

Morgan Lewis Adds Fenwick Litigator Duo In LA, Seattle

By James Mills

Law360 (February 18, 2026, 12:03 PM EST) -- Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP continues boosting its West Coast litigation team, announcing Wednesday it is bringing in a pair of Fenwick & West LLP trial attorneys as partners in its Los Angeles and Seattle offices.

Brian Buckley and Melissa Lawton have joined Morgan Lewis' global litigation practice. Buckley, who spent 12 of the past 16 years at Fenwick and was previously an associate general counsel at Amazon, joins in Seattle. Meanwhile, Lawton, who spent almost five years at Fenwick, joins in Los Angeles. They handle intellectual property disputes, consumer class actions, securities matters and complex commercial litigation.

In an email, Buckley told Law360 that he and Lawton have long-standing relationships with Morgan Lewis that made this a "compelling and logical move."

"I was introduced to the firm as a client when I was in-house litigation counsel at Amazon, and I was consistently impressed with Morgan Lewis' experience, talent, and deep commitment to client relationships," Buckley said. "Melissa and I both collaborated with Morgan Lewis lawyers on a very large matter for a shared client and saw first-hand how the firm operates nimbly, collaboratively, and skillfully to protect its clients' interests."

Buckley noted that it's a challenging and evolving time for their business clients, particularly with respect to consumer rights, privacy and data security issues.

"No firm is better positioned to serve all our clients' litigation, disputes, and regulatory-compliance needs across a wide range of industries and practices," Buckley said. "What drew me to Morgan Lewis is the combination of true trial depth and a globally integrated platform that is especially strong in key technology markets."

The duo said Morgan Lewis' clear investment in expanding its West Coast litigation capabilities made it an "especially compelling place" to build the next phase of their practices.

"The firm has been focused on strengthening its West Coast litigation presence and deepening its bench of first-chair trial lawyers and class action defense lawyers in major technology hubs," Buckley said. "We believe we add depth in areas where client demand continues to grow and we support the firm's strategy of building a forward-looking, trial-ready disputes team."



Brian Buckley



Melissa Lawton

The two met at Fenwick and quickly found they worked well together.

"We share the same philosophies about case preparation, effective client communication, and litigation strategy, which allows us to operate seamlessly and deliver consistent results for clients," Buckley said. "We also know how to build, foster, and manage collaborative teams, which is a core focus at Morgan Lewis."

Morgan Lewis firm chair Jami McKeon said this team's arrival helps the firm boost services offered on the West Coast.

"Brian and Melissa are exceptional litigators who bring deep experience, strong market credibility, and a collaborative approach that aligns seamlessly with our culture," McKeon said in a statement. "Their arrival advances our continued investment in strengthening our litigation platform on the West Coast and reflects our focus on building a deep bench of trial lawyers who can lead the most complex disputes."

Buckley and Lawton are the latest additions to Morgan Lewis' litigation capabilities on the West Coast. Last year, the firm welcomed litigation partners Kit Roth and Andrea Ostrovsky as well as IP litigators Colin Heideman and Christie Matthaei to its Seattle office. Additionally, IP litigators Ali Razai, Benjamin Anger, Benjamin Everton, Brandon Smith, Jacob Peterson and Jeremy Anapol joined the Orange County office, while trial lawyer and workplace health and safety partner Jason Mills joined in Los Angeles.

Buckley is a first-chair trial attorney who represents companies at every stage of the litigation lifecycle, advising on litigation strategy, risk management and dispute resolution.

He earned his law degree in 1996 from the University of Washington School of Law after earning his bachelor's degree in English and psychology at Willamette University.

He worked as an associate with Foster Pepper PLLC, which is now known as Foster Garvey PC. In 2001, he moved to Gray Cary Ware & Freidenrich LLP, which in 2005 became a part of DLA Piper.

In 2009, he moved to Fenwick, staying for seven years. He left in 2016 to join Amazon as associate general counsel, litigation and regulatory. Then in 2021, he returned to Fenwick.

Meanwhile, Lawton handles complex litigation, including working on technology-driven disputes and arbitration-heavy matters.

She earned her law degree in 1999 from Fordham University School of Law after earning her bachelor's degree in history at Columbia University.

She worked two years as an associate with Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP, then moved to O'Melveny & Myers LLP for two years. In 2004, she became a staff attorney with Public Counsel, a nonprofit public interest law firm in Los Angeles.

In 2009, she joined Marina del Rey, California-based boutique Thomas Alexander & Forrester LLP, staying for nine years. Then in 2017, she went in-house, becoming general counsel at Maverick, a social network and creative community for girls and young women.

She returned to private practice in 2019, joining White & Case LLP. Then in May 2021, she moved to Fenwick.

Additionally, litigator Armen Nercessian, who spent the past 13 years at Fenwick, will move to Morgan Lewis on March 2 to join Buckley and Lawton's team. Nercessian, who earned his law degree in 2012 from New York University School of Law, will be of counsel based in Morgan Lewis' San Francisco office.

Buckley explained that litigation always appealed to him because it "sits at the intersection of strategy, advocacy, and real business impact."

"Whether trying a case or advising on risk from an in-house perspective, I've seen how much these moments matter to a company's trajectory and reputation," Buckley said. "The constantly evolving nature of disputes, especially in areas like technology, privacy, and class actions, is what keeps the work intellectually rigorous and energizing for both of us. We also know that our jobs are not just to help clients to avoid risk, but to take smart risk to advance their business goals — we are now better positioned than ever to help our clients do just that."

Morgan Lewis was founded in 1873 in Philadelphia and today has more than 2,200 attorneys across 33 offices worldwide, including 18 in the U.S.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.