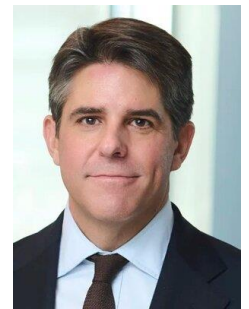


Sterne Kessler Names First New Managing Director Since 2007

By **Emma Cueto**

Law360 (January 5, 2026, 3:59 PM EST) -- Intellectual property boutique Sterne Kessler Goldstein & Fox PLLC announced Monday it has named its first new managing partner in 18 years, with a trial lawyer and executive committee member taking the helm of the Washington, D.C., firm.

Byron L. Pickard, who has served on the executive committee for six years prior to assuming the managing director role, replaces Michael B. Ray, who had served as managing director since 2007 and oversaw the firm's growth to over 200 attorneys, more than double its headcount at the start of his tenure.



Byron L. Pickard

The announcement follows two years of transition planning, according to Pickard, who said he is "excited and energized for the job."

"Mike is handing over the reins of the firm when it's perhaps at its strongest point in the firm's history," he said. "I'm starting the job from a position of strength. There are challenges ahead, but challenges that we see as opportunities, such as [artificial intelligence] and the competition for talent."

Pickard started at Sterne Kessler in 2008 as an associate after two years at the since-dissolved Thelen Reid Brown Raysman & Steiner, and he joined the firm's partnership in 2012. In addition to his time on the executive committee, he also previously served as chair of Sterne Kessler's trial and appellate group.

His practice focuses on handling complex intellectual property trials and appeals.

He told Law360 Pulse he is looking forward to taking over as managing director after being elected by the firm's partnership, highlighting the firm's strengths in areas such as biotech, and saying that it is "still one of the best firms in the country" for patent prosecution.

He said that he also looks forward to continuing the firm's AI initiatives as Sterne Kessler implements more AI tools into its workflow, including tools the firm has developed in-house.

"2026, I think, is going to be a year we see a lot of law firms take AI initiatives from pilot projects to deployment," he said.

He will continue to work with outgoing managing director Ray, who remains with the firm as chair.

"Mike and I have had — and continue to have — a very close relationship," he said. "[I'm excited] to build on what Mike has already done."

Ray said in a statement that he looked forward to working with Pickard as well.

"Byron is an exceptional leader with a deep understanding of Sterne Kessler's culture, clients, and people," he said. "His collaborative leadership style, the trust he has earned across the firm, and his ability to translate strategy into action will build on our strong foundation and drive continued innovation and growth."

--Editing by Dave Trumbore.