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Latham & Watkins Hires Two Kirkland Private Equity Partners (1)

In a move involving two of the largest private equity practices in Big Law, Latham & Watkins has added partners Neal Reenan and Ian Bushner from Kirkland & Ellis.

The pair helped launch Kirkland's Boston office in 2017, and they will be based out of Boston and Chicago at Latham.

"We are deeply committed to growing in line with our clients' needs, and Neal and Ian's arrival further underscores that priority," Marc Jaffe, global chair of Latham's corporate department, said in a statement.

Latham and Kirkland routinely rank at or near the top of league tables as legal advisers to private equity firms. The highly competitive and lucrative practice has been a financial engine for both firms.

In 2018, Kirkland was the largest law firm in the U.S. by revenue and Latham ranked second, according to the latest available AmLaw data. Kirkland's revenue was \$3.76 billion and Latham's was \$3.39 billion.

Kirkland and Latham last year also ranked Nos. 1 and 2, respectively, for the number of M&A and private equity deals they handled in Bloomberg's rankings. That was driven by their leading positions representing principals in U.S. deals, one of the most remunerative markets for Big Law.

The firms have recruited from each other in the past. Jennifer Perkins, former co-chair of Latham's private equity group, joined Kirkland in 2018. Latham hired a four-partner group of litigators from Kirkland in 2017, including Eric Leon, who is now co-chair of Latham's litigation and trial group in New York.

The private equity group departures are the third and fourth for Kirkland this month. Attorneys Abtin Jalali and Chris Harding left for the San Francisco office of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher, [that firm said](#) on March 2.

While at Kirkland, Reenan represented clients including Bain Capital, Madison Dearborn Partners, TPG Capital, and GTCR. He also has represented corporate clients such as CME Group, Cinemark Holdings, and Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.

Reenan and Bushner have led transactions together, including representing Bain Capital in a \$760 million investment in Surgery Partners Inc. in 2017. That deal was also led by Sarkis Jebejian, a prominent Kirkland partner who joined the firm in a [notable move](#) from Cravath Swaine & Moore in 2012.

Reenan was promoted to non-share partner at Kirkland in 2008 and appears to have earned a financial stake in one of the most profitable firms in the country as a share partner, according to his bio at Kirkland. Kirkland share partners earned, on average, \$5 million in 2018, according to AmLaw. Bushner was promoted in 2016 to non-share partner.

Reenan said in a statement that Latham's practices that support private equity, including capital markets,

emerging companies, and debt finance, influenced his decision to join the firm.

"It's a global platform that works really well for our client base," he said in an interview. "There are a lot of great lawyers here with regulatory expertise in key industries like healthcare and financial services that we think our clients will benefit a lot from."

Boston Connection Reenan immigrated to the U.S. from Ireland when he was 14. He went to Harvard for his undergraduate degree and lived in Boston for seven years before moving to Michigan and then Chicago.

He worked as an accountant at PricewaterhouseCoopers and as a consultant at Plante & Moran before earning a law degree from University of Michigan Law School in 2003.

"I realized the lawyers got to have all the fun negotiating the deals, so I wanted to be part of that," he said in an interview.

Boston has been a popular destination for Big Law firms in the past few years. Several firms have opened offices there since 2017 including Kirkland, Hogan Lovells, Womble Bond Dickinson, and Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan.

Latham launched its Boston office in 2011. That office now has 79 lawyers, according to a firm spokesperson.

Kirkland's Boston office has more than 65 lawyers listed on its website, showing significant growth in the roughly three years since Reenan and Bushner relocated from Chicago to lead the firm's new offices alongside Kirkland partner Armand Della Monica. Della Monica remains at Kirkland.

"We enjoyed working with Neal and Ian and we wish them well at their next law firm," a representative for Kirkland & Ellis said.

Reenan attributed the increased competition for talent in Big Law to more information being shared about firms and their lawyers.

"It has become more mobile, and I think clients benefit from the fluidity and the competition within the space," he said.

Bushner said his move to Latham was driven in part by clients wanting to use one firm with regulatory and M&A lawyers across multiple jurisdictions and industry sectors.

"Latham does that as well as anyone," he said in an interview. "So I am most excited about bringing those capabilities to our clients."

By [ROY STROM](#)

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