

Rising Star: King & Spalding's Tristan Pelham Webb

By Clark Mindock

Law360 (June 27, 2022, 2:03 PM EDT) -- Tristan Pelham Webb of King & Spalding has helped put together deals for Axiom Infrastructure US Inc. for the development of renewable energy transmission lines and massive battery storage in California, earning him a spot among the top project finance practitioners under age 40 honored as Law360 Rising Stars.

HIS BIGGEST AND MOST INTERESTING CASE RECENTLY:

Webb said one of the most interesting deals he worked on recently was a joint venture between Axiom and the Morongo Band of Mission Indians in southern California, where they put together a \$585 million financing deal for the building of an electricity transmission line.

The work was the culmination of nearly a decade of efforts on the transmission line, which when complete will quadruple the capacity of primarily renewable power from the Coachella and Imperial valleys to the Los Angeles load center.

Webb said the deal was particularly interesting because it brought together more streamlined forms of deal-making with the challenge of working with a Native American tribe. Working with a sovereign nation with its own history and agency was a fascinating challenge, he said.

"You had a financial sponsor in Axiom Infrastructure. They do a ton of deals, know how to do them, they do them their way, and they know what they care about and don't," he said. "Then you have the Morongo band, they do a fair amount of deal activity. ... But they do things in a very different way, and there were times when we had to go back to their general membership to get literally the entirety of the tribe to vote on a particular action they were taking. We had to make sure the ballot measure going to the tribe was stated in a very particular way that was going to appeal politically."



Tristan Pelham Webb
King & Spalding

Age: 40

Home base: Denver, Colorado

Position: Partner

Law school: NYU

First job after law school: Clerk for a judge at the ICTY and ICTR in the Hague

Webb continued: "That was a really interesting thing to navigate."

HIS PROUDEST MOMENT AS AN ATTORNEY:

Webb said becoming a partner at King & Spalding was easily among the best moments in his career, but said he also gets joy and satisfaction out of more ordinary tasks.

"I just really like closing deals," he said. "I get a lot of satisfaction out of it and I'm super proud and super excited anytime a deal closes. I get a rush from it. Is that really a proudest moment? Not really in the more colloquial sense, but it's certainly why I get out of bed and do what I do."

WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:

Aside from closing deals, Webb said he's been able to appreciate more of the job and the types of wisdom he has now that he's a more established attorney.

He loves it when a client comes to him seeking advice or asking him to solve a complex problem, or to explain how a complex issue works.

"The fun part of this is helping clients — helping them achieve a result, achieve their goal. It's what makes it fun," Webb said. There's obviously a lot of drudgery to what we do as transactional attorneys: lots of documents, lots of pages, lots of words, lots of late nights, lots of early mornings."

He continued: "But the real fun part is being on a call with clients or being in the room with clients and having them look to you for an answer — and then giving them that advice and having them take and trust your advice is super rewarding."

WHY HE IS A PROJECT FINANCE ATTORNEY:

Webb said that, while financial deals can be abstract in their own right, one thing that keeps him engaged is the fact that, at the end of the day, he's working on real assets. There's something about knowing that whatever deal he is working on is connected to a tangible product, whether that's a power line or a power plant or anything else.

"They're things that you build on the ground that are power plants, roads, bridges, tunnels, airports, energy terminals, oil storage terminals — but they're things instead of just a company, right?" Webb said. "Maybe it's just that I have a simple caveman brain, but it's much easier for me to think, OK, we're financing a solar farm that's going to be a whole bunch of piles driven into the ground on which we're going to throw thousands of solar panels that connect by wires into an inverter and feed into a grid. That, for me, is easy to conceptualize."

— As told to Clark Mindock

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2022, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.