

Rising Star: Haynes and Boone's Paul Dickerson

By **Christopher Norton**

Law360, New York (April 07, 2010) -- A commitment to the public good in the cleantech sector, from a clerkship in the federal courts after law school to a leadership role on the U.S.' first-ever renewable energy foreign trade mission, has made Haynes and Boone LLP's Paul Dickerson one of Law360's 10 energy attorneys under 40 to watch.

"Public service is the one constant you'll see throughout my career," Dickerson said.



Dickerson, 39, was practicing law at Haynes and Boone in Houston when the U.S. Department of Commerce asked him to come to Washington to join the staff of the U.S. Foreign and Commercial Service, now known as the U.S. Commercial Service, which helps to sell American goods and services around the world.

"I joined to help organize, franchise a bit and manage the team to an even higher level of efficiency," he said. "I really had a ball."

Following that stint, the U.S. Department of Energy asked Dickerson to come over to look at its organization and help modify its operations as chief operating officer of its Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. He described the office as "our nation's one-stop shop" for all investments across the renewable and efficiency portfolio for the applied sciences.

The office was investing \$2 billion per year in clean energy, but without a strong connection to the markets. Dickerson knew his team had to become smarter investors.

"We spent three years in Silicon Valley, Boston and New York connecting that office with some of our nation's finest investors so we could learn from their experiences and make better investments of our tax dollars in the renewable and efficiency space," he said.



haynesboone
Setting precedent.

Dickerson also led an effort to commercialize the technology the DOE was investing in.

“We improved the licensing function of our national laboratories,” he said. “We were inventing a lot, spending a lot of tax dollars, but we weren't getting it to market.”

On top of licensing, Dickerson wanted to help U.S. companies to sell their products in foreign markets. He called his old team at the DOC and sent a number of staff members to the national renewable energy lab in Colorado for training.

His efforts led to the nation's first-ever renewable energy trade mission, starting in India and China and leading to Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

While at the DOE, Dickerson also made a concerted effort to make it easier for American renewable energy companies to sell their products to the federal government.

“As the nation's largest energy consumer, we had to practice what we were preaching,” he said.

When the time came to move on, he chose to return to Haynes and Boone for four specific reasons, Dickerson said. He needed a law firm that had an international and full service focus, a strong intellectual property practice, experience with project finance and complex tax, and strength within the incumbent energy market, he said.

“Since most of my clean tech clients, to grow and to scale, need to work with traditional energy companies, I had to join a firm with great connections and past representation for the major oil and gas companies,” Dickerson said. Haynes and Boone's connections to power-generating companies, chemical companies and large computer companies were also of particular value, he said.

“The vast majority of entrepreneurs behind clean tech success don't have the experience to scale,” Dickerson said. “The skills they may lack are the same skills that my oil and gas friends have mastered over last 120 years.”

He rejoined Haynes and Boone in 2008 to launch and lead their clean energy practice.

“As these companies are looking to scale and grow, they need a law firm that can shore up their intellectual property, can work on project finance and complex tax, and has experience with large energy projects,” Dickerson said. “That's where Haynes and Boone knocks it out of the park every time.”

For younger lawyers interested in moving into the clean energy space, he of course suggests that they “look no further than Haynes and Boone.”

In addition, he “would encourage them to find some career serving the public, and then transition that into a private career if they wish,” Dickerson added.

All along the way, though, it's vital to have a keen understanding of the practice of law and to look for every opportunity to help one's friends, he said.

“If you live a life of being a good lawyer and someone who will do favors for friends whenever they need it, I think that leads to a fruitful life and a successful career,” Dickerson said.