

Former SEC Enforcer Joins Covington's DC Office

By **RJ Vogt**

Law360 (February 12, 2018, 9:15 PM EST) -- Covington & Burling LLP announced Monday it has added a former associate director in the enforcement division of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission to its Washington, D.C., office, where the 20-year SEC veteran will serve as partner in the firm's securities litigation and enforcement practice area.

Gerald Hodgkins, who oversaw more than 100 enforcement actions at the SEC and was a founding member of the commission's Claims Review Staff overseeing whistleblower awards, will also serve in Covington's white collar defense and investigations practice area.



Gerald Hodgkins

Chair of Covington's securities litigation and enforcement practice David Kornblau said in a statement Monday that Hodgkins' experience overseeing multimillion-dollar settlements will make him a valuable addition.

"Jerry's broad experience at the SEC will allow him to provide clients with practical, thoughtful, and effective counsel during sensitive investigations and proceedings," Kornblau said.

Hodgkins got his start at the SEC's enforcement division as a staff attorney in 1997. He worked on the \$750 million settlement with WorldCom Inc. in 2003 — the largest penalty in SEC history for issuer reporting and disclosure fraud, according to the agency — as well as 2007's \$468 million settlement from the former CEO of UnitedHealth Group Inc., which the agency said remains the largest deal involving Section 304 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

In a statement, Hodgkins said he is looking forward to "enhancing" Covington's SEC enforcement practice, as well as complementing its white collar and investigations group.

"I was attracted to Covington because of the quality of its lawyers and its culture of teamwork and collaboration," he said.

While at the SEC, Hodgkins also handled high-profile cases involving public company accounting and disclosure, the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, broker-dealer and investment adviser regulation, options backdating, and insider trading.

In December, when the government announced he would be leaving the agency, the co-director of the commission's enforcement unit, Stephanie Avakian, praised his work.

"Jerry embodies what it means to be a dedicated public servant," Avakian said, noting that Hodgkins had mentored and overseen the work of "scores of lawyers" in his time at the agency.

The agency also highlighted his work on its case against MRI International Inc., a supposed medical accounts receivable company that was actually a Ponzi scheme, and its boss Edwin Fujinaga. The Ninth Circuit upheld an SEC victory in that case earlier this year.

Prior to joining the government, Hodgkins worked as an associate at Howrey & Simon, a predecessor to Howrey LLP, which dissolved in 2011. He was named to fill the associate director post that had belonged to Fredric Firestone, now a partner at McDermott Will & Emery LLP.

Hodgkins got his undergraduate degree from Tufts University and his law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, according to Monday's statement. He also clerked for the late Charles R. Richey, then a U.S. district judge for the District of Columbia.

--Additional reporting by Jack Newsham. Editing by Breda Lund.