
Michael L. Connor, Former Interior Department Deputy Secretary, Joins WilmerHale

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WilmerHale is pleased to announce that [Michael L. Connor](#), former Deputy Secretary of the Department of the Interior, has joined the firm as a partner.

Mr. Connor, who was the second-highest ranking official at the Interior Department, will focus his practice on energy development, environmental compliance, natural resources, and Native American law, augmenting the firm's robust work in these areas. He will be based in the [Washington DC office](#) and maintain a presence in our [Denver office](#).

"We are thrilled to have Mike join us as a partner," said [Robert Novick](#), WilmerHale's co-managing partner. "He has encyclopedic knowledge of the regulatory process and programs overseen by the Interior Department. Add to that his deep understanding of the needs of the energy and natural resources sectors and you get a lawyer who will contribute remarkable value to what we do for our clients."

"Mike's experience very much complements WilmerHale's focus on the energy and natural resources industry. No doubt he will help deepen our knowledge and be a part of our clients' successes in a very strategic way," said [Andy Spielman](#), chair of WilmerHale's [Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Practice](#) and co-partner-in-charge of its Denver office.

Of his joining the firm, Mr. Connor said: "As someone who has devoted much of his career to energy, natural resource, environmental and American Indian issues, I am delighted to join WilmerHale and contribute to the firm's demonstrated commitment to these areas."

"I was also attracted to WilmerHale's reputation for honoring public service and collegiality, the latter of which results in its lawyers readily and effectively working across practices to obtain the best results for clients. I look forward to working alongside so many superb lawyers who are absolutely at the top of their game."

As Interior Department Deputy Secretary, Mr. Connor was chief operating officer for an agency with more than 70,000 workers, an annual budget topping \$13 billion as well as responsibility to manage 20 percent of the nation's land, and the federal government's trust obligation to Indian tribes and Alaska natives.

A long-time water-resources expert, as Deputy Secretary Mr. Connor was directly responsible for the department's strategic response to the widespread drought conditions in the Western US, resolving water rights conflicts across the West, and developing and implementing policies to promote sustainable water use.

Before President Obama nominated him to be Deputy Secretary Mr. Connor was, from 2009 to 2014, Commissioner of the department's Bureau of Reclamation, the nation's largest water wholesaler and its second largest producer of hydroelectric power.

Mr. Connor also has considerable Capitol Hill experience, having worked for former Sen. Jeff Bingaman, a New Mexico Democrat, and serving from 2001 to 2009 as Counsel to the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. Prior to that, Mr. Connor held several Interior Department positions, including as Director of the Secretary's Indian Water Rights Office.

Raised in New Mexico, Mr. Connor has American Indian ancestry. His maternal grandfather was a member of Taos Pueblo and an original member of the Pueblo's water rights task force. While not an enrolled member of the tribe, Mr. Connor is considered the first person of American Indian ancestry to hold one of the Interior Department's top two posts.

Mr. Connor earned his law degree from the University of Colorado and his bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from New Mexico State University.