

Chasing New Frontiers, Brownstein Expands in Nevada and Adds Wyoming Outpost

Already well established in federal lobbying, Brownstein is focusing on expanding its state-level government affairs and regulatory practices.

By Patrick Smith
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Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, the Denver-based firm that has been clawing its way to the top of the **federal lobbying rankings**, is absorbing a law and lobbying boutique in Nevada and opening up a new office in Cheyenne, Wyoming, as part of an effort to bolster its state government relations and regulatory bench.

Neal Tomlinson will join the firm as a shareholder, Kristina Kleist joins as a policy adviser and associate and Denise Freeman, who is not a lawyer, will join as senior policy assistant. The three will mostly work out of Brownstein's existing Nevada offices in Las Vegas and Carson City while also spending time in the firm's new office in Cheyenne where they will be doing solely government relations work.

"It was one of those triangulated moments," said Rich Benenson, Brownstein's managing partner. "We wanted to bulk up our Nevada practice. We also had our eye on Neal for a while, and his practice had a presence in Cheyenne, which we believe will benefit our real estate group. And finally, we have a natural resource opportunity that will benefit from having a presence in Cheyenne."

Greg Brower, shareholder at Brownstein and former assistant director for the Office of Congressional

Affairs at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, will work with the new team to get them up to speed, the firm said.

Brower previously served as a member of the Nevada Legislature for five regular sessions, including as chair-

man of the Senate Judiciary Committee and as a member of the state's Gaming Policy Committee.

According to a firm release, Tomlinson's practice "concentrates on administrative law and government relations, including many types of business and privileged licensing, regulatory compliance and related business litigation."

Prior to joining Brownstein, Tomlinson was the managing partner in his own law and government relations firm, Hyperion Advisors. He was previously a partner with Snell & Wilmer.

Kleist's practice focuses on administrative law and government relations, including regulatory



Neal Tomlinson, shareholder with Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck.

and licensing compliance. Prior to joining Brownstein she was an attorney at Hyperion Advisors.

Benenson said that expansion on the state government level is a key priority for the firm that complements the growth of its federal practice in D.C.

“We want to use our success and brand at the federal level to invest in our state practice,” Benenson said.

He declined to say what other states the firm might be eyeing, but said it always has a short list of potential recruits.

“My belief is that at the state government relations level, our direction should be about expanding our state practice nationwide without the need for a brick and mortar footprint at each location,” he said. “We did brick and mortar in Cheyenne, but our reach expanded much further.”

Brownstein has made several moves over the past year that solidify its position as a power player on the federal front. Last year its second-quarter results briefly made it the **second largest** federal lobbying firm by reported revenue, the firm hired former chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Ed Royce, and it opened up a new **crisis management practice**.

This has been part of the strategy all along for Benenson. Before he officially **took the reigns** at Brownstein in July 2019, he vowed that the firm would be in “perpetual growth mode” when it comes to the D.C. market.

The firm, which will now have 13 offices in the U.S., has seen slow but steady revenue growth over the past decade.

With the exception of slight dips in 2014 and 2017, it has increased revenue every year since 2010, increasing reported annual revenue from \$131 million in 2009 to \$186 million in 2018.

Cheyenne isn’t the first smaller market the firm has entered. In addition to its two Nevada locations, Brownstein currently has offices in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Atlantic City, New Jersey, to go along with more traditional placements in Los Angeles and D.C.

Brownstein hasn’t prioritized growth in cities such as Houston, Seattle, Dallas and Minneapolis that are often next on the list for firms that are already in the largest U.S. markets—looking instead to cities such as like Reno and Cheyenne when it comes to smaller market expansion.

“The primary markets and financial centers are saturated,” Benenson said. “I think Dallas has become pretty saturated. We are looking at creative opportunities in other jurisdictions that make sense for us.”

Those opportunities, according to Benenson, are fueled by potential partnerships with firms that have strong practices in the real estate, government relations and the natural resources sector. The firm’s next move, he said, was “unlikely to be a financial center.”

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