

Mayer Brown Partner Joins IRS Advisory Council

By Vidya Kauri

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An accomplished attorney from Mayer Brown LLP who is primarily focused on tax issues facing the energy industry has been chosen to serve a three-year appointment on an advisory council to the Internal Revenue Service, the agency announced on Friday.

Shawn R. O'Brien, a partner in Mayer Brown's Texas office with more than 18 years' experience practicing tax law, will join a team representing taxpayers, tax professionals and academia to provide feedback and suggestions to the IRS on significant tax administration issues, the agency said.



Shawn R. O'Brien

O'Brien told Law360 on Friday that he will be part of a specific subgroup on the Internal Revenue Service Advisory Council that will discuss tax matters related to the IRS' Large Business and International Division, which underwent a major restructuring in the fall of 2015, and that the group is scheduled to have its first meeting on Jan. 27.

"Considering ... the state of the IRS and the challenges that they're facing, I just thought I wanted to be of service to them in helping them administer taxes more efficiently," O'Brien said. "I felt like I could offer good suggestions and to help them with certain areas of their administration of the tax system."

O'Brien was Mayer Brown's first tax attorney in Houston when the firm expanded its tax practice to that region in 2012. He had previously been at a local Texas firm for about two years after spending a dozen years with what is now Norton Rose Fulbright LLP, where he kicked off his career.

Within the energy industry, O'Brien's practice focuses on tax controversies, joint ventures, restructuring, acquisition and disposition of energy assets. He represents clients during tax examinations, administrative appeals and in trial and appellate litigation before the U.S. Tax Court, district courts and the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

He also advises foreign and domestic corporations in their transactions, divestitures, buyouts and restructurings.

O'Brien, who obtained his LLM in taxation from New York University in 1998, is one of five new members appointed to the IRS' advisory council.

The new members all have varying backgrounds but decades of experience in the tax field.

Brenda M. Bianculli runs her own firm in Massachusetts handling complex tax and business issues for clients in the real estate and service industries, and Stuart M. Hurwitz also operates his own tax law practice in San Diego, the IRS said.

The federal agency has also appointed Dave Thompson, who previously worked at KPMG and Ernst and Young and is now the director of accounting for Alabama State University, where he teaches the masters of accountancy program, and Dennis J. Ventry, who is a law professor at the University of California Davis School of Law.

The council members are expected to submit a report to the IRS during a public meeting in November with their feedback and recommendations, the IRS said.

--Editing by Stephen Berg.

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