

What Attys Are Saying About Calif.'s New Attorney General

By Rachel Rippetoe

Law360 (March 25, 2021, 4:54 PM EDT) -- California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday nominated Democratic Assembly Member Rob Bonta to replace Xavier Becerra as the state's next attorney general.

The progressive legislator, who was elected in 2012 to represent Oakland, Alameda and San Leandro, is the first Filipino American to hold the position — a point of pride for many attorneys across the state. Bonta wrote California's Green New Deal, championed stricter hate crime statutes in the state and fought for stronger renter protections, the governor's office said. He also served as a deputy city attorney in San Francisco for nearly a decade.

Law360 Pulse chatted with several attorneys across the Golden State to find out what they think about their new attorney general. Here's what some attorneys had to say about Bonta.

A. Marisa Chun
Partner, Crowell & Moring LLP

"Governor Newsom made a phenomenal choice in selecting Rob Bonta for attorney general, among the many amazing candidates. Rob is super-smart, experienced and a person of principles. His experience as a litigator at both a top law firm in private practice and at the San Francisco city attorney's office will be helpful as he leads the attorney general's office."

"Rob will be leading an office with top-flight attorneys. That was my experience both working with the California attorney general's office when I was at the U.S. Department of Justice and representing clients against that office."

"The office will be pivoting from a sometimes-adversarial posture vis-à-vis the prior administration to one of likely cooperation on many issues with the Biden administration, such as, for example, criminal justice reform, hate crimes, and environmental issues. Rob's qualities and relationships will serve him well in building relationships with the U.S. Justice Department and other state attorneys general."

Heather Linn Rosing
CEO, Klinedinst PC

"Rob Bonta is a solid choice for attorney general. He is incredibly smart and savvy, two attributes that will serve him well in the position. He comes from humble beginnings, and his impressive career path exemplifies the opportunities available in our great state."

"I think that his background will give our populace confidence in him as the attorney general. It's a tremendously important position, with so many critical legal battles being fought through that office. It requires great dedication, great stamina, and the ability to stand up for conviction in light of detraction. We are all looking forward to seeing what Assembly Member Bonta will bring to the position."

Elizabeth J. Cabraser

Partner, Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP

"Rob Bonta's nomination as attorney general is a strong and encouraging signal that in our state, law enforcement serves the people, and our top cop will work to advance the goals of social and economic justice for all Californians."

Jina Choi

Partner, Morrison & Foerster LLP

"Rob Bonta seems like a great and really important pick for California AG. Clearly, there were several talented candidates with diverse experiences, backgrounds and perspectives for Governor Newsom to choose from."

"As a fellow Asian American attorney, graduate of Yale Law School and someone who was a longtime lawyer for the government, it's gratifying for me to see Bonta — someone who has dedicated his career to public service — appointed to this hugely influential and impactful post. The nomination is historic and timely given the events of the last few weeks."

Brian Sun

Partner, Norton Rose Fulbright

"Governor Newsom's appointment recognizes the growing presence and meaningful impact of Asian Pacific Islander communities in California. Rob's diverse background and skillset make him the perfect choice to lead the attorney general's office as it tackles numerous challenges, most notably the growing number of hate crimes and the need for greater social justice. This historic appointment is what the citizens of California need as we come out of the COVID crisis and seek to restore confidence in our institutions and democratic form of government."

Ann O'Leary

Partner, Jenner & Block LLP, former chief of staff to Newsom

"I have had the pleasure of serving with Rob Bonta as San Francisco deputy city attorneys and together in Sacramento. I have seen first-hand his deep commitment to justice and progress for all Californians. He's a first-rate lawyer and leader, and I'm so grateful that the governor has tapped him to serve as California's next attorney general. I also want to acknowledge how important it is in the face of horrific hate crimes and violence against Asian Americans that California will have an Asian American attorney general, only the second in the history of California."

Leo L. Lam Partner, Keeker Van Nest & Peters LLP

"Rob Bonta has been a great assembly member and representative and leader of the API (Asian and Pacific Islander) community. He likewise will be a great AG."