

## Bracewell Adds Skadden Energy Regulatory Pro To DC Office

By **Keith Goldberg**

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Bracewell LLP on Wednesday welcomed a veteran Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP energy regulatory partner to its Washington, D.C., office, making it eight hires in the past eight months for the firm's outpost in the nation's capital.

Paul Wight, who spent the previous 18 years at Skadden, joins Bracewell's energy regulatory group and brings significant experience representing electric utilities and independent power producers in regulatory, transactional, enforcement and litigation matters. That means plenty of time spent before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, U.S. appeals courts and the regional grid operators that run the wholesale electricity markets subject to FERC jurisdiction.



Paul Wight

While Wight said he cherished his time at Skadden, he jumped at the chance to join an energy- and policy-heavy firm like Bracewell.

"I liked the fact that they had a deep energy practice, and they had specialists in all of the subareas of energy," Wight said.

Wight has specialized in issues relating to the design and operation of regional wholesale markets, as well as defending market participants in enforcement cases. He joins Bracewell at a time when those markets are being roiled by questions of fuel diversity and grid reliability amid the dominance of natural gas and ascendance of renewable energy at the expense of coal, as well as the growing influence of state energy and environmental policies.

"These are problems that the industry is facing, that FERC is now facing," Wight said. "It's the exact kind of issue I've always worked on."

FERC is currently mulling U.S. Energy Secretary Rick Perry's controversial proposal to pay coal and nuclear plants for providing baseload power and grid reliability services. But there's widespread opposition to Perry's plan, including from the regional grid operators that run the wholesale electricity markets.

"It could be a fundamental change to the way pricing has worked in the markets," Wight said. "We'll have to see what FERC does with it."

Understanding how electricity price formation is going to work in wholesale markets and what the ground rules will be are crucial to electricity companies as they make their investment and infrastructure decisions, Wight said.

“To have some resolution of these issues, and less of a moving regulatory target, is always important to clients,” Wight said.

The changes to the nation's fuel mix and power markets, which will spark plenty of regulatory challenges and litigation, make Wight an ideal addition, according to Cathy McCarthy, who chairs Bracewell's energy regulatory department.

“Clients operating, financing and investing in the energy industry will benefit from Paul's wealth of experience handling complex litigation, enforcement investigations and transactions,” McCarthy said in a statement Wednesday.

Wight's arrival comes one day after former Crowell & Moring LLP Chair Angela Styles joined Bracewell's D.C. office as a partner in the firm's nascent government contracts practice.

Bracewell has added six others to its D.C. office since March: government contracts partner Robert J. Wagman, energy projects partner Hans Dyke, and civil litigation practice head David A. Super, along with principals Liam P. Donovan and Anna Burhop and senior counsel Christine G. Wyman to its policy resolution group, which handles government relations and lobbying.

“It's exciting to join a shop that has a vision and is growing,” Wight said.

--Additional reporting by Sam Reisman. Editing by Jack Karp.