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Duane Morris names new global corporate practice group chair

BY ROY STROM

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Duane Morris LLP has named Brian P. Kerwin chair of the firm's global corporate practice group — the first time a Chicago lawyer has led any of the Philadelphia-founded firm's practices.

Kerwin was among the partners who in 1999 opened Duane Morris' office here, which now houses 48 attorneys. He primarily represents private equity funds, banks and other institutional lenders in middle-market business and financing transactions, closing an average of 20 to 25 deals a year, he said.

"We have a really good, strong group of clients and a strong group of lawyers, and I'm looking to build both," Kerwin said.

The corporate practice group includes 155 lawyers, making it the second-largest practice by attorney headcount at the 700-lawyer firm. Ten corporate attorneys reside in Chicago.

Kerwin declined to list specific clients but said he represents eight of the 12 largest financial institutions in Illinois as well as several national private equity funds. Most of his work involves midmarket transactions roughly ranging up to \$500 million.

In the leadership role, Kerwin

will be meeting with legal recruiters in various cities where Duane Morris has offices, including in Chicago. He said "in an ideal world," the firm's corporate attorney presence here would double to 20 lawyers within the next four years.

He has experience hiring laterals — the firm allowed him to hire five lawyers to assist with his practice as it grew over the past eight years. He is currently looking to make a sixth hire.

He said his plan is "to hire really strong, quality transactional lawyers ... to further grow and expand upon our existing depth in terms of what we have to offer clients."

He also wants to expand the firm's client base by hiring lawyers with existing books of business.

"I have a mandate for growth, but they have to be very high-quality skilled lawyers, and it has to make good economic sense," he said.

His previous leadership experience at the firm includes membership on its national governing partners board and the management committee of the Chicago office. He was the vice chair of the corporate group prior to his appointment as chair.

Last year, Kerwin led the sale of a Michigan benefits payments



Brian P. Kerwin

processing services company to private equity group The Riverside Co. He represented Vapor Power International, a boiler, generator and thermal fluid heater manufacturer, in its sale to private equity firm Stone Pointe Partners. And he represented the buyers in a purchase of 15 nursing homes and assisted living facilities across the Midwest.

In a release, John J. Soroko, chairman and CEO of Duane Morris, said Kerwin "is viewed by his partners as an extraordinarily gifted lawyer and leader and will utilize his vision, skills, personality and energy to guide our active and broad-based corporate practice group as its chair."

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Duane Morris LLP