

Former Kaiser Permanente GC Joins Signature Resolution

By James Mills

Law360 (October 6, 2025, 9:41 AM EDT) -- Alternative dispute resolution service Signature Resolution is bringing in the former general counsel of Kaiser Permanente to join its panel of neutrals.

Mark Zemelman, who has over 40 years of legal experience, has joined Signature Resolution, the service announced last week. He was with Kaiser Permanente for 31 years, the last 12 years as general counsel where he oversaw the nation's largest private arbitration system and also guided the organization through high-stakes litigation.



Mark Zemelman

Zemelman will work out of Signature's offices in San Francisco and Oakland, California, but will handle virtual cases as well.

In a Friday interview, Zemelman told Law360 since retiring from Kaiser in 2022, he has been doing healthcare arbitrations with the American Arbitration Association, but found he also wanted to do mediations. Thus, he contacted Signature.

"I discovered as I was doing arbitrations, I tended to deal with arbitrations more as a mediator," Zemelman said. "As I was listening to the cases being laid out, I started to visualize what I thought would be a likely range of outcomes. I would sit down with the lawyers and say, 'This is what I'm hearing. This is the strength of your case and here's the strength of your case. In view of what I'm explaining to you, why don't you go off at lunchtime and see if you can settle this.'"

"It's an effective way of doing arbitrations but it also shows I'm sort of naturally a mediator," Zemelman added. "I'm happy at the end of the day to make decisions when parties can't reach agreement, but I much prefer that they reach agreement. So, I began thinking I really need to find a place that has a very strong emphasis on mediation."

So, he will work for both AAA and Signature.

"Both organizations are open to me continuing with the other," Zemelman said. "Signature was willing to give me the opportunity to both mediate and arbitrate a full range of cases. The situation is, I hope, ideal in that I'll remain on the healthcare panel at AAA and at the same time be open to a much wider variety of things and probably much more mediation at Signature."

Zemelman expects to handle many kinds of cases at Signature, including healthcare cases.

"As general counsel of any \$90 billion national organization, you're involved in a very wide range of matters," Zemelman said. "I got involved in securities matters, contract disputes, construction disputes, environmental matters, malpractice arbitration, employment disputes, huge class actions and so much more; areas of law that I never thought I would have gotten involved in. I have a lot of experience in a lot of areas."

Zemelman, who was raised in Southern California, earned his law degree in 1983 at the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, which is now known as UC Law, San Francisco.

He worked two years as an associate with Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP, then moved to Law Offices of Sanford J. Rosen for a year, according to his LinkedIn profile.

In 1986, he joined McCutchen Doyle Brown & Enersen LLP where he was frequently assigned to work on cases for Kaiser Permanente.

Zemelman's father had been a doctor with Kaiser, so Zemelman was intimately familiar with the organization. Eventually, he convinced Kaiser to hire him as an in-house attorney.

"When I decided I wanted to go in-house. I liked the idea of being involved in healthcare, with real people's lives," Zemelman said. "I called up the Kaiser legal department, and they didn't have any openings. I said it would cost them about a third of what they were paying me [at McCutchen] if they brought me in. It took them, I think, one week to make me an offer."

"The general counsel at the time asked me, 'Why is it you're willing to take a pay cut to come here?'" Zemelman recalled. "I said part of it had to do with lifestyle and going in-house and part of it had to do with looking at the rest of my career and saying, 'What is the product I want to be associated with?' And wanting to be involved with real people's lives rather than something less intimate."

Zemelman started as an environmental lawyer at Kaiser and then eventually moved over to become a health care lawyer. In 1998, seven years after he joined, he moved up to become assistant general counsel and leader of the business law practice group. Then in 2010, he was named general counsel.

Signature Resolution was founded in 2017 and now has over 100 neutrals and seven California offices: downtown Los Angeles, Century City, Bakersfield, San Diego, Oakland, Santa Clara and San Francisco, plus virtual services.

"Mark's career is nothing short of remarkable," Dario Higuchi, Signature Resolution founding partner and managing member, said in a statement. "As the longtime general counsel of Kaiser Permanente's national legal department, he built and led one of the country's most sophisticated legal operations and gained unparalleled insight into complex dispute resolution. That combination of subject-matter expertise and leadership is rare, and we're excited to see him bring his knowledge to our clients and colleagues with Signature Resolution."

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.