

Sterne Kessler Nabs Ex-Latham Atty As 1st Ethics Chief

By **Aebra Coe**

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A former Latham & Watkins LLP ethics attorney has joined Sterne Kessler Goldstein & Fox PLLC as the Washington, D.C.-based intellectual property boutique's first chief ethics and risk counsel, the firm said Wednesday.

In her new role, Elham Dehbozorgi — who also counts WilmerHale among her past employers — will act as a liaison with professional liability insurers and advise Sterne Kessler on ethical obligations, compliance, conflicts of interest, how to best mitigate risk, and issues related to data security and privacy.

Dehbozorgi said she is looking forward to leading the newly founded office of in-house ethics at Sterne Kessler, particularly because she has always been interested in the “complex and challenging” field of IP ethics. She said she gained some experience in the niche field while at Latham but is now able to commit herself to it fully.

“Managing compliance at an IP firm is more complex than at a general practice firm,” Dehbozorgi said. “You’re not just regulating entity conflicts, but the world of technology subject matter conflicts. It presents a lot of risk management issues.”

Dehbozorgi said her interest in legal ethics was sparked while she attended the Catholic University of America's Columbus School of Law. There, she worked as a research assistant to Professor Lisa Lerman, who at the time was co-writing a now-popular law school textbook on legal ethics, “Ethical Problems in the Practice of Law.”

Lerman fostered Dehbozorgi's interest in legal ethics, which in her third year the attorney decided to pursue, just around the time when the in-house compliance role was first emerging in BigLaw, Dehbozorgi said.

After school, she joined WilmerHale, working under the Deputy General Counsel Brooke Pinkerton for more than three years as a conflicts attorney. From there, Dehbozorgi moved to Latham, where she worked for the past half-decade with the firm's assistant general counsel, Clara Martone-Boyce, building on the work Dehbozorgi did at WilmerHale and taking on a broader role as an adviser focusing on conflicts, compliance and ethics.



Elham Dehbozorgi

“The ethics field is a fascinating one to me,” Dehbozorgi said. “It’s one where you’re preemptively and proactively thinking about how to avoid issues and how best to mitigate risk, while also abiding by ethics rules.”

She said client intake is one of the areas she is most excited to tackle at Sterne Kessler.

“It’s a nice intersection between business and law,” said Dehbozorgi, whose undergraduate degree was in business administration and international finance. “I make sure we’re doing it the right way, but without hindering the firm’s business.”

--Editing by Edrienne Su.

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