

Akin Gump Nabs Project Vet From Bingham

By **Jake Simpson**

Law360, New York (January 18, 2012, 2:36 PM ET) -- A project finance and energy expert from Bingham McCutchen LLP has joined Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP as co-head of the firm's global project finance group, Akin Gump announced Tuesday.

Jacob J. Worenklein, a 35-year industry veteran who was a partner at Bingham, started Friday and will be based in his new firm's New York office, according to Akin Gump.

One of the pre-eminent energy project finance lawyers in the industry, Worenklein joins Edward Zaelke and Adam Umanoff as heads of the project finance practice, recently named one of Law360's project groups of 2011. He said he went to Akin Gump because of its position as an industry leader in the alternative energy sector.

"The opportunity here is to work with the energy clients of the firm to build their capabilities, and the firm has such deep roots in that area," he said.

Prior to working at Bingham, Worenklein founded and served as chairman and CEO of New York-based U.S. Power Generating Co., which owns and operates power plants in the Northeast. In the 1990s, he headed up the energy and projects finance sectors at banking giants Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and Societe Generale SA.

Worenklein said his time away from private practice gave him a better sense of the business needs of power companies and a track record of successful deals that will help him attract new clients for Akin Gump.

"The ability to serve clients broadly and deeply is the gold ring here," he said. "I have been a banker to and partner with a lot of these clients and have been their lawyer before at other firms. I think clients like the idea that they can talk to somebody who can give proactive advice about pressing challenges in their business."

Worenklein started his career with Milbank Tweed Hadley & McCloy LLP, where he formed the firm's project finance and energy infrastructure groups. He was at Milbank for 20 years before joining Lehman Brothers.

"There are very few project lawyers with [Worenklein's] experience practicing in the U.S.," Umanoff said. "Having someone with his reputation and experience as part of our team is a huge benefit for our clients."

Worenklein said he was working on four coal gasification projects in the U.S. for Leucadia National Corp., each worth about \$2.5 billion, and that he was advising on a major gas pipeline project in Eastern Europe, though he declined to specify the project or client.

Worenklein received his law degree from New York University School of Law, his master's degree from New York University and his bachelor's degree from Columbia University.

--Editing by Eydie Cubarrubia.

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