

Former Commerce Official Jumps To Mayer Brown

By **Zach Winnick**

Law360, Los Angeles (February 23, 2012, 3:35 PM ET) -- Former Deputy Secretary of Commerce John J. Sullivan has left Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP to join up with Mayer Brown LLP as a partner in its Washington office, the firm announced Wednesday.

The move marked the return of a deeply experienced international trade expert who left Mayer Brown in 2004 to serve in the U.S. Department of Defense and later the Department of Commerce before returning to private practice in 2009.

Sullivan said Wednesday that Mayer Brown's international reach would provide solid ground for a broad global commerce practice that includes litigation and arbitration, as well as counseling on import and export regulation, U.S. economic sanctions issues, and trade and investment issues in markets worldwide.

"Mayer Brown's geographic scope, practice area diversity and roster of leading multinational clients make it the perfect place for me to apply my extensive experience in litigation and in advising clients on U.S. economic sanctions, export controls and other national security issues," Sullivan said. "I look forward to working with my new colleagues around the world to help clients address a wide range of legal and business challenges."

Sullivan earned a bachelor's from Brown University in 1991 and a law degree at Columbia University School of Law in 1985, where he was a Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar, then clerked for Circuit Judge John Minor Wisdom.

The global commerce expert later worked as an associate for Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison LLP in New York before clerking for U.S. Supreme Court Justice David Souter between 1990 and 1991, leaving that post to serve as counselor to Assistant Attorney General J. Michael Luttig in the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Legal Counsel.

Sullivan left the government to join up with Mayer Brown in 1993, rising to partner before returning to government in 2004 as deputy general counsel for the Defense Department. He joined Commerce as general counsel the next year.

Appointed as deputy secretary of Commerce in 2007, Sullivan played a key role in developing and administering U.S. trade law and policy, leading trade missions to open foreign markets for U.S. exports, participating as a senior member of the U.S. Delegation to the Palestine Investment Conference in May 2008, and moderating discussions between U.S. business leaders and senior Iraqi government officials as co-chair of a U.S. delegation in November 2008.

Sullivan also co-chaired the transparency component of the Strategic Economic Dialogue with China led by then-Secretary of the Treasury Henry M. Paulson.

In an interview with Law360 in 2009, Sullivan said his government service gave him an appreciation for the importance of U.S. trade policy in bringing stability to war-torn regions of the world.

“During my government service, I was impressed by the important role that U.S. trade and economic policies play in establishing and promoting peace in parts of the world devastated by armed conflict,” he said. “My experience has led me to believe that an open international economic system governed by agreed-upon rules — and unburdened by protectionist trade barriers — is necessary for global growth and prosperity and, therefore, an essential aspect of U.S. national security.”

Since returning to private practice as a partner at Gibson Dunn in 2009, Sullivan has continued to serve the federal government in an advisory capacity, accepting a September 2010 appointment to be chair of the U.S.-Iraq Business Dialogue, an advisory group focused on fostering economic development and investments in Iraq.

On Wednesday, Michael E. Lackey Jr., head of Mayer Brown's Washington office, hailed Sullivan's return to the firm as a partner in its litigation and dispute resolution practice.

“John has an outstanding track record in government service and in private practice,” Lackey said. “His deep knowledge and experience in the international trade arena and his proven skills as a seasoned litigator will be valuable assets to our clients across the globe.”

Founded in 1881, Mayer Brown is a global law firm serving clients from offices in 20 cities across the Asia, Europe and the U.S.

--Editing by Andrew Park.

All Content © 2003-2011, Portfolio Media, Inc.