

Akin Gump Snags Renewable Energy, Tax Pro From GE

By **Megan Stride**

Law360, Chicago (September 19, 2011, 4:32 PM ET) -- Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP said early this month that it had lured a former managing director and senior tax counsel at GE Energy Financial Services over to its New York office, further boosting its project finance offerings in the renewable energy field.

The firm announced Sept. 7 that David Burton joined its ranks as a partner in its renewable energy and tax and project finance practices, following the group of four energy-focused project finance partners that Akin Gump snapped up for its Los Angeles office from Chadbourne & Parke LLP in May.

Burton, who spent 11 years at GE, told Law360 on Monday that the "fantastic opportunity" to work with the former Chadbourne & Parke team, including global project finance practice co-chairmen Adam Umanoff and Edward Zaelke, was a major factor that drew him to the firm.

Akin Gump's established presence in the renewable energy world was also a convincing element, he said.

"My practice and my passion is renewable energy, and Akin Gump has a best-in-class, cutting-edge renewable energy practice," Burton said Monday.

Burton is a pro at structuring tax-driven vehicles for renewable energy assets, according to his new firm. He has worked in sale-leasebacks, flip partnerships and inverted leases, among other structures, and has overseen a slew of transactional tax aspects, from deal structuring to building tax policy initiatives.

During his time at GE Energy Financial Services, the company grew to be the largest tax-advantaged energy investor in the country with \$6 billion in wind, solar, hydro, biomass and geothermal power investments, according to Akin Gump.

Burton said he plans to focus his practice at Akin Gump on wind and solar energy projects and that he'd also like to take on some mainstream tax work, particularly in the private equity and hedge fund spaces, as well as international project finance matters.

Burton said Monday that his confidence in the choice to join Akin Gump has only been bolstered since he started work there on Sept. 6.

“The firm is very well-run, the managing team is very financially savvy, and the lawyers I've met and worked with I've been very impressed with,” Burton said. “It's lived up to all of the high expectations I had going in.”

Burton spent 4 of his 11 years at GE in the energy financial services division, and also held positions in the company's capital tax organization.

Before joining GE, he was a tax attorney at Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP's Philadelphia office.

Akin Gump's hiring of Burton follows the major boost its renewable energy practice received in May with the addition of the Chadbourne & Park team.

In addition to Zaelke and Umanoff, partners Thomas I. Dupuis and Lloyd MacNeil joined the firm in that move.

--Editing by John Quinn.

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