

Rising Star: Gibson Dunn's Robyn Zolman

By Linda Chiem

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Gibson Dunn capital markets partner Robyn E. Zolman's zest for tackling complex deals has helped her steer billions in acquisition financing for energy company The Williams Cos. Inc. and Zayo Group's \$458 million initial public offering, earning her a spot on Law360's list of top capital markets attorneys under the age of 40.

Zolman, a Denver-based partner who started her legal career at Gibson Dunn, has steadily built a robust practice focused on capital markets transactions that include public and private offerings of equity and debt securities — many attached with complex structuring or tight deadlines — and securities regulation and disclosure issues and corporate governance matters.

Coming up as an associate who made quick work of hitting the partner track at Gibson Dunn, Zolman had a flair for transactional work and went on to expand her expertise in IPOs, follow-on and secondary offerings of equity securities, investment grade, high-yield and convertible debt offerings, as well as tender offers, corporate restructurings and spin-offs.

"I loved how fast-paced the securities law [practice] was and I found it fun and interesting to have rules-based parameters," she told Law360. "It was a really good fit. I took to it. I enjoyed it and picked it up quickly where I was able to absorb the rules and deal points."

Zolman, 37, serves as the lead relationship partner for capital markets and securities work for The Williams Cos., for which she's handled 30 financing transactions involving the issuance of over \$27 billion in securities over the past 12 years. In 2014 alone, she led the teams that completed a \$3.4 billion common stock offering and a \$1.9 billion senior notes offering that helped finance Williams' \$6 billion purchase of additional general and limited partner interests in Access Midstream Partners LP.

"Those were exciting transactions where we had a really compressed time frame with disclosure pressures because you're marketing the financing and you also have to sell the acquisition on why it



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makes sense,” Zolman said. “That was setting the stage for what really were single-day transactions.”

That \$6 billion acquisition of additional interests helped seal the merger between Williams’ master limited partnership, Williams Partners, and Access Midstream to create a \$50 billion U.S. midstream giant. Zolman handled the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission-related aspects of that megamerger.

Also in 2014, Zolman served as primary outside securities counsel to Zayo Group Holdings Inc., helping steer the fiber optic telecommunications company’s \$458 million IPO in October 2014 in which Zayo and its private equity backers sold approximately 24.1 million shares priced at \$19 apiece.

“IPOs are fun and challenging and helping [Zayo] both with the actual implementation of the IPO and the SEC aspect of getting the company ready for being a truly public company brings the whole picture together,” Zolman said.

More recently, Zolman guided Zayo on a \$700 million offering of senior notes in January to back its \$675 million acquisition of Latisys Holdings LLC. That caps off a banner year in which Zolman also represented home builder D.R. Horton Inc. in \$1 billion worth of senior notes offerings and steered transactions for Atmos Energy Corp. and BioCryst Pharmaceuticals Inc.

A graduate of the University of Colorado at Boulder who earned her law degree from Harvard University, Zolman says she’s been fortunate to have worked with senior associates and partners, including Richard Russo, one of the co-founders of Gibson Dunn’s Denver office, who helped push her into the room with decision-makers and clients that eventually laid the foundation for the work she’s lining up today.

“I had a bunch of people helping me develop, allowing me to be in the room watching and learning as they were doing their jobs, giving me in-depth involvement at a young age,” she said. “They set me up as a go-to person for the client relationship and that’s how you really learn to be a good lawyer.”

Eager to help the next generation of lawyers start on the right track, Zolman also mentors, guides and evaluates young associates as a member of Gibson Dunn’s professional development committee and is the partner in charge of corporate training for the Denver office.

“I love the challenge and I think to really enjoy a job like this you have to,” Zolman said. “It’s very stressful in a way that is energizing as opposed to overwhelming. There’s always a path forward and the challenge is figuring it out. If you are willing to step outside of your comfort zone, that’s where the real opportunities are.”

--Editing by John Quinn.