

Former Senior Official At FCC Rejoins Covington

By **Chuck Stanley**

Law360, Washington (February 1, 2017, 6:32 PM EST) -- Matthew S. DelNero has rejoined Covington & Burling LLP as a partner in its communications and media practice group after serving as the chief of the Federal Communications Commission's Wireline Competition Bureau, the firm announced Wednesday.

DelNero told Law360 that he will oversee a diverse portfolio of telecom issues, including broadband expansion, privacy, data security and merger activity, bringing to the practice a new appreciation for the policy process and priorities of regulatory staff from his time serving the commission.

DelNero's return adds expertise on a broad range of telecommunications issues to the practice, said Yaron Dori, co-chair of Covington's communications and media practice group, in a statement.

"The communications industry is continuing to undergo rapid and transformative change, which requires lawyers to be versatile and credible across multiple disciplines," Dori said. "Matt's tenure at the FCC has only expanded the areas in which he has knowledge and depth, and we expect that to inure to the benefit of our clients."

DelNero was a partner at Covington from 2011 to 2014, when he joined the FCC as deputy chief of the Wireline Competition Bureau. He was promoted to bureau chief in 2015 and led a team of more than 170 addressing privacy and data security obligations for Internet Service Providers, the regulatory structure for enterprise broadband services and transactions between cable, broadband and other telecom providers.

In his return to the firm, DelNero said he expects broadband deployment, a priority for incoming FCC chair Ajit Pai, as well as industry consolidation and foreign investment to be areas of significant activity in the coming year.

DelNero was deeply involved in broadband expansion efforts at the FCC, overseeing the Wireline Competition Bureau's stewardship of the \$8 billion Universal Service Fund, the main source of funding for broadband expansion programs in low-income, high-cost rural areas.

The ongoing effort to reallocate spectrum from broadcast to broadband wireless use is also going to be the subject of constant negotiation between the affected stakeholders until the process is complete, DelNero said.



Matthew S.
DelNero

Despite efforts by the commission and cooperation from stakeholders, DelNero said, the complexity of migrating existing broadcast stations to new channels and auctioning off newly available spectrum licenses is bound to bring about unforeseen challenges.

“There’s no way to make it a simple process,” he said. “No matter how much planning goes into it, there are going to be surprises.”

In addition to the firsthand experience he acquired working on a broad range of FCC initiatives, DelNero said his time at the commission gave him an understanding of the heavy workload faced by regulators and the huge challenges they tackle on a day-to-day basis.

“It certainly made me appreciate the complexity of policymaking in a way that I hadn’t before,” he said.

High workloads and a dense crowd of stakeholders anxious to weigh in on regulatory issues taken on by the commission make it imperative for interested parties to carefully tailor their dealings to align with the needs and capabilities of regulators as much as possible, he said.

For issues of importance, he added, it is imperative that interested parties remain consistently engaged with the process.

“You have to stay involved. It’s not enough to just file a comment or ex parte and expect to influence how an issue is resolved,” he said.

DelNero received his undergraduate degree from Tufts University and his law degree from Harvard Law School.

--Editing by Sara Ziegler.