

Morgan Lewis Picks Up Benefits Pro From Stroock In NYC

By Kellie Mejdrich

Law360 (October 21, 2022, 11:54 AM EDT) -- Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP bolstered its ranks in New York with the addition of a veteran benefits lawyer who previously headed up teams on executive compensation and transactional employee benefit plans at Stroock & Stroock & Lavan LLP.

Austin Lilling, who has practiced in the benefits space for more than 20 years, will continue providing advice on benefits and compensation arrangements, including when businesses are working to structure deals involving those issues, to employers and management teams, Morgan Lewis said Oct. 17.



Austin Lilling

Lilling told Law360 he's looking forward to advising on these issues, particularly as mergers and acquisitions appear to be entering a growth phase.

"The M&A space, the private equity space — even some more distressed transactions that might be coming down the pike given the economy — that's really my sweet spot," Lilling said. "So my synergies, together with the firm's experience in all those arenas, really made for a very nice fit."

Firm Chair Jami McKeon praised Lilling's hire in a statement.

"Shaping compensation and benefit plans, particularly when intertwined with multifaceted financial transactions, such as private equity deals and large restructurings, requires a high level of skill where Austin's sophisticated experience will be of value to our clients," McKeon said.

"He is poised to align his well-rounded background for cross-practice collaboration in a number of areas, such as restructuring, tax and private equity transactions, to provide our clients a full suite of services," McKeon added.

The firm said Austin focuses on counseling company leaders — including senior executives and management teams, among other key players — on a wide array of transactions including mergers and acquisitions, financial restructurings, as well as hedge fund and private equity matters.

Lilling will also advise real estate, media and entertainment organizations on their compensation programs, the firm said.

Craig Bitman, leader of Morgan Lewis's employee benefits and executive compensation practice, said in

a statement, "We know Austin well, having been on the other side of transactions, and we are confident he will seamlessly integrate with our team and be a great asset to our clients on day one."

"Austin's representation of management teams in buyouts and with private-funds clients will add strength and additional clients to our management representation and executive compensation practices," Bitman added. "His strong partnership tax background will also be extremely helpful to our private equity clients who frequently face complex tax issues in the compensation arrangements."

Lilling was a partner at Stroock & Stroock & Lavan from August 2018 to October 2022. He's had several stints at other law firms, including at Katten Muchin Rosenman LLP, Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP and Lowenstein Sandler LLP.

Lilling holds a Master of Laws from New York University School of Law and a law degree from Seton Hall University School of Law. He earned his bachelor's degree from Emory University.

When asked about what keeps him engaged in executive compensation and employee benefits law, Lilling said working in the human capital business gives him an opportunity to help people.

"It's sometimes a generic term, but in our space, you actually get to help people," Lilling said. "And compensation happens to be one of the things that's pretty much top of mind for most workers."

"I get to have a firsthand seat and also help advise key players in those matters," he added. "And it's really one of those scenarios and settings that allow me to have a real feel-good relationship with a client, and they appreciate it greatly."

--Editing by Neil Cohen.