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Bracewell, Hunton Andrews Kurth Add to Texas Energy Teams

A number of Big Law firms have recently added lawyers in Texas who work in the energy sector, including lawyers handing in energy transition work.

BY BRENDA SAPINO JEFFREYS

What You Need to Know

- Big Law firms in Texas continue to add lawyers working in the energy sector.
- Former in-house lawyer John Zabaneh joined Bracewell as an partner in Houston in the oil and gas practice.
- At Hunton Andrews Kurth, DLA Piper corporate transactions partner J.A. Glaccum joined as a partner in Houston.

Bracewell has hired energy and infrastructure lawyer John Zabaneh, who spent the last decade working in-house, while Hunton Andrews Kurth adds DLA Piper corporate partner J.A. Glaccum as energy sector hiring continues at a steady clip in Texas.

Zabaneh, who worked in-house at a number of energy companies including Chesapeake Energy, Rosetta Resources, Noble Energy and Gavilan Resources, joined Bracewell on Sept. 9 as a partner in Houston in the oil and gas practice.

Glaccum, who started at Hunton Andrews on Sept. 6 as a partner in Houston and does M&A, divestitures and private equity transactions, works in a variety of industries, but many are in renewables, power and utilities.

Other Big Law firms that have recently added energy sector lawyers in Texas include Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, which hired two from Eversheds Sutherland including Ben Clark,



Courtesy photos

John P. Zabaneh, left, partner with Bracewell, and J. A. Glaccum, right, partner with Hunton Andrews Kurth.

who had been the Houston-based co-leader of the U.S. Energy Projects team; and White & Case, which expanded its energy team with Jamie Franklin, a partner with liquefied natural gas expertise who transferred from the Singapore office.

Also, midsize firm Porter Hedges recently added energy transactions lawyers as partners

in Houston — Michael Byrd, who had been practicing at his own firm, and Shane Sullivan, who came from Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld.

Zabaneh, the new Bracewell partner, had been working in-house, almost exclusively in the energy sector, since 2012 when he left Baker Botts, where he was an associate, to work at Chesapeake Energy.

“I had an interest in going in-house to really learn more about the energy industry, nuts and bolts, [and] had the opportunity to travel out into the field,” he said.

He wasn’t necessarily looking to return to private practice, but the opportunity with Bracewell was appealing, Zabaneh said, because he had worked with lawyers from the firm on matters over the years and “found them to be really skilled practitioners.”

Because of his in-house experience, Zabaneh said he brings

an understanding of what clients need and want when engaging outside counsel on deal work.

“Managing costs is always a high priority. Efficiency matters, not just in terms of managing costs, but in terms of managing time,” he said.

James McAnelly III, a co-chair of Bracewell’s oil and gas practice, wrote in a press release that Zabaneh “knows the upstream and midstream transactional space from all angles,” and he can advise clients on conventional energy projects along with renewables, carbon capture and other energy transition matters.

Glaccum said he was attracted to Hunton Andrews’s network of offices and its Texas roots. (Houston-based Andrews Kurth Kenyon merged in 2018 with Hunton & Williams, forming Hunton Andrews Kurth.)

Energy transition work in renewables, power and utilities

is a large focus of his transactional work, he said. Hunter Andrews has a deep bench in the power industry and in renewables in transactional and regulatory work, he said, which benefits his clients and practice.

According to information on his firm biography, Glaccum has done work for clients including SemaConnect, Everfi, Kadmon Holdings, Empresa de Energia del Cono Sur, ICG Holdings Corp., Learning Technologies Group and First Solar.

Courtney Cochran Butler, a co-lead of Hunton Andrews’ capital markets practice, wrote in a press release that Glaccum is a highly regarded M&A lawyer who has advised an “impressive and diverse list of clients” over the past two decades.

A spokesperson for DLA Piper did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Glaccum’s departure.