June 2022 Legal Industry News and Highlights: Law Firm Hiring, Industry Recognition, and New Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Article By

Chandler Ford
Crissonna Tennison

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Happy Summertime from the National Law Review! We hope you are staying safe, healthy, and cool. Read on below for the latest news in the legal industry, including law firm hirings and expansion, legal industry awards and recognition, and diversity, equity, and justice efforts in the field.

Law Firm Hiring and Expansion
Michael Best & Friedrich LLP has added Brett R. Valentyn as Senior Counsel to the firm’s Corporate and Transactional Practice Group. Mr. Valentyn, a well-practiced mergers, acquisitions, and corporate attorney, has a wide array of experience in areas such as private equity, corporate governance, and transactional and contractual matters. He has advised clients across industries in buy-side and sell-side transactions for both small-cap and large-cap companies.

“Brett’s successful history in advising clients on transactional matters has him well-positioned to flourish,” said Jason Rogers, Chair of the Corporate & Transactional Practice Group. “Brett’s impressive background in transactional law will only strengthen our already deep bench of talented and business-minded private equity and M&A attorneys. I’m confident Brett will make a wonderful addition to our Corporate & Transactional Practice Group.”

Corporate attorney Eric D. Statman has joined the Toxic Torts practice group at Goldberg Segalla. A 20-year veteran of complex commercial litigation, Mr. Statman is poised to continue his environmental, product liability, and mass tort practice out of the firm’s Manhattan office.

Previously, Mr. Statman has aided clients across a variety of industries, resolving major disputes with minimum impact to corporations through mediation or litigation, as well as negotiating a large number of group settlements. Notably, he has represented asbestos defendants as local and national counsel, helping to develop strategies to minimize exposure.

Michael J. Ligorano has rejoined Norris McLaughlin’s Real Estate, Finance, and Land Use Group and Immigration Practice Group after nine years as the Diocese of Metuchen’s General Counsel. Ligorano is an established New Jersey land use and immigration practitioner with experience evaluating undeveloped land, as well as acquiring, developing, and financing municipal projects around the state. In addition to city planning, Ligorano has served as a legal resource for multinational businesses who wish to enter the United States, assisting in the navigation of the US immigration process. He is the former supervising attorney for the Diocese of Metuchen Catholic Charities Immigration Program, and a member of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

“Michael has a deep understanding of our firm and of the local landscape. He is not only one of the state’s foremost land use and commercial real estate attorneys, but as an experienced immigration counsel will help make ours arguably the best immigration practice in the region,” said David C. Roberts, Chair of Norris McLaughlin. “We are pleased to have Michael at the firm and look forward to his leadership and cross-practice collaboration.”

Five partners and eight associates have joined the Chicago office of the MG+M The Law Firm. The Asbestos Litigation Practice welcomes Partners Timothy Krippner, Michael Cantieri, Christopher Triska, William Irwin, and Daniel Powell, as well as Associates Alex Blair, Elizabeth Grande, Aerial Henderson, Dragana Kovacevic, Cindy Medina-Cervantes, Emily Sample, and Andrea Walsh. The new members bring with them decades of combined high-stakes complex commercial and liability defense experience.
“MG+M enthusiastically welcomes this exceptional team of professionals to our firm,” commented MG+M Chairperson and Partner John B. Manning. “We have collaborated with this group of lawyers for years and look forward to their enhancement of our brand as a go-to firm for high-stakes litigation matters in Illinois, the Midwest and nationally.”

Legal Industry Awards and Recognition

The Environmental Practice Group at Greenberg Traurig, LLP has been recognized in the Legal 500 United States 2022 Guide. 31 attorneys across 12 offices in the US were included in the list, highlighting the firm’s expertise in areas such as environmental regulation, environmental litigation, energy regulation, mass torts, and Native American law.

Of particular note, shareholder David B. Weinstein was recognized in the U.S. Guide as a Leading Lawyer in the category of Dispute Resolution > Product Liability, Mass Tort, and Class Action – Defense: Toxic Tort. Likewise, shareholder Troy A. Eid was recognized as a Leading Lawyer for Industry Focus > Native American Law.

Canadian law firm Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP was recognized six times at the 2022 Benchmark Canada Awards, including three separate “Firm of the Year” Awards. Specifically, the firm was named the Competition Litigation Firm of the Year for the first time, the White Collar Crime/Enforcement Firm of the Year for the third consecutive year, and the Arbitration Firm of the Year for the fifth consecutive year.

In addition, Blakes was granted the Impact Case of the Year award for work on Sherman Estate v. Donovan, led by partner Iris Fischer. Partners Michael Barrack and Melanie Baird also received the Hall of Fame Award and the IP Litigator of the Year award, respectively.

Thomson Reuters has named six Stubbs Alderton & Markiles attorneys as “Rising Stars” on the Southern California Super Lawyers list. The members of the firm that have been selected are listed here:

- Kelly Laffey
- John De La Merced
- Neil Elan
- Celina Kirchner
- Alexander Manglinong
- Blaine O’Malley

Attorneys selected for the Super Lawyers list demonstrate a high degree of personal and professional achievement, as well as a significant level of peer recognition. The list selects only 2.5 percent of under-40 lawyers in the Southern California area for the “Rising Stars” designation, making decisions based on peer nomination, independent research, and peer evaluation.
Two Womble Bond Dickinson (US) attorneys have been ranked in the 2022 edition of Chambers USA. Cristin Cowles, Ph.D., an experienced patent prosecution and patent lifecycle management attorney, has been ranked in Intellectual Property. Jed Nosal, a practiced state regulatory oversight, enforcement, and compliance attorney, has been ranked in Energy & Natural Resources.

Additionally, the firm’s Massachusetts-based Energy & Natural Resources practice has been recognized by Chambers USA as an industry leader. In total, 60 Womble Bond Dickinson attorneys and 22 state-level practice areas have been recognized in the 2022 edition of Chambers USA.

Diversity, Equity, and Justice Efforts

Chris Slaughter, CEO of Steptoe & Johnson PLLC, affirmed the firm’s commitment to diversity and inclusion by taking the Leaders at the Front Initiative Pledge with the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity. Nationally recognized for its strengths in energy law, business, labor and employment, and litigation, Steptoe & Johnson has a longstanding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, with efforts such as the D Cubed Program, the Standing Diversity & Inclusion Committee, and ongoing diversity recruitment and retention efforts.

The Leaders at the Front Initiative is a movement intended to forefront the conversation about diversity and inclusion for major organizations and law firms. It requires an organization to act on their pledge by creating an action plan that turns their words into measurable actions, with the end goal of helping a new diverse generation of attorneys obtain positions of leadership and in return create a national legal industry that is diverse and inclusive.

Three Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP attorneys have been recognized by the Virginia Access to Justice Commission for their outstanding pro bono services. Lee-Ann C. Brown, an associate at the firm, has been named the 2020-2021 Pro Bono Service Champion, an honor reserved for top Virginia attorneys reporting the highest number of pro bono hours. Douglas L. Patin and Henry C. Su have likewise been named 2020-2021 Pro Bono Service Honor Roll members for contributing over 40 hours of pro bono service.

The Virginia Access to Justice Commission was established in 2013 by the state’s Supreme Court to promote equal access to justice, with a particular emphasis on the civil needs of Virginia residents. The bar’s participation in pro bono service has since become a priority for the Commission, connecting judges, lawyers, and legal aid and social services to assist in making the courts more accessible for all.

“These attorneys have made tremendous strides in providing pro bono service and working to promote access to justice in the Virginia community, and we are proud of their significant contributions,” said Bradley Pro Bono Counsel Tiffany M. Graves.

Hunton Andrews Kurth LLP has announced the establishment of the HuntonAK Pathfinders Scholarship Program, a 10-week, paid Summer Clerkship for outstanding first-generation 2L law students. Stemming from the winning submission at the firm’s annual “Hackathon,” a brain-storming competition for enhancing diversity and inclusion in the legal industry, the scholarship seeks to attract students to the
private practice of law while providing valuable work and mentorship experiences at the firm.

“Hunton Andrews Kurth is committed to making our profession more accessible to talented law students who have already demonstrated great determination by climbing the first rung of the educational mobility ladder,” said managing partner Wally Martinez. “This scholarship, strictly for first-generation students, is one of the first of its kind and we are honored to help lead the way with this effort.”

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