

Sterne Kessler Adds Ex-Lead Patent Judge In DC

By Alison Knezevich

Law360 (October 3, 2022, 2:01 PM EDT) -- A former lead administrative patent judge has joined Sterne Kessler Goldstein & Fox PLLC in its Washington, D.C., office, where she will serve as counsel in the electronics practice group.

Jennifer Meyer Chagnon was with the Patent Trial and Appeal Board within the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office since 2013, according to a firm announcement. She served in the lead role over the past five years.

During an interview with Law360 Pulse on Friday, Chagnon said she was drawn to Sterne Kessler because she was familiar with the firm's work through her time with the patent office.

"They have a lot of PTAB work, and it's always really high-quality work, so that really drew me to be interested in exploring the firm as an option when I was looking to make a move," she said.

The firm also has a reputation for having "a great culture, and that was something that was important to me," Chagnon said.

In a statement, Michael B. Ray, the firm's managing director, said Chagnon's experience on the bench would bring insight into how the patent board works, which will "help our clients navigate some of their toughest issues."

"As such, she is a tremendous addition to help us serve the complex and growing demands of our PTAB practice clients," Ray said.

The move to Sterne Kessler marks a return to private practice for Chagnon. She was previously an intellectual property attorney with the now-defunct Dickstein Shapiro LLP, where she also clerked before graduating from law school, she said.

She said she had always planned to work again in private practice, and "the timing just was right now for me to make that move."

Chagnon started with Sterne Kessler on Sept. 19.



Jennifer Meyer Chagnon

Michael D. Specht, a director in Sterne Kessler's electronics practice group and co-chair of the firm's patent office litigation practice, said that with her time as a judge, Chagnon "brings a plethora of insights" to the firm.

"On top of that, she did [patent] prep and prosecution work before she was a judge," Specht said in an interview. "So she has a really unique background that fit perfectly into what we were looking for."

Her experience will help her counsel clients to "build patents that are defensible and will pass muster if challenged on validity grounds," he said.

According to Sterne Kessler, Chagnon heard cases in a range of technology areas as a patent judge. She presided over more than 450 inter partes review and post grant review proceedings, and adjudicated ex partes appeals, the firm said.

The firm added that Chagnon worked with the patent board's executive team on issues including policy, strategy and personnel.

The patent board was formed in 2011 under the America Invents Act.

Chagnon graduated from the University of Virginia School of Law. She earned a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and a master's in biotechnology from Johns Hopkins University.

She said she didn't initially plan to go to law school, but while studying engineering as an undergraduate, a patent attorney spoke to one of her classes, sparking her interest in law.

Sterne Kessler is based in D.C. and currently has 154 attorneys, according to the firm.

--Editing by Stephen Berg.