

## Porter Wright Adds Ex-ICE Deputy Chief Of Staff In DC

By Jack Rodgers

*Law360 (December 15, 2023, 3:45 PM EST)* -- Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP has hired a government and regulatory affairs attorney who focuses on immigration matters, white collar defense issues and other related work, the firm announced Thursday.

John Amaya joins Porter Wright in Washington, D.C., as a partner, where he'll work as a member of the litigation department. His practice focuses on representing companies, individuals, foreign sovereigns and institutions on a range of issues, including federal investigations, global immigration and cross-border compliance matters.

From 2015 to 2017, Amaya worked as deputy chief of staff and senior adviser with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, according to his LinkedIn profile. He was first appointed to the agency in 2014 by former President Barack Obama, and started as a counselor to the director of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agency, according to his LinkedIn profile.

After his time at ICE, Amaya started his own firm, Amaya Legal Strategies PLLC, and focused on immigration and national matters for corporations and individuals, according to his LinkedIn profile.

In an email to Law360 Pulse Friday, Amaya said he wanted to move to Porter Wright because it "presented me with the opportunity and freedom to grow [my practice]."

"The firm is retooling and growing the Washington office to ensure there is a robust policy and regulatory presence for our clients. The entrepreneurial energy surrounding the firm right now is thrilling and I wanted to be a part of Porter Wright's growth," Amaya said.

A University of Washington School of Law graduate, Amaya also holds a Master of Laws degree from Georgetown University Law Center.

In 2006, he spent a year as a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice, where he focused on litigating cases involving immigration and nationality laws, according to his LinkedIn profile. Amaya, a fluent Spanish speaker, also worked in a range of roles focused on helping Latin American immigrants before making his transition into private practice. He spent roughly three years, from 2007 to 2010, between the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund and UnidosUS, a Latino civil rights and advocacy organization, according to his LinkedIn profile.



John Amaya

After working at UnidosUS, Amaya was senior counsel in the U.S. Senate for four years, where he worked for Patrick J. Leahy in his role as chairman of the Senate's Judiciary Committee, according to his LinkedIn profile.

The son of immigrants, Amaya told Law360 Pulse that he is "living the American Dream as a direct result of [my] parents' sacrifices." To him, focusing his career on making sure others have their immigration matters taken care of "was a very easy area of law to embrace," and is work that "truly matters."

"It matters to my corporate clients seeking counsel on the intersections of export compliance and immigration hiring policies who need a little help navigating a confusing labyrinth of laws," Amaya said. "It matters to my Afghan clients seeking refuge and protection following the withdrawal of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. And it matters to my foreign clients seeking to invest in the United States economy, so they too can pursue their own American Dream."

Adrian Snead, a litigation practice group partner who joined Porter Wright in July, told Law360 Pulse that he and Amaya overlapped in the Senate, and Amaya had a "distinguished career working for Chairman Leahy." He added he was looking forward to Amaya's contributions to the firm.

"We can't be more excited to have John join us in the D.C. office as part of our immigration, government relations, and litigation teams," Snead said.

Amaya said Snead was a longtime friend, and that Snead worked for Porter Wright helped make the decision to join the firm that much easier.

"When he shared his vision for Porter Wright in D.C., I knew immediately that I couldn't pass up working with him again and help him build something special," he said.

Holly D. Kozlowski, Porter Wright's partner in charge in Washington, D.C., and Cincinnati, told Law360 Pulse in an email Friday that she was thrilled to have Amaya move his practice to the firm.

"We see many synergies between our existing practice groups and John's experience, and look forward to building strong resources for a variety of both domestic and international clients," Kozlowski said.

--Editing by Caitlin Wolper.