

Legal News: Law Firm Hires, Professional Recognition and Legal Innovation

Article By:

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With plenty of adjustments and creativity, the legal industry churns into August. The legal industry has shown remarkable ingenuity as law firms adapt to the challenges of COVID-19 and the ancillary impact of the pandemic. Below we highlight some law firm hires, law firm innovations and accolades, and legal technology news.

Law Firm Hires and Lateral Attorney Moves

Labor and employment lawyer [Ryan McCoy](#) rejoined [Norton Rose Fulbright](#) as a partner. McCoy split the past seven years between Baute Crochetiere Hartley & Velkei and Alston & Bird, previously spending eight years as part of Norton Rose Fulbright's dispute resolution and litigation practice from 2005 until 2013.

McCoy represents clients from the healthcare, pharmaceutical, retail, insurance, transport and insurance industries, focusing his practice on wage and hour class actions, [discrimination suits](#), [wrongful termination and retaliation](#), commercial litigation, and complex insurance coverage. He has also defended clients before the [American Arbitration Association](#) in wage and hour violations, sexual harassment, pregnancy discrimination, disability discrimination as well as meal and rest period disputes.

"Ryan impressed us as a young lawyer, and we are thrilled to have him return in his prime. The client demand for employment and labor law seems to be at an all-time high during this unusual time for businesses," said [Shauna Clark](#), Norton Rose Fulbright's U.S. head of employment and labor.

"I am delighted to return to Norton Rose Fulbright and collaborate once again with these talented lawyers. The firm's unmatched global reach and wide range of offerings will benefit my clients significantly," McCoy said.

Patent attorney [Pierre R. Yanney](#) joined [Bressler, Amery & Ross](#) law firm as a principal in its

[Corporate and Commercial Transactions Practice Group](#). Previously, Yanney was a principal at Baker & Hostetler law firm.

Mr. Yanney focuses his practice on all aspects of [patent law, ranging from patent litigation, opinions and counseling](#), to Patent Office prosecution, and has experience in handling a wide range of technologies including RFID, cellular systems, medical electronics and devices, signal processing, communication systems, electronic tolling, and elevator control systems. Yanney has prosecuted more than 2,000 patent applications and written more than 100 patent opinions, in addition to arguing several cases before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit and the Patent Trial & Appeal Board.

“I’m excited to welcome Pierre Yanney to our New York office. Pierre is known for the breadth and depth of his IP experience. It’s rare that you come across someone like Pierre who can write a patent application, get it allowed at the Patent Office, and also litigate patents in district court. His talents and business insights will be a positive addition to our active Corporate and Commercial practice,” said Bressler New York Managing Principal, [Mark Knoll](#).

Labor and employment attorney [Scott Nelson](#) joined [Hunton Andrews Kurth](#) as a partner in the law firm’s Houston office. Nelson previously was a partner at Seyfarth Shaw LLP, and led Baker McKenzie’s domestic U.S. Employment Counseling and Litigation practice.

Nelson’s practice focuses on complex employment litigation, specifically wage and hour class and collective actions, ERISA litigation, and trade secret and restrictive covenant matters. He also counsels clients on employment law compliance, including international employment law issues, restrictive covenants, wage-and-hour matters, internal investigations, executive terminations, mass layoffs, employee policies, employee training and due diligence.

“Scott’s thorough understanding of the many complex issues our clients face and his impressive track record of experience handling ERISA litigation and advising on international employment law matters complement the strengths of our comprehensive labor and employment practice,” said [Emily Burkhardt Vicente](#), co-chair of [Hunton Andrews Kurth’s labor and employment group](#). “We are pleased to welcome him to the firm.”

[Bergeson & Campbell](#) attorney Timothy D. Backstrom passed away on July 24. Backstrom joined Bergeson & Campbell in 2007, and was an expert in the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act, also contributing to the law and regulation of fuel and fuel additives under the Clean Air Act.

“Tim was an incredibly gifted lawyer, respected by his peers, loved by his fellow colleagues here at Bergeson & Campbell, P.C., and a wonderful man, husband, and father. He is survived by his wife Lydia Cox Backstrom, his (step) son Christopher Blancato, his brother Paul Backstrom (Kathy), and his cousins Dan and Don Backstrom,” [Bergeson & Campbell said](#) in a statement following his death.

Backstrom grew up in Illinois and Wisconsin, later moving to the East coast to earn his undergraduate degree at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He earned his law degree at Yale Law School, and then went on to work for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Office of General Counsel on pesticide, toxic substances, and air quality issues for 25 years, developing a deep understanding of FIFRA.

"We will miss Tim's uncompromising commitment to legal excellence, his passion for the law, his exuberance for any work composed by Gustav Mahler, and his unrelenting belief that the rule of law will ultimately prevail over the societal challenges we are now experiencing," Bergeson wrote in a statement.

Law Firm Innovation

[Winston & Strawn](#) announced the formation of an Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Advisory Team, designed to help companies navigate their ESG profiles. The advisory board will be co-chaired by Winston & Strawn partners [Mike Blankenship](#) and [Eric Johnson](#), and utilizes the firm's experience across disciplines to oversee the ESG issues companies are facing during these challenging times. Blankenship identifies the correlation between successful businesses and their attention to ESG values, saying, "successful businesses are placing ESG principles at the forefront of their core values and leveraging those principles to chart a path for financial success and future growth to the benefit of all their stakeholders, including employees, customers, vendors, local communities, and stockholders."

The team includes Chicago partners [Mike Melbinger](#), [Eleni Kouimelis](#), [Cardelle Spangler](#), and [Rex Sessions](#), of counsel [Stephanie Sebor](#); New York partner [Tara Greenberg](#), London partners [Peter Crowther](#) and [Anthony Riley](#). The group will focus on ESG disclosure and messaging, Board oversight of ESG risks, shareholder activism, corporate governance and regulatory compliance. With an eye to these principles, the Winston & Strawn ESG team will "work closely with clients to develop and execute ESG-related initiatives that best fit their specific needs to the benefit of all of their stakeholders," Eric Johnson says.

[Hughes Hubbard & Reed](#) law firm launched a [coronavirus and CARES Act tracker](#) that monitors enforcement actions across the country, targeting [Paycheck Protection Program loan fraud](#), [fraudulent COVID-19 cures](#), as well as violations of state and federal laws. Hughes Hubbard & Reed is monitoring coronavirus government agency filings, and will update the tracker frequently.

To date, Hughes Hubbard & Reed has identified 110 coronavirus and CARES act cases brought by the Department of Justice and Securities and Exchange Commission, with 12 state attorneys general bringing cases. Pennsylvania's attorney general's office has been the most active with COVID-19 related legal actions. Forty percent of cases involve alleged criminal violations, and 30 percent of coronavirus related cases include a suspension of securities trading by the Securities and Exchange Commission, with the number of cases growing steadily since April.

The tracker can be accessed [here](#) with detailed information on each case, including links to court

filings and relevant statutes.

[DLA Piper](#) law firm received the 2020 Beacon of Justice Award from the [National Legal Aid & Defender Association](#) (NLADA), recognizing the growth of the firm's pro bono practice focusing on the needs of immigrant children facing abuse, neglect and abandonment. The NLADA also recognized the firm's collaboration with the American Bar Association to develop habeas corpus petition template pleadings and practice advisories for unaccompanied children.

"We are honored to play a role in advocating for the rights of vulnerable individuals and families seeking a better life in the US," said [Lisa Dewey](#), pro bono partner and director of New Perimeter, DLA Piper's nonprofit affiliate that provides long-term pro bono legal assistance in under-served regions around the world. "I am proud of the dedication to serving immigrants that our lawyers have demonstrated through their pro bono service, and we look forward to continuing this important work."

Jay Bender, a partner at the Birmingham, Ala. office [of Bradley Arant Boult Cummings law firm](#), received the Alabama Commendation Medal from the Alabama Army National Guard for his work on the "Honoring American Veterans in Extreme Need Act of 2019" (HAVEN Act; H.R. 2938).

Bender was presented the award by [Amy Quick Glenos](#), an of counsel [attorney at Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, P.C.](#), and a reserve component soldier and captain in the U.S. Army JAG Corps, Alabama Army National Guard, for which she also serves as trial counsel.

The HAVEN Act was signed into law last year, changing bankruptcy laws to protect disabled veterans experiencing financial hardship. Bender worked pro bono alongside other Bradley attorneys on the law, serving as co-chair of the Legislative Committee of the American Bankruptcy Institute Task Force on Veterans and Service Members Affairs – of which Mr. Bender is a founding member.

"We congratulate Jay on this prestigious recognition of his many years of work and unwavering commitment to protecting disabled veterans in financial distress and ushering the HAVEN Act into reality," said Bradley Birmingham Office [Managing Partner Dawn Helms Sharff](#). "This recognition is reflective of Jay's outstanding work and the importance of this landmark law in helping disabled veterans and their families achieve financial stability."

[Tycko & Zavareei law firm](#) won a \$11 million settlement representing a [healthcare whistleblower in a False Claims Act lawsuit](#). [Jonathan Tycko of Tycko & Zavareei](#) and Felix [Gavi Luna of Peterson Wampold Rosato Feldman Luna](#) law firm represented the whistleblower.

The settlement involved allegations that a testing laboratory owned by Cordant Health Solutions paid kickbacks to two major clients of the laboratory to encourage further testing referrals to the laboratory from those clients. The whistleblower, who was a former employee of Cordant, filed the lawsuit under the qui tam provision of the False Claims Act five years ago. Cordant agreed to pay the government \$11,942,913 to settle the claims. The government awarded the whistleblower approximately \$2.4 million, or 20 percent of the settlement amount.

"This settlement shows that the False Claims Act works," Tycko said. "Through the [qui tam provisions of that law](#), our client was able to bring the kickbacks to the attention of the government in a way that led to both criminal and civil remedies. We are proud and humbled to represent brave whistleblowers, such as the individual who brought this case."

"We are grateful for how seriously the U.S. Attorney's Office, and all the government lawyers and investigators who have worked on this matter, took our client's allegations, and for the work they did to reach this settlement," said Luna.

[Bryan Cave Leighton & Paisner](#) recently announced that Denver associate, [Ivan London](#), was recently elected to serve on the Board of Advisors for Western Energy Alliance. Comprised of 300 member companies, the Western Energy Alliance focuses on environmentally responsible exploration and production of oil and gas in the region. The Western Energy Alliance supports policies to encourage investment and job growth in the region. London's practice [with Bryan Cave focuses on regulation in energy, environmental](#) and with other natural resource matters.

Legal Technology Innovations

At the end of July, [Clarivate Plc](#) announced an agreement to combine with [CPA Global](#), a global leader in IP software and tech-enabled services. The transaction will be all-stock with an enterprise value of approximately \$6.8 billion. The transaction is expected to go through regulatory approvals, is expected to close fourth quarter of 2020. By combining efforts, CPA Global and Clarivate will provide an IP solution that provides market-leading software, data, technology and services throughout the IP lifecycle, from academic research to IP portfolio management.

[Jerre Stead, CEO of Clarivate](#) indicates the company's share similar core values and expects the partnership to lead to more innovation. He says, "This is a transformative combination with a strong strategic fit between the two companies. It will create a full-service IP organization which will provide customers with a wide range of products and services to help them make faster and smarter critical decisions." [Simon Webster, the CEO of CPA Global](#), echoes the sentiment, calling the move "a natural next step." He says, "The fit between our respective product offerings across the innovation and IP lifecycle, the commonality of our vision for the future of the industry, and the alignment of both companies' cultures and values makes for an extremely exciting future for our customers, employees and shareholders alike."

Leading accounting firm [BDO USA, LLP](#) launched [Athenagy](#), a business intelligence platform for legal professionals, designed to provide the legal department with transparency and critical insight throughout the litigation cycle. Athenagy is designed to integrate with Relativity®One and can provide critical insight into where data lives and what it does through the steps of a legal hold, providing information to legal professionals.

[Daniel Gold, managing director of BDO](#) Managed Services practice, says "Athenagy solves persistent problems that legal departments face when it comes to managing their data. By providing transparency and detailed analytics throughout the data lifecycle, Athenagy is empowering legal professionals to make better, more informed decisions at every step of the e-discovery process, and beyond."

That's it for now. We'll have more soon.

Rachel Popa contributed to this article.

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