

Crowell & Moring Opens In Denver, Hires 4 Attorneys

By **Matt Perez**

Law360 (October 14, 2021, 3:05 PM EDT) -- Crowell & Moring LLP is launching an office in Denver with an initial group of seven attorneys, the firm announced Thursday, continuing a year of expansion that includes new locations in the Midwest.

Coinciding with the new launch is the hiring of four attorneys, including partner Meshach Rhoades, who will serve as the managing partner, and Katy Raffensperger, who moves over from Hogan Lovells. Joining them are two new corporate and health care associates, also from Hogan Lovells — Laura Martinez and Melissa Moravec — as well as three Crowell & Moring attorneys already based in Denver.



Meshach Rhoades

The new team at the office, which does not have a physical location yet, handles corporate transactions and commercial and regulatory litigation. The firm will look to continue expanding its workforce at the new office.

"It's very exciting for us," Philip T. Inglima, the chair of Crowell & Moring, told Law360 on Thursday. "We're very happy with the venue, but the thing that we're most excited about is the talent. Meshach and Katy are terrific. Meshach in particular is the kind of person who we just felt great confidence in initially being able to count on her leadership, her deep knowledge of the market, her strong client relationships, and the fact that both Meshach and Katy align completely with core values of our firm."



Katy Raffensperger

Inglima noted that while the coronavirus pandemic showed that firms like Crowell & Moring can successfully serve clients nationwide without a physical location, "The reality is many of our clients do look to whether we are investing in the communities, investing in the places where they've made their homes or established important outposts for their operations.

"We've seen a lot of client activity in Colorado in the last several years," he added. "We have through that gotten interested in the possibility, and this year we really decided to bear down on assessment of the market and were very impressed with the quality of the people who were there — that goes for both the clients and the lawyers."

Rhoades is a litigator joining the firm from Armstrong Teasdale LLP, with experience handling disputes related to contracts, intellectual property, business torts, real estate, employment and class actions. In

particular, she works on regulatory issues with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the Federal Trade Commission and the departments of Agriculture and Justice. She represents clients across several industries, including food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, retailing, manufacturing, real estate and finance.

While at Armstrong Teasdale, Rhoades served as chief diversity officer, which Inglima says is crucial for her new role as managing partner.

"We want to make sure that our ongoing recruitment efforts are always putting [diversity, equity and inclusion] extremely high on our list of prime criteria," he said. "We're sending a message to our community, to our client community and I hope to others in the bar community that there are a lot of really strong leaders out there, strong individuals who have been underrepresented in legal leadership ranks in the past, whether it's at the partnership level, office leadership, firm leadership, and we are quite committed to this kind of growth and quite happy and excited to achieve it in this way."

Rhoades also co-founded the Latinas First Foundation, which promotes cultural and historical contributions of Latinas in Colorado, along with providing scholarships and other opportunities. She earned her bachelor's degree from Regis University and her law degree from the University of Colorado.

"This is an exciting opportunity to launch Crowell & Moring's Denver office and build a strong team of lawyers to advise the growing business community here," Rhoades said in a statement. "As a former college athlete, I value teamwork above all else. I am thrilled to be joining Crowell, a firm that embraces that mindset both internally and in the collaborative interactions with its clients."

Raffensperger, who is also joining as a partner, is a transactional attorney primarily working in the health care industry. In her practice, she handles acquisitions, dispositions, mergers, buyouts, reorganizations and joint ventures, among other transactions. She has also worked with clients in hospitality, sports and entertainment, technology and manufacturing.

Raffensperger received her bachelor's degree from the University of Colorado and her law degree from the University of Denver.

"With Crowell & Moring's expanding platform, we are well positioned to meet the sophisticated business objectives of clients, including at the intersection of their transactional and regulatory needs," she said in the announcement. "In addition to driving success for our existing clients, we look forward to building a strong corporate team in Denver that can provide M&A and other transactional legal services to companies locally and nationally."

Rounding out the group are senior counsel Betsy Derwinski and counsel Suzanne Walts from Crowell & Moring's technology and intellectual property department, and associate Sarah Rippey from its privacy and cybersecurity group.

The firm has made big expansions already this year. In July, the firm merged with Brinks Gilson & Lione, which brought on about 60 attorneys and IP professionals and gave Crowell & Moring its first physical presence in the Midwest with offices in Chicago and Indianapolis. Additionally, in April, 24 attorneys from Wall Street boutique Kibbe & Orbe joined its locations in London, New York and Washington, D.C.

"We do really feel good now about the three locations we have across the middle belt of the country,

providing us an opportunity to have a different touch point and a different level of connection with many of our existing clients and other clients we believe we can serve," Inglima said.

--Editing by Gemma Horowitz.

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