

Former Gov. Rauner Counsel Rejoins Mayer Brown

By **Hannah Meisel**

Law360, Springfield (January 25, 2017, 8:51 PM EST) -- A former attorney in Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner's administration has rejoined Mayer Brown LLP as a partner in the government practice and global infrastructure group in Chicago, the firm announced this week.

Mitch Holzrichter is back at Mayer Brown after two years in the governor's office where he served as deputy chief of staff for legislative affairs and special counsel after serving as deputy general counsel. Before that, Holzrichter had spent his entire career at Mayer Brown, beginning in 2008.



Mitch Holzrichter

Now that he's returned to the firm, Holzrichter said he's ready to take on government practice with fresh eyes, having actually served in government since the beginning of Rauner's administration in January 2015. Holzrichter will continue to focus on the broad world of government and political law, including infrastructure deals, which he said drew him into this area of law in the first place.

"Infrastructure work appealed to me because it's similar to a corporate transaction, but [you're] able to look at it every day ... and know the public benefits from that," he told Law360 in an interview Wednesday.

During his time in the governor's office, Holzrichter wasn't helping with building physical projects like roads or bridges, but he said helping to build the state's first consolidated technology infrastructure — the newly opened state agency Illinois Department of Innovation and Technology — was a point of pride in his tenure. Holzrichter said when he first encountered technology in state government, he was "shocked" at how antiquated Illinois' systems were.

"One of the goals of [DoIT] has been consolidating accounting systems, HR systems ... I think in terms of modernizing state government, it's been a real success," he said.

DoIT launched this fall, and is aimed at streamlining Illinois government's 400-plus technology systems, developed ad hoc over the years with little to no communication or overlap between departments.

In addition to DoIT's creation via executive order, Holzrichter said during his time with Rauner he had a hand in two other major areas of Illinois government: school funding and criminal justice reform. Though neither issue has been fully resolved, Holzrichter said the incremental steps the governor's office was able to take were real progress.

"As a lawyer for the governor, our job is to help execute on his vision when we can," Holzrichter said. "For example, with IT improvements, we did everything we could in the governor's authority and found success. Not everything depends on the legislature."

Still, working in government had its moments of frustration, especially as Illinois is facing an unprecedented budget crisis.

"We were all frustrated that the General Assembly has not come to a bipartisan agreement on balanced budget," he said. "But there's a lot of other things we can do as lawyers in the executive branch ... to effectuate change."

Holzrichter said even as he returns to work in the private sector, he will continue to use his experience in the public sector every day at Mayer Brown, where many of his colleagues have also served in government.

"When we represent a government client, we know [how government works] and when we're representing a private client, can provide them insight [into how government works]," Holzrichter said.

But he said returning to Mayer Brown was an easy decision, describing the government practice team as "collaborative" and knowledgeable. In a statement from Mayer Brown leaders, the admiration was mutual.

"Mitch has an excellent track record of advising both the public and private sector on complex government transactions, particularly in the infrastructure and gaming industries," John Janicik, co-leader of Mayer Brown's government practice, said. "His time serving in senior leadership roles at the State of Illinois and knowledge of legislative processes will be invaluable to companies that are heavily regulated or licensed by the government, such as private investment funds, financial institutions, government contractors, utility companies and gaming operators."

Holzrichter said he's glad to be back at Mayer Brown, but he's not ruling out a return to the public sector.

"I think we need good people serving in government," he said. "We're all better off as a state and nation if we have people willing to serve and I'd certainly be open to it again."

--Editing by Orlando Lorenzo.