

Former Calif. AG Adviser, Fed Prosecutor Joins Covington

By **Cara Mannion**

Law360, New York (February 9, 2017, 8:42 PM EST) -- Covington & Burling LLP announced it has bolstered its white collar practice group with the addition of special counsel who previously was lead adviser to a California attorney general and boasts an impressive record with the U.S. Department of Justice.

Mónica Ramírez Almadani, who started at Covington on Monday, said she looks forward to helping build up the Los Angeles office, which opened in 2015, while advising clients on government enforcement matters, internal investigations and commercial litigation. Almadani said she is rejoining several former colleagues from the U.S. attorney's office who now work at Covington.

"As someone who's never worked at a law firm, I was looking for the right mix of talented attorneys with whom I could work and also a real sense of creativity and innovation," she said. "I knew that was the culture here."

Before joining the firm, Almadani worked as a member of former California Attorney General Kamala D. Harris' senior management team. When Harris was elected to the U.S. Senate in November, Almadani said she was spurred to join private practice for the first time.

"I was at the point in my career where I had enough experience and exposure to the kind of matters that Covington's clients face," she said.

In her role under Harris, Almadani advised the attorney general on the state of California's pressing legal questions and assisted with implementing California Department of Justice policies, the firm said. She also oversaw public corruption and financial fraud cases, according to a statement.

Before that, Almadani worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in California from 2012 to 2015 and prosecuted public corruption and civil rights cases, some of which went to trial or appeal at the Ninth Circuit, the firm said.

Almadani said her experience as a prosecutor will give her an advantage when defending Covington clients because she understands how federal investigations are run and the politics within government offices.

"When you've been behind the scenes and know how investigations begin and how cases are developed from the ground up, that does give you unique insight when you're advising clients," she said.

Before becoming an assistant U.S. attorney, Almadani served as a senior attorney for former U.S. Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole, working on nationally significant congressional investigations and litigation, the firm said.

One such matter was the successful challenge to an Arizona law that intended to increase enforcement powers over federal immigration laws, which Almadani said essentially criminalized immigration status. She said she played a critical role in developing the arguments within the case, which eventually went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Prior to that, Almadani counseled Assistant Attorney General Thomas E. Perez, who became the U.S. secretary of Labor in the Obama administration, on immigration, education and police matters from 2009 to 2011, the firm said.

James Garland, co-chair of Covington's white collar group, said in a statement that Almadani's experiences will benefit a wide range of the firm's clients.

"She is an exceptional courtroom advocate and litigator, and has a well-earned reputation as a trusted adviser," he said.

Almadani received a bachelor's degree in literature from Harvard University in 2001 and went on to receive a law degree from Stanford Law School in 2004.

Almadani kicked off her legal career clerking for Judge Warren J. Ferguson of the Ninth Circuit, according to the firm. She then worked for the American Civil Liberties Union's legal department for four years, where she led litigation and initiatives supporting the rights of immigrants and non-U.S. citizens.

--Editing by Jill Coffey.