

Ex-Warner Bros. Litigation Head Joins Signature Resolution

By James Mills

Law360 (November 8, 2023, 3:35 PM EST) -- Alternative dispute resolution center Signature Resolution announced this week it is bringing in a retired Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. corporate lawyer in charge of litigation to serve as one of its neutrals, working primarily out of its Los Angeles office.

Clara "Zazi" Pope, who was head of litigation during much of her 31 years with Warner Bros., will serve as a neutral for the six-year-old, California-based Signature Resolution. She will specialize in business, entertainment and complex litigation matters.

Pope told Law360 on Tuesday that, even though she was ready to retire from Warner Bros., she wasn't ready to leave the legal world entirely.

"When the time came for me to actually leave, I realized I still wanted to be a lawyer and I still wanted to be part of the legal community," Pope said. "I had developed so many close and wonderful relationships with the very talented legal community that we're privileged to practice in. I wanted the opportunity to continue to work with these colleagues."

Pope said she wasn't interested in taking another corporate job or in joining a law firm. Teaching classes in law school wasn't her cup of tea either.

"Mediation is something that I have always been interested in," she said. "I'm not at all ready to stop working and not at all ready to stop my professional life. This is just a new chapter."

When she made the decision to go into mediation, Pope said Signature Resolution was the only place she contacted.

"To me Signature is the highest service provider in this space. And it wasn't even a close call," she said. "[Signature co-founder] Lou Meisinger is somebody I have known for decades, respect enormously, had several mediations with him. When I decided I wanted to do this, he was the only one I reached out to. He immediately emailed me back and was very receptive. I never considered going anywhere else. In my mind, they are top of the line and that's where I wanted to be."

Dario Higuchi, Signature Resolution's other founding partner and managing member, is thrilled to welcome Pope.



Clara "Zazi" Pope

"Her impressive career in entertainment litigation for Warner Bros. will prove beneficial to serving our team, clients and complex cases," Higuchi said in a statement. "With her insightful and engaging approach, Pope will undoubtedly be able to guide individuals and entities through challenging disputes, making her a great asset to the Signature Resolution team."

Signature Resolution was founded in 2017 and has Los Angeles locations in downtown LA and Century City, San Diego and Oakland, as well as virtual services. Its neutrals, including trial attorneys and respected judges, specialize in virtually every civil practice area.

Pope, who was raised in the North Carolina mountains, earned her law degree in 1987 from Harvard Law School after earning her bachelor's degree in history from Swarthmore College.

She worked as an associate with litigation boutique firm O'Donnell & Gordon LLP, which was acquired by Kaye Scholer shortly after her arrival. Then in 1991, she moved in-house to Warner Bros., where she held many titles over the past 31 years. The most recent title was senior vice president and deputy general counsel.

While some may be skeptical about having a corporate attorney to mediate or arbitrate a case, she dismisses that worry, pointing out that she was not a transactional attorney or a production attorney or a legal affairs executive.

"I was head of litigation," she said. "I managed litigation for so many years, hired outside counsel, managed outside counsel, reviewed pleadings, went to trial, did arbitrations. Sometimes I was the client, sometimes I did the arbitrations myself. I participated in so many arbitrations, mediations and trials. I am acutely aware of the benefits of litigation, the risks of litigation, the costs of litigation and I'm very experienced in all kinds of dispute resolution processes."

Pope further explained that having worked in the corporate world, she has insights that other neutrals likely don't have. She knows how companies work. She knows how many stakeholders there are, the challenges that come from the finance group, the challenges of dealing with insurance or the in-house risk management team.

"There are so many advantages and perspectives you get from being inside a company," she said. "Then managing the litigation for that company and all these years that go along with it, that gives me a pretty unique perspective and the ability to see both where the plaintiffs are coming from and the defense is coming from. As I said, we were on both sides of many issues. I really understand how this all works."

--Editing by Nicole Bleier.