

## Akin Gump Adds 2 Litigators To Health Industry Practice

By **Derek Hawkins**

Law360, New York (June 20, 2011) -- Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP hired two new partners last week specializing in Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement issues from King & Spalding LLP, beefing up the firm's health industry practice in Washington.

Christopher Keough and Stephanie Ann Webster joined Akin Gump's Washington office, where they will continue a highly successful practice devoted largely to Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement litigation and compliance, the firm said June 14.

"Both our clients and team members will profit immensely from the tremendous experience and know-how they bring to the table," said Jorge Lopez, the head of the firm's health industry practice.

Keough joins the firm fresh off a victory in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, which ruled Friday that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services incorrectly denied Medicare reimbursements to University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center for its inpatient costs.

The case was typical of Keough's practice, which has largely involved representation of hospitals in a range of reimbursement matters, including some of the biggest disputes in the Medicare program's history. He also represents clients in false claims, fraud and abuse actions related to federal health programs and advises them on regulatory matters.

Webster is also a Medicare and Medicaid reimbursement expert, counseling hospitals on payment and compliance issues, and representing them in federal court and administrative proceedings. She previously served as an attorney in the HHS' Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Division.

Webster and Keough said they met about a decade ago as opposing counsel in a case before the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, with Webster serving as lead counsel for the HHS.

In the years since — following Webster's move to private practice — the pair has racked up numerous successes together, among them their representation of plaintiffs in a sprawling class action over Medicare reimbursements that ended with a \$666 million government settlement.

Their goal at Akin Gump is to help turn the firm's health industry practice into the top group nationwide.

“Our reason for the move is to join a practice that’s in its prime,” Webster said. “We’re excited about working together to make it better.”

Keough added that with the passage of national health care reform, their services would be in increasing demand, and Akin Gump offered the pair new resources to keep up with the pace.

“The kind of legislative and policy practice that’s strong here is a whole other avenue for solving problems for clients,” Keough said.

--Editing by John Williams.

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