

COVID-19 Kept BigLaw Lobbyists Busy In Q1

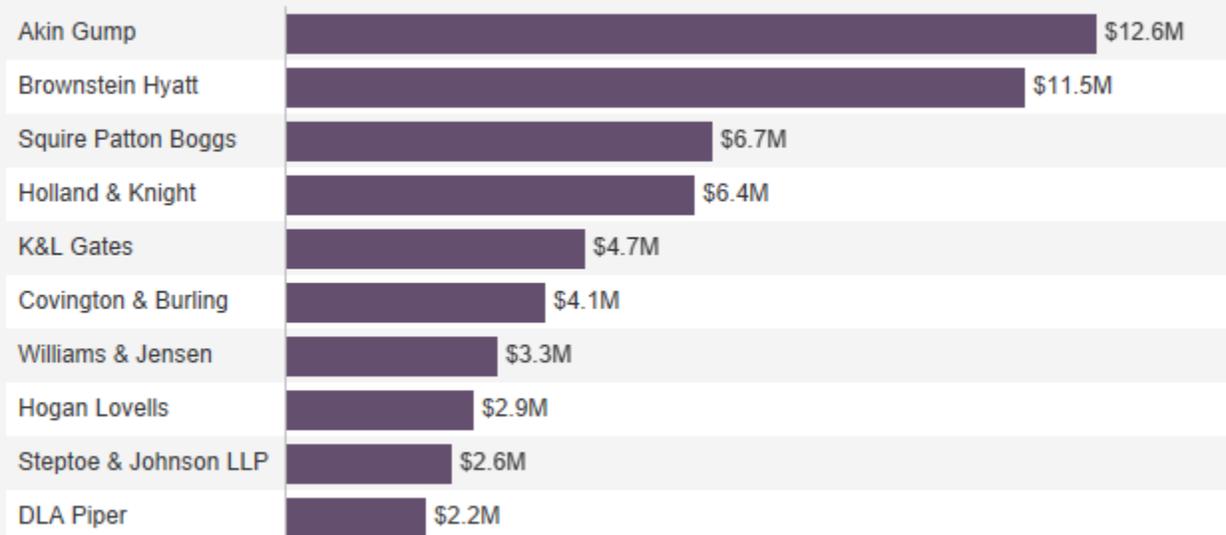
By Kevin Penton

Law360 (April 21, 2020, 7:42 PM EDT) -- BigLaw federal lobbyists saw their work mushroom during the first quarter of 2020 as the COVID-19 crisis began to develop, with several of the larger firms reporting double-digit increases compared to the same period last year, according to data reported by the firms.

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP led the way with a posting of \$12.6 million, its highest ever and a 31% boost from the first quarter of 2019, while Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP was not far behind with a posting of \$11.5 million, a 25.6% hike from the previous year.

Akin Gump's growth during the quarter hardly reflects its lobbying activity around COVID-19, as that work commenced late in the period, said G. Hunter Bates, co-leader of the firm's public law and policy practice. He expects the firm's second-quarter numbers will better reflect its lobbying activity around the novel coronavirus, as Congress and the Trump administration continue to respond to the crisis.

Akin Gump Tops Q1 Lobbying Revenue Among Firms



Source: Law firms' self-reported data, U.S. Senate Lobbying Disclosure Act Database

“The last year and, particularly, the last quarter have really showed the benefits of our firm’s strengths in the policy and regulatory arenas combining to assist our clients in very challenging times,” Bates said.

The financial data, released Monday, comes from the law firms' self-disclosures as well as from the U.S. Senate Lobbying Disclosure Act Database.

Brownstein Hyatt saw 20 new clients come on board during the first quarter, as entities attempted to grasp how the stimulus programs tied to COVID-19 worked and how they might potentially benefit, said Marc Lampkin, chair of the firm’s government relations department.

“This quarter has been unbelievably fast-paced for our bipartisan lobbying team given the COVID-19 pandemic,” Lampkin said. “I believe we have some of the smartest minds navigating this unprecedented situation.”

The other firm that saw double-digit growth compared to the same period in 2019 was Holland & Knight LLP, where lobbying activity during the first quarter totaled \$6.4 million, a 11.5% increase, according to the firm. That brought it within \$265,000 of third-place finisher Squire Patton Boggs LLP, which tallied nearly \$6.7 million.

K&L Gates LLP ranked fifth on the list, with nearly \$4.7 million in revenue during the first quarter of 2020, according to the firm. The firm’s public policy and law practice saw its overall revenue go up by 16%, said group co-leader Darrell Conner.

“That growth reflects the benefits of a policy group being part of a fully integrated global law firm,” Conner said. “Looking forward, we believe ... COVID-19 is going to have a long tail, with the road to recovery continuing to run through Washington, D.C.”

Covington & Burling LLP in January had expected 2020 to be a busy legislative year, but of course did not anticipate all the work that would come in association with the various COVID-19 efforts by the federal government, said Muftiah McCartin, co-chair of the firm’s public policy group. The firm reported taking in just over \$4 million, a slight uptick from the same period in 2019.

“We had no idea then how hectic it would be as companies across industries are now facing an economic crisis that demands federal attention, and will continue to demand attention through the end of the year, both on the funding and policy sides,” McCartin said.

Lobbying revenues for the other large law firms in the top 10 were largely consistent with the same period in 2019, with Williams & Jensen PLLC taking in \$3.3 million, Hogan Lovells earning \$2.9 million, Steptoe & Johnson LLP reporting approximately \$2.6 million, and DLA Piper LLP receiving nearly \$2.2 million.

--Additional reporting by Sam Reisman. Editing by Bruce Goldman.