

Volterra Fietta hires former WilmerHale counsel

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Suzanne Spears

Suzanne Spears, a former counsel at Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr with experience in business and human rights, has joined public international law boutique Volterra Fietta in London.

A US national, Spears took up her new role as counsel on 9 October. She left WilmerHale in March after eight years in the firm's London international arbitration group to focus on her business and human rights practice.

Spears held research and consulting roles for various institutions including the United Nations, the Council on Foreign Relations and the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights before joining Debevoise & Plimpton as an associate in 2002, practising from its London and New York offices. She moved to WilmerHale's London office in 2006 and was promoted to counsel three years later.

Her experience at WilmerHale includes acting for a US multinational in an UNCITRAL claim against a Latin American state before the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and for an oil and gas company in three commercial arbitrations over a multibillion-dollar investment. At Debevoise, she was involved in the preparation of Occidental Petroleum's ICSID claim against Ecuador, which was filed in 2006 and led to a US\$2 billion award in the oil company's favour in 2012.

She tells *GAR* that "joining Volterra Fietta feels like a homecoming" and that she will continue to advise states and companies on human rights issues alongside her arbitration work.

Volterra Fietta partner **Patricio Grané** describes Spears as "dynamic, experienced and charismatic," while partner **Graham Coop** says that she is a "great lawyer" and "fun to work

with.” Coop, a former general counsel of the Energy Charter Secretariat, adds that her experience on high-profile energy disputes will make her a “perfect complement” to the firm’s energy arbitration practice.

In her new role, she is already representing a US investor in an ICSID claim against a Latin American state, an Asian government in an interstate dispute, and a former minister who is engaged in a human rights dispute with her home government.

Gary Born, head of international arbitration at WilmerHale in London, praises Spears as a “thoughtful, hugely energetic and a delightful colleague,” adding that she and Volterra Fietta are a “great fit.”

Steven Finizio, also of WilmerHale in London, calls Spears an “extremely knowledgeable” lawyer who is committed to human rights issues, as well as arbitration. He notes that she “played a key role” in several complex energy disputes and treaty arbitrations at the firm.

Originally from California, Spears is qualified to practise in New York. A graduate of Tufts University in the US state of Massachusetts, Spears obtained her Juris Doctor and a master’s degree in international affairs from Columbia University. She was a Fulbright scholar in Spain and speaks fluent Spanish in addition to her native English.

Spears’s arrival coincides with the news that one of Volterra Fietta’s founding partners, **Stephen Fietta**, will leave the firm in December to set up his own practice. Fietta and partner **Robert Volterra** set up the firm in 2011, having previously worked together at Herbert Smith and Latham & Watkins.

Volterra Fietta also recently promoted **Giorgio Mandelli** to partner in September, while **Christophe Bondy**, a former senior counsel in Canada’s Trade Law Bureau, joined as a partner in July.

While the partnership has swelled, the firm has seen some long-serving associates depart over the past year. **Laura Rees-Evans** has joined Debevoise & Plimpton as an associate in London, while **Dominic Afzali** is now with Allen & Overy in Hong Kong and **Ioannis Konstantinidis** has joined the Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre for Regional Arbitration.