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Tort Reform

THURSDAY, MAY 06, 2010 4:35:00 AM

Tort reform 'godfather' moves to the Cato Institute; Class-action crusader joins Manhattan Institute

BY CHRIS RIZO

WASHINGTON (Legal Newsline)-Walter Olson, a noted legal scholar and one of the nation's leading critics of lawsuit abuse, this week joined the Cato Institute, serving as a senior fellow at the libertarian think tank.

Cato's founder and president, Ed Crane, said Olson will continue his work on tort reform in his new professional home, at the group's Center for Constitutional Studies.

The Cato Institute is the fifth most-influential think tank in the world, according to a study revised this year by the University of Pennsylvania's Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program.

At Cato's Washington campus, Olson, whom American Justice Partnership President Dan Perino this week called "the intellectual godfather of the legal reform movement" will be working alongside other influential legal scholars, including criminal justice authority Tim Lynch, editor-in-chief of the Cato Supreme Court Review Ilya Shapiro and constitutional law expert Robert Levy, chairman of the Cato Institute's board of directors.

Olson was previously a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research in New York, where he worked for more than 25 years, after being tapped in the mid-1980s to lead the group's fledgling research on civil litigation.

The institute's eventual Center for Legal Policy took root after Olson "brought together many of the brightest minds in the legal and economic disciplines," said James Copland, the center's director since 2003.

"Walter will be sorely missed," Copland wrote in a blog posting this week. "He displays none of the arrogance one might expect of someone so accomplished."

The president of the Manhattan Institute, Larry Mone, said Olson was the first scholar to "understand the size and systematic nature of runaway litigation in the American legal system."

Olson is widely considered a communications master and pioneer of legal blogging.

In 1999, he started overlawyered.com, which was among the Internet's first -- and most widely read -- legal blogs. A few years later, he was instrumental in the creation of the Manhattan Institute's legal blog, PointOfLaw.com, Copland said.

Before joining the Manhattan Institute, the Yale graduate was editor of Regulation magazine, originally published by the American Enterprise Institute but now a part of Cato.

On his own, Olson has published three books: "The Litigation Explosion" in 1991, "The Excuse Factory" in 1997 and "The Rule of Lawyers" in 2003. His fourth book, "Schools of Misrule: Legal Academia and an Overlawyered America" is scheduled for release next year.

Copland announced in the blog entry also that Ted Frank has agreed to join the Center for Legal Policy as an adjunct fellow and serve as editor of its blog.

Frank is the founder and president of the Center for Class Action Fairness in Washington, which provides pro-bono representation to class members objecting to proposed settlements.

On his blog, Frank said his appointment at the Manhattan Institute won't take from his effort to protect consumers from unfair class action settlements that generally provide consumers with very little relief but enrich the trial lawyers who bring the suits.

"I'll still be litigating cases on behalf of consumers against settlements that are rip-offs, and that litigation



Walter Olson



Ted Frank

IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

Monday, May 03, 2010
[Referendum on Calif. greenhouse law appears headed for voters](#)



SAN FRANCISCO (Legal Newsline)-California voters will likely be asked in the November general election if the state's greenhouse gas law should be put on hold for rosier economic times, a postponement the Democratic frontrunner for attorney general, Kamala Harris, said Monday would be a colossal mistake. [Read more...](#)

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will be entirely separate from the Manhattan Institute," Frank wrote.

Before starting his public-interest law firm, Frank was a fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute. He was director of the AEI Legal Center for the Public Interest.

Frank, a graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, serves on the executive committee that oversees the Federalist Society's Litigation Practice Group.

From Legal Newsline: Reach staff reporter Chris Rizo at chrisrizo@legalnewsline.com.

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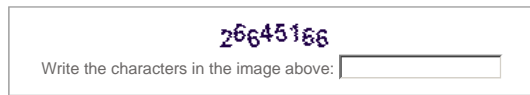
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