



Paul Charlton has gained a reputation in the Valley as a go-to attorney for high-profile cases.

JIM POLUN | PHOENIX BUSINESS JOURNAL

A new legal chapter

After involvement in political controversy, attorney now works with others in spotlight

BY MIKE SUMNUCKS | Phoenix Business Journal

Paul Charlton was thrust into the spotlight in late 2006 when he was fired as U.S. attorney for Arizona — one of several politically charged dismissals of federal prosecutors by the George W. Bush administration. Five years later, Charlton is with the Phoenix law office of Gallagher & Kennedy PA in Phoenix, representing clients in controversial high-profile cases that parallel his own experience in many ways. Since he joined the firm in 2007, his clients have included:

- Maricopa County Supervisor Don Stapley, R-Mesa, after he was arrested and indicted on faulty disclosure and campaign finance charges by Maricopa County Sheriff Joe

Arpaio and former Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas. Those charges and indictments later were dropped or nixed by the courts.

- Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr., in a power struggle among tribal leaders that involved him being removed from office by the Navajo council and later reinstated by the courts.
- Paradise Valley Town Councilman and former Mayor Vernon Parker, against charges by the U.S. Small Business Administration of improper business filings. Charlton said

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Parker essentially has been cleared of those allegations.

- Independent Redistricting Commission Chairwoman Colleen Mathis, as part of her bid to stay in office after being impeached by Gov. Jan Brewer and Arizona Senate Republicans. Charlton is representing Mathis in a Maricopa Superior Court matter. The Arizona Supreme Court reinstated Mathis to her post last month.
- Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, during his highly publicized political fights over immigration issues with Arpaio and the MCSO.

Charlton also served on a panel of former prosecutors who made recommendations to the city of Phoenix regarding immigration policies and how the Phoenix Police Department should handle various interactions with illegal immigrants.

“They’re all referrals,” Charlton said of his big cases.

But the cases he’s taken on and the clients he has represented prove he is one of the go-to Phoenix attorneys for high-profile matters. Former Arizona Attorney General Grant Woods, Stinson Morrison Hecker LLP Managing Partner Mike Manning and Gallagher partner Patrick McGruder also are among the cadre of local attorneys who get such high-profile work. Clients in that category tend to like having well-known attorneys who are comfortable dealing with the media and who can work within channels.

For example, former presidential candidate Herman Cain has hired prominent Atlanta attorney Lin Wood to represent him against sexual harassment and infidelity claims. Wood said last month that his clients have included former Congressman Gary Condit, who was investigated and later cleared in the death of congressional intern Chandra Levy, John and Patsy Ramsey, who were questioned in the disappearance of their daughter, JonBenet, and Atlanta Olympics bombing suspect Richard Jewell, who was cleared.

Charlton said he understands the ins and outs of high-profile work from his tenure as U.S. attorney for Arizona, and via his firing along with some other federal prosecutors. Charlton was let go primarily because he disagreed with the U.S. Justice Department over a death penalty case.



Mike Kennedy

The types of cases Charlton takes can bring him notoriety and more work for attorneys at Gallagher & Kennedy.

Jordan Rose, managing partner of Scottsdale-based Rose Law Group, said high-profile work appeals to a lot of attorneys and their firms.

“We love the challenge of bringing our best every second, using all of our abilities, thinking so outside the box that we actually make the playing field bigger. Big issues have the added benefit of keeping our attorneys thrilled to come to work

each day,” said Rose, who has been doing legal work for the real estate partnership that includes Phoenix Suns owner Robert Sarver in a case against a proposed copper mining project in Florence.

But there are times when headline-grabbing cases create a political minefield for the law firms involved.

Charlton said he still is a Republican, despite sometimes representing the other side of issues. He said he is not interested in the vacancy created after Dennis Burke was fired as U.S. attorney for Arizona as a result of the “Past and Furious” gun-running case debacle.

Gallagher Managing Partner Mike Kennedy said Charlton brings a lot to the firm’s table.

“Not only has Paul been a stellar complement to Tom Henze and Barry Mitchell in our criminal defense group, but because of the breadth of his experience as the United States attorney, Paul is forging new opportunities in the areas of corporate compliance, representation of public officials and Native American law,” Kennedy said. Gallagher’s stable of clients includes Freepoint-McMORan Copper & Gold Inc., the Arizona Cardinals, the Arizona Diamondbacks, MidFirst Bank and Northern Trust. The firm also is representing Curis Resources Ltd., which is trying to develop the Florence Copper Project opposed by home builders and others.

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