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Rising Star: Mayer Brown's Chad Richards

By **Britain Eakin**

Law360 (August 25, 2026, 4:02 PM EDT) -- Chad Richards of Mayer Brown LLP is helping guide the regulatory approvals for Manulife Investment Management's $1.9 billion utility acquisition in the Pacific Northwest after coming off one of the largest infrastructure deals in recent years, BlackRock's $12.5 billion acquisition of Global Infrastructure Partners, earning a spot among the energy law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

Biggest deal he has worked on:

Richards pointed to two overlapping transactions as the biggest of his career: BlackRock's $12.5 billion acquisition of Global Infrastructure Partners, a deal that was announced in January 2024, followed closely by GIP's $6.2 billion take-private acquisition of Allete Inc., which was announced in May 2024. Allete owns regulated utilities in Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Richards, who worked on the deals at Kirkland & Ellis LLP before he moved to Mayer Brown, represented GIP in both deals and said their overlap remains the most complex matter of his career and required a coordinated strategy.

"There were a lot of regulatory approvals involved in both transactions … the approvals themselves were running concurrently with each other, so it was a lot of navigating — responding in one proceeding but then making sure that you're consistent in another," Richards said.

He found himself navigating the concurrent proceedings before both state regulators and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. With two sets of regulators at play, Richard said, the two deals required careful "regulatory staging," as approvals for one transaction unfolded while others were getting underway.

His most interesting deal lately:

2026 LAW360 RISING STAR

Chad Richards
Mayer Brown

Age: 37
Home base: Washington, D.C.
Position: Partner
Law school: University of Michigan Law School
First job after law school: Associate at Dorsey & Whitney

Richards is representing Manulife Investment Management in a $1.9 billion joint venture with Portland General Electric Co. to acquire electrical provider PacifiCorp's Washington state service territory and other assets. Richards said the deal, announced in February, is especially complex because it will essentially create a new utility that will serve roughly 140,000 customers.

The Pacific Northwest doesn't have a centralized electricity market like other parts of the country, which makes the regulatory analysis in this kind of deal "more granular and interesting," Richards said.

The deal requires coordinated approvals among federal regulators and state-level regulatory bodies spanning six states, each with differing standards and processes.

"A lot of the FERC-relevant markets are smaller in the Pacific Northwest, so it makes the … up-front work in doing the technical analysis a little bit more difficult and interesting," he said.

His proudest moment as an attorney:

Richards said he couldn't point to a single case or deal he's worked on as making him proudest. Instead, he said, he takes pride in helping clients navigate complex regulatory problems, whether they are seeking a transaction approval or developing an asset.

Richards said his pride comes from seeing physical assets get built so he knows that his work is having a tangible impact.

"I find it gratifying to support them in getting those assets built, and helping them achieve their objectives," he said.

Why he's an energy attorney:

Richards said he didn't set out to become an energy attorney, but he knew he wanted to do regulatory work. After joining Dorsey & Whitney LLP as an associate right out of law school, he found himself working on pipeline matters involving FERC.

He said he enjoyed the variety of constant changes in the regulatory space, along with doing advocacy and transactional work. The size of the projects with data centers, for example, are so complex that it keeps him engaged on a daily basis so he can accurately advise his clients.

He also enjoys connecting his efforts to tangible assets.

"It was just cool to be able to look at a map and see — this is where the pipeline runs. This is what it's doing and what it's serving," he said. "So tying back some of the work that I was doing to actual physical assets made me more engaged than if I were doing something that was strictly financial or further upstream."

How he thinks the legal industry will change over the next 10 years:

Looking ahead, Richards said he expects artificial intelligence to reshape both the energy and legal industries in the next decade. Surging demands by clients to get involved with data centers are already driving much of his practice, he said.

At the same time, he expects AI to change the practice of law. Legal teams will likely get smaller as AI makes attorneys more efficient, but ultimately he doesn't think the technology will be able to replace attorneys.

"I think that judgment calls will still have to be made by an attorney, an actual human," he said.

--As told to Britain Eakin. Editing by Amy French.

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2026 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,100 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2026, to be eligible for this year's award.
