

Ex-Amazon In-House Counsel Joins Porter Wright In DC

By Jack Rodgers

Law360 (July 25, 2023, 4:05 PM EDT) -- Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP has expanded its government and regulatory affairs group as well as its litigation practice group with a former corporate counsel from Amazon Web Services, according to a recent news release.

Adrian F. Snead joins Porter Wright as a partner and is based in the firm's Washington, D.C., office. He'll continue his work focused on counseling corporate clients on regulatory challenges, complex litigation and regulatory challenges to emerging industries like cloud computing and cannabis, the firm said.

He also works with homeland security, veterans affairs and military-related issues, as well as cannabis banking reform, the firm said. He helps corporate clients litigate complex business and contract disputes and works on white collar defense matters and national security cases.

A George Washington University Law School graduate, Snead has a range of private practice and public experience, clerking for Judge Royce C. Lamberth of the D.C. district court, where the firm said he handled national security cases. While pursuing his law degree, Snead worked at the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights and Criminal divisions, the firm said. He also worked as a White House intern during the Obama administration.

In addition to that experience, Snead spent three years as counsel to Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., where he advised the lawmaker on foreign policy and was a military legislative assistant, according to his LinkedIn profile. In that role, Snead helped the senator on his Appropriations and Banking committee assignments and served as Merkley's personal representative to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the firm said.

Following that role, Snead had a couple private practice positions working for Whiteford Taylor & Preston LLP and Holland & Knight LLP for a total of over five years, according to his LinkedIn profile. He first joined Amazon in 2022.

Some of Snead's experience includes serving on trial teams that won cases against the Guatemalan and Iraqi republics, and Snead successfully represented three former Central Intelligence Agency station chiefs in regard to oil concessions in Iraq, the firm said.



Adrian Snead

Shane Pennington, an appellate and regulatory litigator focused on challenges in federal and state agencies, joined Porter Wright last month.

In an interview with Law360 Pulse on Tuesday, Snead said he didn't have an initial plan to leave Amazon Web Services, but that he was thinking about moving to an Am200 law firm that had a little more discretion with attorney billable hour costs and alternative billing methods. He added that Porter Wright interested him because it would allow him to continue having a litigation practice, while building out a public policy practice for the firm in D.C.

"When Porter Wright, when we started talking, they kind of threw it at me, they said, 'What would you do if we gave you the keys to the office?'" Snead said. "And that was my first indication that this was a little bit different than a normal place."

Snead said one of his focuses was to help rebuild that D.C. practice, which he called "much smaller than it used to be." Snead said Porter Wright was looking to build out a public policy practice and that the firm was currently looking for a Republican lead for that practice.

But Snead said the firm was also focused on litigation capabilities and D.C.-specific areas, like government contracting, intellectual property and expanding into emerging markets like cloud computing and electronic vehicles.

"We're looking to keep growing and our plan is to keep growing and I'm certainly excited to be a part of that," he said.

Snead said he went to George Washington Law School with the intent to work in the public sector in the government. After his time in the Senate, he decided to jump back to private practice for a variety of reasons, including having formerly worked with Merkley on cannabis matters — realizing there was a lack and need for lawyers and lobbyists at a high level.

At Holland & Knight, Snead said he still felt pushed to be just a litigator, even though he tried focusing on being a multi-faceted attorney with a public policy and cannabis practice.

"I've always had a knack for business, I've always wanted to be on the business side, and I wasn't really getting that," Snead said. "And that's both why I went to Amazon Web Services, because being an in-house attorney, you have a lot more exposure to the business end of things and you're more of a partner to the business."

Holly Kozlowski, partner-in-charge of the firm's D.C. office, said in a statement that Snead's experience in public service and in all three branches of the government would make his knowledge invaluable to firm clients. Scott North, chairman of the firm's government and regulatory affairs practice, also lauded Snead's new role with the firm in a statement.

"Adrian and Shane have the deep government experience needed to help our clients proactively address their most complex legislative and regulatory challenges," North said in a statement.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.