

Rising Star: Latham & Watkins' Natasha Gianvecchio

By Jess Davis

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Latham & Watkins LLP's Natasha Gianvecchio, who represents some of the country's biggest energy companies in billions of dollars' worth of transactions and in precedent-setting Federal Energy Regulatory Commission proceedings, is one of seven attorneys in the energy world honored on Law360's Rising Stars list.



Natasha Gianvecchio

Gianvecchio, 38, represents clients primarily in the electric and natural gas industries, including independent power producers, power marketers, electric utilities, natural gas companies and financial institutions. She negotiates energy trading agreements, energy management agreements and power purchase agreements, and regularly represents clients before FERC, the U.S. Department of Energy and state public utility commissions.

"Being in an industry practice, you get to use different kinds of legal skill sets — negotiating, advocating, drafting, presenting and arguing," she said. "It's a lot of fun because I think you're not as stuck in that 'Am I corporate lawyer? A litigator?' It's a lot more flexible than that."

In 2014, Gianvecchio advised private equity firm Energy Capital Partners in its \$1.94 billion purchase of Waste Management Inc.'s renewable energy generation subsidiary, guiding the firm through regulatory approvals, due diligence review and transition planning and implementation. She also represented ECP in the \$3.5 billion sale of 10 power plants to Dynegy Inc., in a deal that closed this week. She was responsible for diligence, deal support, regulatory approvals and energy hedging.

And she represents power plant owner Cogen Technologies Linden Venture LP and a New Jersey-based electric generator affiliated with General Electric Co. in potentially precedent-setting proceedings tied to open access transmission tariff requirements in FERC. Open access rules generally require transmission owners to offer unaffiliated electric generators the ability to interconnect with the transmission owner's system. Linden Cogen is contesting its responsibility under the open access rules for bearing the cost of facility modifications to accommodate a Consolidated Edison Inc. system upgrade unrelated to Linden Cogen.

Gianvecchio is one of the Latham partners who's been involved since the early stages of the matter and played a key role in developing the strategy, briefing the matter before FERC and pursuing settlement.

She said working in a heavily regulated industry forces creative thinking to find solutions to clients' problems. That means understanding the reasons behind why governmental policies were enacted and finding ways for clients to run their businesses in the way they want to.

“I was interested in the intersection between business and policy in a heavily regulated industry,” Gianvecchio said of why she picked her practice area. “You have such a great opportunity to help clients meet their business goals in a way that works with state and federal regulation and the markets. I think it’s an interesting practice, an interesting way to spend my days.”

She’s also advising GE subsidiary Linden VFT LLC in multiple FERC proceedings in a fight against the PJM’s allocation of more than \$100 million in regional transmission upgrade costs. The issues relate to new tariff provisions not previously implemented.

Gianvecchio, who made partner at 33, said she was often the youngest person in the room, the only woman in the room or both, but was able to make her mark by remembering the job is about client service at the end of the day. She said a focus on understanding someone’s business and having them understand you care what’s going on with their problems goes a long way toward making clients comfortable.

“The industry is a big industry, but in some ways is very insular,” Gianvecchio said. “The more you can start seeing patterns, how transactions are happening, how folks are viewing markets, the better positioned you are to provide clients with the kind of service they’re looking for. You want to come in saying, I understand your business, how it works and what you’re facing on a day-to-day basis.”

--Editing by Edrienne Su.