

Press Coverage | January 8, 2024

Meet the DC Native Driving Troutman Pepper's Beltway Office

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Chris Jones, office managing partner of Troutman Pepper's Washington, D.C. office, was interviewed in the January 8, 2024 *Law360 Pulse* article, "[Meet the DC Native Driving Troutman Pepper's Beltway Office](#)."

"Washington is near and dear to my heart," Jones told *Law360 Pulse* in a recent interview. "And to be able to play a leadership role in the firm's Washington operations is a real privilege."

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The Washington office itself is probably about 30 years old, so to see it grow from when I joined the firm during the earlier days to almost 130 lawyers and public affairs professionals is pretty cool.

It's also nice to be in this position at a time where our clients have eyes and ears at the seat of government. It's really important to the firm's overall strategic objectives.

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Growth of the office for growth's sake is not what we're into, but there are a couple of strategic places that we'd like to play off existing client needs and that sort of thing — and making sure that we're delivering the capabilities here in D.C. that all our clients need.

As a billion-dollar law firm, our clients are big and varied and spread all over the place. Their needs for D.C. representation can vary wildly. We do have a couple of strategic areas that we really stand out in, including energy, insurance, financial services, private equity, that sort of thing.

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The firm spends a lot of time thinking about what matters for our energy clients. There are some big administrative law issues that are going to be coming down. The U.S. Supreme Court is going to have to take up Chevron deference, which is every administrative lawyer's favorite phrase. But that could be a real game changer for all of our clients — to see how much deference a court will give those federal agency decisions. The whole nature of administrative law could change as a result of that decision, and not just the energy space, but all of our regulatory

representations across the city.

There are a lot of energy transition issues going on right now due to programs that came out of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act or the Inflation Reduction Act. A lot of those programs we expect to stick and survive even a change in the administration, if there is one.

The grid and the energy system is changing at a pretty rapid pace, and as a firm we're involved in pretty much every aspect of it. I just lead the regulatory practice in D.C., but we've got a whole host of finance and commercial lawyers doing renewables deals all across the country. We've got folks working on hydropower projects, we've got folks doing state regulatory work in the southeast and elsewhere. So we're kind of everywhere on energy issues these days.

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We are fortunate to have a really comprehensive DEI program that we will be actively supporting here in D.C. Our DEI leadership structure is housed in a couple of other offices across the country, so we are going to be their eyes and ears and boots on the ground to make sure we are achieving all of those strategic DEI goals that the firm has laid out, and that our clients are demanding in the marketplace.

The other challenge is just building a welcoming environment for everybody, and that includes trying to create an office environment in an age where folks have gotten used to not necessarily being in the office, so that's certainly a challenge that I've got ahead of me. We're going to get the balance right and continue to create a nice atmosphere for folks to work in, even though being in the office isn't what it was before the pandemic.

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We've definitely made a point of emphasis to have people be more present back in the office and contributing to the total environment in the office. Having said that, we have very busy and successful practices that have done very well with remote work.

For younger lawyers, my personal view is they don't learn as quickly from their couch and in their pajamas as they would in the office. So we need to balance that need to create a mentoring environment for folks that are early on in their careers with the flexibility that a lot of folks really want. I think we're doing a good job of it now.

We are going to do more just to create those office environments and events and that sort of thing, to make sure folks are spending time with each other, not just as practitioners but as friends and colleagues. That's what makes a law firm — it's all about the people you're working with and making sure you're creating the lasting relationships that keep everybody together and all growing in the same direction.

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There's not a day that goes by that several of us in the D.C. office don't talk about the opportunities that we were given, the way that we were mentored. And it does change a little bit. The days of partners walking by your office and grabbing you for lunch, that doesn't happen nearly as often as it used to. We've had to be really purposeful

thinking about those mentoring opportunities. We really try to be mindful of what folks gave us, especially in this day and age where even if you're not physically present with the folks that you're working with every day, you try to stay connected with them and bring them along the same way we were brought along.