

Morrison & Foerster Nabs Former Obama Climate Official

By **Michael Phillis**

Law360, New York (February 13, 2017, 8:33 PM EST) -- Morrison & Foerster LLP announced on Monday it had hired a former Obama White House official who helped a range of federal agencies carry out the administration's energy, technology and conservation policies, as a senior adviser based in Washington, D.C., where he will advise the firm on climate change-related matters.

Ali Zaidi will focus on helping the firm's lawyers advise clients on legislation, regulation and policy issues related to global warming and clean energy development. He comes to the firm after spending eight years in the Obama administration. In 2014, he was appointed as a senior member of OMB where he lead a team overseeing policy, budget and management issues across an almost \$100 billion portfolio and a range of federal agencies including the Department of Energy, Interior and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

He said he was pleased to have the opportunity to advise a firm that was uniquely positioned to help clients adapt to the challenges that come from advancing clean energy in an era of policy uncertainties.

"I think this is a firm that is well positioned," Zaidi said to Law360 Monday. "I think that the clean energy transformation, and the place from which climate solutions are going to market, is at the nexus of policy, finance and technology."

Zaidi said Morrison & Foerster has offices located in Washington, D.C., New York and San Francisco — squarely within the epicenter of each of those areas. In addition, the firm has a strong appellate practice and a large team of lawyers dedicated to the practice area.

After the election of the Trump administration, which has promised to roll back some of Obama's environmental regulations, Zaidi is joining the firm at a time of upheaval around climate policy. Zaidi said, however, the Obama administration played a key role in building a market for climate-friendly technology that will be hard to stop even if Trump's policies haven't yet been enacted.

"It is important to help folks understand where the longer arc is headed," said Zaidi. "This is a long-term transformation."

At OMB, Zaidi played a key role in the agency's implementation of the Climate Action Plan, which was the Obama administration's key climate change policy that aimed to reduce emissions and spark the development of more climate-friendly technologies.

“When you work on public policy on behalf of the American people, your job is to take the long view and the broad view,” said Zaidi adding that despite resistance, it was “just the right thing to do.”

Chris Carr, chair of Morrison & Foerster’s Environment and Energy Group, said the energy revolution was delivering economic benefits, which Zaidi can help clients navigate.

“[Zaidi] is steeped in the complex, cross-sectoral issues surrounding clean energy policy, technology and markets,” said Carr in a statement. “So he has exactly the right experience and expertise that our clients need to navigate any regulatory changes and advance their interests.”

Zaidi said he formally joined the firm at the end of January. He also serves as Precourt Energy Scholar at Stanford University, where is he engaged in research on the intersection of policy and technology innovation.

--Editing by Joe Phalon.