

Office Snapshot: A Look At Willkie's Chicago Office

By Xiumei Dong

Law360 (June 4, 2021, 2:13 PM EDT) -- Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP brought on former Jenner & Block LLP Chairman Craig Martin and five other partners from that firm last March to launch an office in Chicago. Fourteen months later, the Midwest outpost has grown to more than 40 attorneys who handle complex litigation, private client matters and more.

According to Martin, the growth is largely driven by demand for legal services from the firm's existing clients, including Fortune 100 companies, private entities and wealthy families.

"The growth in the office and the growth of the number of lawyers simply reflects the number of lawyers that we have needed to hire in order to work on our existing matters and our existing clients," Martin told Law360 Pulse in an interview.

Besides building out the initial group's expertise in litigation, trials, appeals, investigations, corporate governance and private wealth, the Chicago office will continue to expand Willkie's Midwest capabilities in the fields of mergers and acquisitions, private equity, restructuring and asset management, Martin said.

"We want to work on our clients' most important reputational and economic issues across the board in the areas that we practice, so in trial practice, private wealth, private equity, corporate restructuring and M&A, ultimately," he said.

Here, Law360 Pulse takes a closer look at Willkie's Chicago office and its work.

OFFICE LEADER

Craig C. Martin stepped down as chairman of Jenner & Block last February and joined Willkie the following month as a member of the firm's executive committee, Midwest chairman, and a partner in the litigation department.

He had practiced at Jenner & Block for over three decades and represented some of the firm's oldest clients, including General Dynamics, Chicago's Crown family, insurer Aon, United Airlines and Northern Trust Bank.



He regularly appears as lead counsel in trials and appeals in state and federal courts and arbitrations for

his clients, which include "major Chicago companies and some of the nation's most influential families," Willkie said.

LOCATION

Willkie's Chicago office is at 300 N. LaSalle Drive.

THE TEAM

67 TOTAL EMPLOYEES

9 Partners

1 Special counsel

4 Counsel

27 Associates

13 Summer law clerks

4 Paralegals

9 Other staff

THE WORK

Willkie's Chicago litigation practice focuses on trials and appeals across a variety of areas, including complex commercial, Employee Retirement Income Security Act, intellectual property, antitrust, securities and trade secrets litigation. The office also conducts investigations and provides board governance counseling.

The office has scored at least four major litigation wins in the past year.

In April, the team secured an ERISA victory for professional services firm Aon Hewitt Investment Consulting Inc. After three years of litigation, the court found in favor of Aon on all claims.

In February, client Olin Corp. was awarded a final judgment of \$49.3 million in New York federal court, concluding a three-decade-long contract dispute relating to environmental liabilities at dozens of manufacturing and disposal sites.

Last summer, the team obtained dismissal of two related federal lawsuits brought against a group of former officers and directors of paper manufacturing company Appvion Corp. The suits alleged the executives breached their state corporate law fiduciary duties by artificially inflating the company's stock value and that they created improper corporate dividends.

And in August, the team convinced the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation to centralize numerous putative class actions asserting antitrust claims against Follett Higher Education Group and other college course material publishers and retailers.

COMINGS AND GOINGS

The office opened in March with the six former Jenner & Block partners. Since then, it has expanded to more than 40 attorneys, adding partners, counsel and associates. The office recently added another former Jenner & Block partner, Sarah Haddy, as a counsel in its executive compensation and employee benefits department.

The Chicago office is "highly interested in driving a workplace that has a diverse team," Martin said,

noting that more than 50% of its lawyers are women and that one in every five lawyers at the Chicago office came from an underrepresented background.

The office also hired 13 summer law clerks this year, 46% of whom are from underrepresented groups and 62% of whom are women, according to Martin.

--Editing by Aaron Pelc.

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