

Wagner Law Lures ERISA Expert Back From BNY Mellon

By **Patrick Hoff**

Law360 (May 3, 2022, 3:44 PM EDT) -- Benefits boutique Wagner Law Group has brought back an attorney who spent the past several years working in-house for BNY Mellon Investment Management, adding his extensive experience dealing with the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, securities law and banking regulations to its roster.

John J. Sohn, who left Wagner in 2016 to become managing counsel for BNY Mellon Investment Management, is rejoining the firm as a partner, Wagner Law announced Monday. Sohn was previously a partner at Wagner from 2009 to July 2016.

Sohn told Law360 in an interview Tuesday that leaving Wagner six years ago was not an easy decision, and after being away, "rejoining felt like the right thing to do." He noted that Wagner is among the few boutique firms specializing in ERISA.

"If I was going to move to another firm, I knew that I couldn't go wrong with going back to Wagner," Sohn said. "And the prospect of working with a lot of smart attorneys who also happen to be good friends made the decision pretty easy for me."

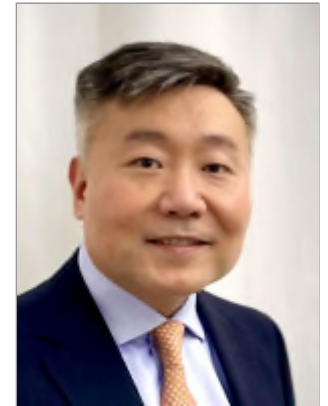
Sohn said benefits law has evolved "quite a bit" in recent years, with courts and regulators becoming much more sophisticated — which for him means there's always a new development that keeps things fresh and interesting.

"I personally think that this is one of the most interesting parts of the law because there's a lot at stake," Sohn said. "At the end of the day, I think people really do want to do the right thing. They just want to understand; what does the law require? And then, what are your options?"

But as ERISA, securities law and banking regulations become more entwined, Sohn said "there is a real need in the industry for practitioners with expertise in both ERISA and investment management law."

"I think you really do need to have an integrated appreciation of how the different regulatory frameworks work together," he added. "And I think that's what keeps this stuff interesting for me."

According to The Wagner Law Group, Sohn obtained a bachelor's degree from Harvard University in 1991 and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1994. Since then, he has spent over 25 years advising financial institutions about investment management matters, including retirement-related products and services.



John Sohn

Sohn's areas of expertise include ERISA and how banking and securities laws impact fiduciaries, having previously advised asset management firms, broker-dealers, banks, insurance companies and retirement platforms.

Before joining Wagner in 2009, the firm said, Sohn served as associate general counsel for both Legg Mason and Citigroup as their lead ERISA counsel.

Marcia S. Wagner, founder and managing director of The Wagner Law Group, said in a statement Monday that "John is an outstanding attorney in one of the most complex areas of the law, and we are delighted that he is returning to our firm."

Sohn told Law360 Tuesday that Wagner Law Group has grown in recent years, and he thinks it's going to be a "really exciting place to practice law." According to the firm, it has 47 attorneys in 12 offices, up 10 from **this time last year**.

"I know I will be working with a sophisticated clientele in a familiar atmosphere with other outstanding attorneys," he said.

--Editing by Covey Son.