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Thompson Hine Launches Energy Practice, Adds Laterals in 4 Offices

By Brenda Sapino Jeffreys

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What You Need to Know

- Thompson Hine has launched a dedicated energy practice.
- The firm hired four laterals working in the energy sector, and Polsinelli partner Robert Nelson, Jr. was hired to lead the new practice group from the Silicon Valley and New York.
- Managing partner Tony White said the formal launch of an energy practice is part of the firm's strategic plan to meet the competition.

Thompson Hine, the Am Law 200 firm founded in Cleveland, has launched an energy practice and added four lawyers, including two partners, in Los Angeles, New York, Silicon Valley and Washington, D.C. as the firm continues to meet competition with strategic moves.

The firm has hired energy and infrastructure partner Robert L. Nelson, Jr., who came from Polsinelli and will lead the energy practice group as a partner in the Silicon Valley and New York. Others include Dentons partner Peter Bekker, an international arbitrator who joins as a partner and head of energy disputes in New York, and senior counsel Terrel Ferguson, an energy and project finance lawyer from Pillsbury Winthrop



Courtesy photos

L-R: Chelsea Gunter, Terrel Ferguson, Peter Bekker, and Robert L. Nelson, Jr., of Thompson Hine.

Shaw Pittman who is based in Los Angeles, and senior counsel Chelsea Gunter, who had her own firm, Boreal Energy Advisors, and joined Thompson Hine in Washington, D.C.

Nelson, who works in traditional and emerging energy sectors, said he previously worked with each of the three other lateral hires at Am Law 50 firms.

Tony White, managing partner of Thompson Hine, said in an interview that the firm has had some capabilities in the energy space, but it is much deeper now with Nelson and his team.

"He is one of the country's leading partners in the energy space and he is A-to-Z, soup-to-nuts versed in energy," White said.

The firm has been focused on strategically building a comprehensive energy group for nearly two years, because "as a national firm, there

were certain things we felt we needed to bolster to meet our competition.”

Adding the practice strengthens the firm’s ability to serve clients in significant energy markets, specifically along the Marcellus Shale, a gas-producing region where the firm operates four offices, the firm noted in a press release.

White said the firm has a number of lawyers with energy expertise, but they have not been concentrated until now into a practice group. The practice group will grow significantly, he said, once many of the other lawyers at the firm who have worked in the energy sector join it.

White said the launch of the energy practice builds upon the firm’s launch of its Silicon Valley office in January, when it added 18 lawyers and staff from intellectual property litigation boutique Turner Boyd Seraphine and took over its office in San Mateo.

In addition to that, White said, the firm recently added a team of six securities litigation and regulatory enforcement lawyers from UB Greensfelder, led by litigation partner Alan Wolper, in Chicago, and a specialized immigration practice in Cleveland, led by former UB Greensfelder immigration chair David Leopold.

“What’s on the horizon? More strategic growth,” White said.

Nelson said the energy team that joined Thompson Hine brings complementary skills and backgrounds.

“Chelsea and Terrel are the two of the best lawyers I’ve worked with, and Peter...is absolutely

first-rate as far as international disputes are concerned and also has a transactional background,” Nelson said. He added that others at Thompson Hine are a good fit, such as the finance team, a construction group that has strong project finance skills, and a stadium financing practice.

The firm is already in discussions with other energy lawyers in a wide variety of energy areas such as power for AI projects, oil and gas, and infrastructure.

He declined to identify clients the group brought to Thompson Hine, but they include energy generators, infrastructure funds, private equity funds dealing with energy, and data center developers, contractors and lenders.

According to the firm, the energy practice complements the firm’s work in energy facility siting and permitting, environmental compliance, renewable energy, clean technology and regulatory support before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, U.S. Department of Energy, Nuclear Regulatory Commission and state agencies.

Bekker stated in the press release that he is excited to reunite with Nelson and join a firm in growth mode with a strong energy team.

A spokesperson for Dentons did not immediately respond to a request for a comment on Bekker’s departure, and a spokesperson for Polsinelli did not immediately respond to a request for a comment on Nelson’s departure. A spokesperson for Pillsbury did not immediately provide a comment on Ferguson’s departure.