

Gov't Contracts Veteran Rob Burton Joins Crowell & Moring

By Patrick Boyle

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Rob Burton, a veteran of procurement law and formerly one of the federal government's top procurement officials, has joined Crowell & Moring LLP as a partner in its government contracts group in Washington, D.C., the firm announced Monday.

Burton, who served as both acting administrator and deputy administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, will play "a significant role" in expanding Crowell & Moring's government affairs capacity and working with clients on acquisition reform legislation and regulatory change, the firm said.

"I think I have a lot to contribute to the private sector now that I have that firsthand government experience," Burton told Law360. "I think you bring a different dimension, from both a policy and a legal standpoint."

Crowell & Moring Chair Angela B. Styles, who worked with Burton at the OFPP, called him "one of the most highly regarded attorneys in the government contracts community."

Burton said he made the move from Venable LLP, where he was a partner in the firm's government contracts group, because Crowell & Moring boasts one of the nation's largest government contracting practices and has a wide breadth of clients. At the same time, he sees room to build the firm's government affairs practice, specifically in the area of acquisitions.

"What I wanted to do was try to play a role in developing the government affairs practice whereby we provide services to government contractors that want to effect procurement policy changes through legislation or regulation," Burton said.

Burton will focus on a wide range of government contracts issues, such as contract cost disputes, suspension and debarment proceedings, internal investigations, and corporate compliance and ethics programs, the firm said. His assignments will include helping government contractors navigate the procurement process, including assisting contractors with marketing strategies for selling to the government.

One of the most important developments affecting federal contractors, Burton said, is the Program



Rob Burton

Management Improvement and Accountability Act of 2015, which makes a series of process changes to address weaknesses in the management of federal programs. The bill has passed the Senate and awaits a House vote.

“Some people say they’re baby steps,” he said of the bill’s provisions. “But they’re fundamental steps that programs need to take in order to mature.”

Burton served at OFPP for seven years starting in 2001, including as deputy administrator, making him responsible for the government’s acquisition policy and procurement guidance to executive branch agencies. His office was charged with developing policy affecting more than \$400 billion in annual federal spending, Crowell & Moring said. He served as acting administrator for two years.

Among the accomplishments he’s most proud of at the OFPP was improving training requirements for program managers through the Federal Acquisition Certification for Program and Project Managers, and initiatives to improve communications between industry and the federal government.

“So many disputes can be avoided by improved communications,” he said. “It’s somewhat fundamental, but the government sometimes has trouble being transparent and has difficulty engaging with industry.”

Before joining OFPP, Burton spent over 20 years as an acquisition attorney with the Department of Defense, including as senior acquisition counsel to the Defense Contract Management Agency, Crowell & Moring said.

Burton graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law after receiving his bachelor’s from the College of William and Mary. He was also a senior executive fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the law firm said.

Burton joins Crowell & Moring about two months after the contract group added partner David Robbins, the former head of Shulman Rogers Gandal Pordy & Ecker PA’s government contracts practice, who also served as a senior official in the Air Force’s general counsel office.

“Crowell & Moring’s government contracts group is first-rate, and I look forward to helping the firm’s clients navigate through the complex issues related to federal procurement,” Burton said in a statement.

Crowell & Moring LLP is an international firm with about 500 lawyers representing clients in litigation and arbitration, regulatory and transactional matters. It reports offices in Washington, D.C., New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Orange County in California, Anchorage, London and Brussels.

--Editing by Patricia K. Cole.

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