

Press Coverage | July 17, 2026

State AGs Flex Muscle In Paramount Suit Amid DOJ Inaction

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[Chris Carlson](#), a partner in Troutman Pepper Locke's [State Attorneys General](#) Practice Group, was quoted in the July 17, 2026, *Law360 Pulse* article, "[State AGs Flex Muscle in Paramount Suit Amid DOJ Inaction](#)."

"It definitely is a trend, and it's a trend that has substantially exacerbated under Trump 2.0, with the states stepping into the perceived gap," said Troutman Pepper Locke LLP partner Christopher Carlson, who served as an assistant attorney general in the Office of the West Virginia Attorney General.

The gap Carlson is referring to is the one left by the fact that, under Trump, the federal government is taking on fewer and fewer enforcement actions, according to attorneys.

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"States are more willing to break and take independent action, and are more willing to take the case to trial," said Carlson. "The federal government certainly has stepped back in certain arenas, but I think it's more indicative of the states stepping forward. The states have continued to realize their power."

...

"And what that means is they're going to take this to the mat. They didn't bring them in for a quick settlement. They think this is going to have to go to trial," Carlson said.

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Victories like those have provided "a proof of concept," showing that state attorneys general can break from the DOJ and win more relief, and they've grown more aggressive as a result, Carlson said.

During his time in the West Virginia attorney general's office in 2012, state enforcers usually deferred to the federal government and accepted whatever remedy it had negotiated in joint federal and multistate matters, Carlson said.

"Now, I'm seeing every time there is a joint state and federal matter, the states are looking very hard at the settlement to say, 'Is this enough?' and having a relatively suspicious view of are the remedies adequate for our states," Carlson said. "They are just not giving the benefit of the doubt to the settlement being acceptable on behalf of their state citizens."

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Oregon's attorney general's office asked the state's Legislature for, and got, several new consumer protection lawyers, according to Carlson.

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In some cases, state enforcer offices have actually hired the attorneys who have left the federal government since Trump returned to the White House, lending more prestige to the offices, according to Carlson and

Tierney.

“The Colorado AG’s office has hired DOJ antitrust lawyers. The New York AG’s office and the California AG’s office and Maryland AG’s office have hired former CFPB attorneys. And I think New Mexico as well,” Carlson said. “When you have a number of people that are very talented going to state offices, they’re going to keep that mantle going.”

Carlson, who represents clients facing investigations and enforcement actions from state attorney general offices, said it’s almost akin to how prestigious working at the DOJ used to be.

“The quality of attorney that I’m on the other side of the V on has just gotten better,” Carlson said. “It’s kind of like the DOJ.”

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In some instances, being able to hire outside counsel is an advantage the states have over the federal government when bringing enforcement actions, according to Carlson.

Under a 2007 George W. Bush executive order, federal agencies are barred from hiring outside law firms on a contingency fee basis. States don’t have that limitation, Carlson explained.

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“I think the states are here to stay,” said Carlson. “I think they’ve seen the wins that they can have and the impact that they can have, and you’re going to continue to see [state attorney general offices] be a destination for people that want to make a difference.”

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