

## Crowell & Moring Adds 'Tough Litigator' From DC AG's Office

By Marco Poggio

*Law360 (April 14, 2021, 2:29 PM EDT)* -- Crowell & Moring LLP has brought on a deputy attorney general for the District of Columbia as a partner for its Washington, D.C., office to bolster its employment and labor, litigation, and state attorneys general practices, the firm announced Wednesday.

Toni Michelle Jackson, who has led the public interest division of D.C.'s Office of the Attorney General since 2018, will focus on complex civil disputes involving civil rights, class actions, internal investigations, employment and commercial litigation, the firm said in a statement.



Toni Michelle  
Jackson

Jackson brings to the table plenty of public sector experience. As a deputy attorney general, she directed four specialized sections of an office tasked with both defending and prosecuting actions on behalf of the district's agencies. She litigated civil cases involving government contracts and actions aimed at enforcing agencies' decisions. She brought civil rights actions on behalf of the public. Other times, she defended the district's government in them.

Speaking to Law360, Jackson said she was happy to use her years of public sector experience to help clients "both affirmatively and defensively."

"I'm very excited to start at Crowell and join up with a lot of friends and people that I've worked with on cases. It's a great firm, with well-respected litigators. I'm very happy to be here," Jackson said.

Jackson said she looks back at the years spent at the D.C. Attorney General's Office with a sense of fulfillment, knowing her experience will prove a game changer in her private practice work.

"Those were great jobs. I loved doing that, supporting the public interest and protective folks," she said. "I had all the experience I could get from the public side. This is the next challenge for me."

Philip T. Inglima, chair of Crowell & Moring, described Jackson in a statement as a "highly-respected first-chair litigator" who will power up the firm's litigation arm for matters before D.C. courts and throughout the country.

"Toni is a tough litigator who can provide insight into the rise in high-stakes AG enforcement matters," Inglima said in the statement. "Her extensive jury and bench trial experience will help clients facing

employment, civil rights, class action and other complex civil litigation matters."

A third-generation Washingtonian, Jackson joined the D.C. Attorney General's Office in 2006. Early in her tenure, she successfully defended the district's government in a \$500 million breach-of-contract lawsuit, according to the agency's website.

Jackson left the office two years later to join the U.S. Department of Justice as a senior trial attorney in the civil rights division. In the span of more than six years, she brought numerous enforcement actions against employers engaging in discriminatory practices under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. She also defended the U.S. Department of Transportation's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program, which helps small businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged people compete for federally funded transportation contracts.

In 2015, Jackson returned to the D.C. Attorney General's Office, where she led the equity section and supervised 11 attorneys defending government agencies in class actions and other major civil lawsuits filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia and the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

Jackson was among the attorneys who successfully defended the District of Columbia in 2017 in a class action brought by Virginia motorists who accused the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority of using Dulles Toll Road revenue to fund Washington Metrorail's Silver Line extension in violation of the U.S. Constitution.

The following year, Jackson's team scored another win: She successfully challenged an antitrust suit in which D.C. taxi drivers alleged that a district regulation killed competition by cutting them out of the market.

With her ascent to deputy attorney general in charge of the office's public interest division in 2018, Jackson's agency as a litigator expanded to include actions on behalf of the public. She launched the civil rights section and the elder justice section, where she litigated on behalf of senior citizens and vulnerable adults who were victims of housing discrimination, racial discrimination, fraud and abuse, the statement said.

In November, the District of Columbia defeated a suit brought by a police union challenging the district's recently enacted police reform law, which pulled the disciplinary process for officers' misconduct away from the union. Jackson led a team of attorneys representing the district.

"Toni was an excellent division manager at the Office of the Attorney General, and our loss is Crowell & Moring's gain," D.C. Attorney General Karl A. Racine said in a statement. "Toni was a fierce advocate for district agencies in some of our most complex defensive litigation, and for vulnerable district residents in our civil rights and elder financial protection cases."

In a statement, Mark Klapow, co-chair of the firm's litigation group, hailed Jackson as a "seasoned litigator" who will strengthen the firm in its trial operations. Trina Fairley Barlow, who co-leads the firm's labor and employment practice, said Jackson's experience with investigations and defending class actions will be a boon to her team.

"She will be an asset to clients navigating a range of employment matters," Fairley Barlow said in a statement.

After graduating from the University of Minnesota Law School and prior to joining the public sector, Jackson had a notable career in private practice. In 1999, she co-founded Jackson & Ward LLC, the first Minnesota law firm owned by Black women. She later founded her solo practice, Jackson Law Offices, specializing in employment and family law matters.

"It's always been a goal of mine to go back to a law firm and practice," Jackson said. "It's just the right time to do it."

--Additional reporting by Hailey Konnath, Matt Bernardini and John Kennedy. Editing by Rich Mills.