2026 RISING STAR

William Dong

Kirkland & Ellis LLP's William Dong has served as lead tax counsel on several multibillion-dollar deals spanning industries, including a $4.75 billion sale of a data center and energy infrastructure developer to a tech giant, earning him a spot as one of the tax attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

His most interesting deal:

The $4.75 billion landmark data-center deal between Alphabet Inc. and TPG Rise Climate and its investors that closed in March counted Dong among its tax advisers.

In 2024, Dong led a team advising TPG Rise Climate and its investors, Climate Adaptive Infrastructure and Greenbelt Capital Partners, in their initial investment of Intersect, an energy and data center infrastructure developer that was later sold to Alphabet, the parent company of Google.

Alphabet in December announced an agreement to acquire Intersect as part of a broader goal to secure Google's access to power infrastructure needed to support its artificial intelligence expansion. The deal would build upon Google's existing partnership with Intersect, which already had energy and data center development projects under construction, according to Alphabet's 2025 announcement.

" The [group of investors in the $4.75B sale of Intersect to Alphabet] was a deal that demonstrated how important data center solutions and energy infrastructure have become in the current economy. "

Having advised on the tax aspects of the sponsors' initial investment beginning in 2024, Dong said the deal was especially meaningful, because he got to see the full life cycle of the investment.

Taking on the complexities of a deal that broadly reflects tech giants' race to secure power sources for their AI capacity was also rewarding, Dong said.

"The transaction itself was quite challenging and had a number of moving parts that required careful attention and coordination from the team," he said.

"It was also a deal that demonstrated how important data center solutions and energy infrastructure have become in the current economy," Dong said.

His proudest moment:

While Kirkland recognizes Dong as a versatile tax expert across public and private equity M&A transactions who is routinely chosen for market-moving deals, he said the greatest reward for him is watching younger attorneys he has taken under his wing grow in their careers.

Nothing makes Dong prouder than hearing other partners praise the work of associates he has worked with in deals, mainly the individuals in the firm's Utah and Texas offices, he said.

When those associates are excelling, coming up with creative solutions or producing exceptional work, "that's when I feel the most proud," Dong said.

"I feel like I had a hand in it," he said.

" Showing creativity in this job is the thing that motivates me, which is a little surprising because people probably don't think that about tax law. "

Why he's a tax attorney:

Dong chose the tax practice for its problem-solving demands and has remained in the area for the same reason since he became an attorney in 2013.

"You're always learning," so the tax practice will "never become stale for me," he said.

Dong entered law school with the idea of becoming a litigator, which he said is what everyone thinks when they're pursuing a legal career.

Dong, however, was still undecided about which practice area to pursue after graduation. During his summer associateship at Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP, he rotated through several groups, including product liability and bankruptcy, before finding his niche.

After landing in Weil's tax practice, Dong said he found his calling, saying the practice is "extremely interesting" and likening the tax issues arising in deals as challenging puzzles to solve.

One can "really develop an expertise in the field," Dong said, citing his current focus on hybrid capital at Kirkland as an example.

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On the future of the industry:

The biggest change is already happening, which is the industry's rapid adoption of artificial intelligence-based tools to boost companies' workflow, according to Dong. "It's got to be AI," he said.

Junior and senior attorneys alike are increasingly using AI to boost productivity, he said, while firms are heavily investing in developing new tools powered by the technology.

While the use of AI is sweeping across every industry, its role in knowledge-based areas like tax law will be "extremely helpful and transformative," Dong said.

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