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States Stepping Up Merger Work in First Half of 2026

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[Ashley L. Taylor Jr.](#), co-leader of Troutman Pepper Locke's [State Attorneys General](#) Practice Group, was quoted in the July 17, 2026, *Law360* article, "[States Stepping Up Merger Work in First Half of 2026](#)."

Ashley Taylor Jr., co-leader of Troutman Pepper Locke LLP's state attorney general practice and a former deputy attorney general for Virginia, told *Law360* that more than reflecting political disagreement between the states and the current administration, the uptick in state activity shows they have been honing their enforcement capabilities over time.

If the states had not developed an ability to bring merger and other antitrust cases on their own, Taylor said they would be unable to act even if they disagreed with the administration's policies or politics.

"What we're seeing in merger enforcement reflects a structural shift," Taylor said. "State attorneys general have developed significant antitrust expertise and are now willing and able to act independently of federal regulators. It's a bureaucracy developing its muscles, developing expertise, developing a comfort level for acting on their own."

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Taylor noted the "odd alliance" of state enforcers and a competitor in the market but said it makes sense if you consider that companies who feel they will be impacted by a merger often meet with enforcers to advocate their position. "On some level, if you're a competitor, you have an interest in the regulator truly understanding an industry," he said. "You would much rather have an educated regulator than a regulator who doesn't understand the marketplaces."

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