

## Winston & Strawn Launches ESG Advisory Team

AUGUST 6, 2020

CHICAGO, Aug. 6, 2020 – The global law firm of Winston & Strawn LLP today announced the formation of a new Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Advisory Team. Co-chaired by Houston-based partners Mike Blankenship and Eric Johnson, the advisory team synthesizes the firm’s multidisciplinary experience to help boards and management teams oversee the complete spectrum of ESG-related legal and business issues.

“Amid an ever-changing business environment, it’s clear that the most resilient and successful businesses are placing ESG principles at the forefront of their core values and leveraging those principles to chart a path for financial success and future growth to the benefit of all their stakeholders, including employees, customers, vendors, local communities, and stockholders,” said Blankenship.

In addition to Blankenship and Johnson, the cross-functional team includes Chicago partners Mike Melbinger, Eleni Kouimelis, Cardelle Spangler, and Rex Sessions; and London partners Peter Crowther and Anthony Riley. Drawing from deep experience and building on existing client work, the team will focus on matters relating to:

- ESG disclosures and messaging, including program implementation and framework selection;
- Board oversight of ESG risks and establishment of related corporate principles and values;
- Corporate governance;
- Shareholder activism;
- Regulatory compliance;
- Energy transition and renewable and alternative energy sources;
- Employee benefits and executive compensation, including incentivizing ESG-related behaviors;
- Labor and employment; and
- Crisis management.

“Embracing ESG principles and implementing ESG-related programs is a unique process for every organization, tied directly to each organization’s distinct cultural and brand identity,” said Johnson. “Our team works closely with

clients to develop and execute ESG-related initiatives that best fit their specific needs to the benefit of all of their stakeholders.”

**Mike Blankenship** focuses on corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, private equity, and securities law matters, and regularly counsels public companies on strategic transactions, capital markets offerings, and general corporate matters. He has advised numerous clients on many ESG matters, including ESG due diligence and developing and implementing long-term ESG strategies.

**Eric Johnson** has extensive experience representing private and public companies, as well as investors, in a broad range of corporate and securities matters, including mergers and acquisitions and capital markets transactions. He regularly advises boards and management teams on ESG matters, including implementation of various ESG programs and ESG-related disclosures.

**Mike Melbinger** works exclusively in the area of executive compensation and employee benefit programs for corporations, boards, partnerships, executives, and fiduciaries, designing and implementing stock- and non-stock-based executive compensation and benefit programs, employment contracts, and severance and compensation agreements, and providing strategic counsel to compensation committees, senior executives, and legal departments.

**Eleni Kouimelis** focuses on environmental issues that arise in a variety of contexts, including transactions, compliance counseling, and litigation. She provides compliance counseling to diverse industrial and manufacturing clients in all the environmental media, including designing and implementing audit and sustainability programs, strategic planning, and permitting and siting approval.

**Cardelle Spangler** focuses her practice on employment litigation and counseling matters across the full spectrum of issues, including EEO, ERISA, restrictive covenant, breach of contract, and diversity-related initiatives over her 20-years as an employment litigator and advisor. She has significant experience representing clients in the medical device, pharmaceutical, food service, financial service, and transportation industries.

**Rex Sessions** represents clients in employment discrimination, wrongful discharge, and ERISA litigation matters; counsels clients on equal employment opportunity practices and employment-at-will issues; and assists clients in developing human resource policies and employee handbooks. He is experienced in negotiations and litigation concerning executive employment agreements, non-competition provisions, and other contracts.

**Tara Greenberg** focuses on acquisitions and dispositions, debt and equity financings, and general corporate matters primarily related to energy and infrastructure projects. She regularly represents clients in complex transactions, including strategic and financial acquisitions and dispositions, preferred and other equity investments, tax-equity financings, senior secured and subordinated debt financings, and leverage lease financings of major energy facilities, project portfolios, and other gas, solar, wind, and waste management sector businesses.

**Peter Crowther** has significant experience in all aspects of EU law. While his sector focus is broad, he has a particularly established track record of advising clients in the energy, technology, and financial services (including insurance) industries on a wide variety of issues. Amongst other advice to energy sector entities, he has advised on the application of secondary legislation in the sector, and assisted with the preparation of and submissions to the EU authorities regarding the development of the EU energy legal framework. He has extensive experience in the international dimension of EU energy policy and energy treaties entered into between the EU and third-world countries.

**Anthony Riley** focuses on corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, and private equity transactions. While his work covers all sectors, he has significant experience in the energy and infrastructure sectors. His experience includes undertaking regulatory reviews of EU ESG fund compliance and wider assistance to renewable energy funds.

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## Related Professionals

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[Michael J. Blankenship](#)



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Eleni Kouimelis



Cardelle Spangler



Peter Crowther