

Virginia Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax Joins Morrison & Foerster

Justin Fairfax has joined Morrison & Foerster in the Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C. offices, as a partner in its Commercial Litigation, Trials, and Investigations + White Collar Defense groups.

Fairfax will separately perform his duties as Virginia lieutenant governor, which is a part-time role under Virginia law. Fairfax is a former federal prosecutor who served as an Assistant United States Attorney (AUSA) in the Eastern District of Virginia and has prior experience at national and international law firms.

The firm said in a release that Fairfax gained national prominence after he was elected lieutenant governor of Virginia in November 2017, making him only the second African-American to be elected to statewide office in Virginia. In his role as lieutenant governor, he presides over the Senate of Virginia and serves on various boards and commissions. Fairfax is one of the youngest individuals in the country to hold the position of lieutenant governor.

“Justin is a rising star whose addition highlights the firm’s strategy of hiring experienced lawyers who understand government and the private sector,” said Brad Wine, co-chair of the firm’s Litigation Department. “His impressive background strengthens our national and regional commercial litigation, enforcement, and investigations capabilities. Justin will help us continue to meet our clients’ needs as we further expand our presence in Washington D.C. and Northern Virginia.”

While serving as an AUSA, Fairfax was part of the office’s

major crimes and narcotics unit, where he prosecuted a wide range of federal felony offenses, including embezzlement, fraud, and human trafficking. In private practice, he litigated a variety of commercial and white-collar cases in federal and Virginia state courts. He worked on matters relating to securities litigation, Foreign Agents Registration Act investigations, and wire fraud prosecutions, among others. Fairfax has served as a law clerk to the recently retired Judge Gerald Bruce Lee of the United States District Court of the Eastern District of Virginia.

“Justin brings to Morrison & Foerster strong familiarity with the government, a keen understanding of clients’ needs, and impressive experience litigating complex matters,” said Charlie Katz, managing partner of the firm’s Northern Virginia office. “His experience in the Eastern District and Virginia State courts further expands the litigation practice of our Northern Virginia office and will be critical to clients facing commercial disputes, investigations, and other high-stakes matters.”

“Morrison & Foerster offers the ideal destination to restart my private practice and work on important domestic and international matters,” added Fairfax. “The firm has an outstanding reputation for its litigation work, and a national and global footprint in many of the industries where I plan to focus my practice. In this regard, I have maintained and will continue to maintain, close contact with relevant ethics officials to ensure that my joining, and work with, the firm will not present any conflicts of interest with my role as Lt. Governor or with the Commonwealth of Virginia. I’m excited to enter this next phase of my legal career and to continue the tremendous work I’ve had the privilege of doing as Lt. Governor on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth of Virginia.”

In July, the firm announced that John E. Smith, former director of the U.S. Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign

Assets Control, had joined as a co-head of its National Security Practice, and Lisa Phelan, former chief of the National Criminal Enforcement and Washington Criminal I Sections of the Antitrust Division at the Department of Justice, had joined as a partner in its Global Antitrust Law Practice. Other senior U.S. government officials who have joined Morrison & Foerster in recent years to further build regulatory, compliance, and investigations practices include John Carlin, Bob Litt and David Newman to grow the firm's Global Risk & Crisis Management Group and National Security Practice; Chuck Duross and James Koukios to expand the firm's FCPA and Anti-Corruption Practice; and Michael Birnbaum, Carrie Cohen and Joshua Hill to further enhance the firm's Securities Litigation, Enforcement and White-Collar Defense Practice Group.