

Lawyers See Bull Market for Disputes

Law firm **Duval & Stachenfeld** has formed a 13-member team that will focus on what it views as a growth industry — legal claims stemming from structured-finance transactions.

The law firm has carved most of the group from its 45-member real estate practice because the property-market crash is spurring a rash of lawsuits.

“When the brunt of the recession hit, everybody took 6-12 months to figure out what had hit them,” said managing partner **Bruce Stachenfeld**. “Then we had another 6-12 months where people were trying to figure out what to do. Now we’re in the next phase, where we’re seeing legal claims start to emerge.”

The idea behind the “structured real estate dispute resolution team” is to concentrate specialists from various areas. The group is focusing on three types of disputes:

- A “put-back” case, in which a trustee or servicer demands that an originator buy back a securitized loan at par value because of an alleged breach of representations and warranties.
- A “tranche warfare” case, in which bondholders of differing seniority battle over rights.
- An investor lawsuit, in which a bondholder sues an issuer for fraud or violation of securities laws.

The team is co-chaired by Stachenfeld and litigation chair **Allan Taffet**. The other senior partners involved are



structured-finance attorneys **Bola Oloko** and **Christine Spletzer**; litigators **Brian Burns** and **Timothy Pastore**; and **Terri Adler**, who chairs the real estate practice group. ❖