

## MoloLamken Adds Federal Prosecutor, Arbitration Lawyer

BY CHRISTINE SIMMONS

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD litigation boutique MoloLamken continued to beef up its attorney roster with two new hires this week, bringing on former assistant U.S. attorney Megan Cunniff Church, the lead prosecutor who secured the conviction of a Chicago public schools executive, and Rémy Gerbay, an international arbitration lawyer who has relocated to the firm's New York office from London.

Church served in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois for more than nine years, most recently as a deputy chief of the office's Financial Crimes Section.

Church, who joined MoloLamken's Chicago office Monday as a partner, investigated and prosecuted the case against Chicago Public Schools Chief Executive Officer Barbara Byrd-Bennett, who was sentenced in April to four-and-a-half years in prison for a scheme involving kickbacks from an educational consulting firm.

Church said she wasn't actively seeking to leave the U.S. Attorney's Office, but when she heard about the opportunity at MoloLamken through a recruiter, Michelle Kaplan McAndrew at Atticus Recruiting, she was attracted to the firm's high-profile work in public corruption cases and its variety of matters.

While MoloLamken is well known for its successful representation of former New York Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, whose public corruption conviction was overturned on appeal this year, the firm also handles complex business litigation, white-collar criminal defense, investigations, patent litigation, whistleblower cases and arbitration.



Megan Cunniff Church



Rémy Gerbay

Church, 39, said she considered large law firms options too.

"Big law firms have a great variety of work," she said, "but especially in Chicago, the law firms have institutional clients, so you're working for those particular clients on those limited matters."

Church said she didn't want to be "pigeonholed" into only working on commercial or white-collar litigation. "I wanted to be in the courtroom in a variety of cases," she said, "expanding my skill set beyond the traditional white-collar work many AUSAs find themselves doing when they leave the office."

President Donald Trump has nominated John Lausch, currently a Kirkland & Ellis partner and formerly an assistant U.S. attorney, to head the Northern District of Illinois prosecutor's office. Church said the change in administration wasn't a factor in her decision to leave and praised Lausch's talent and leadership for the job. Lausch and Church previously worked together in the office for a couple years.

### Steady Growth

While Church's addition gives MoloLamken even greater expertise in public corruption matters, firm co-founder Steven Molo said the boutique isn't seeking to develop a profile on that specific line of work. "It just so happens that some of these cases have been corruption cases," he said, adding

the firm is seeking to develop a profile of "excellent courtroom advocacy" in all areas.

MoloLamken's Chicago office, which opened about a year after the firm's 2009 founding, moved to a new, larger space in the same office building this month, Molo said. The office, with about 10 attorneys, now has 10,000 square feet at 300 North LaSalle St., up from 4,000 square feet.

Meanwhile, the boutique also hired this week as counsel Gerbay, who was of counsel at the U.K. international disputes boutique Enyo Law, where he represented parties at arbitration and sat as an arbitrator.

Molo said the firm, which has represented foreign governments and non-U.S. citizens, is seeking to expand its international arbitration practice.

Firmwide, the boutique has grown from five lawyers in 2009 in New York and Washington, D.C., to about 35 attorneys today in the three offices. Over the last two months, the firm has hired five new associates, all coming from federal clerkships.

In New York last year, MoloLamken hired as its first female partner Jessica Ortiz, the former chief of the narcotics unit at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Church is now the firm's second female partner.

@ Christine Simmons can be reached at csimmons@alm.com. Twitter @chlsimmons

 MOLOLAMKEN