

Ex-Fla. DBPR Head, Real Estate Vet Jump To Spiritus Law

By **Madison Arnold**

Law360 (May 9, 2022, 3:01 PM EDT) -- Florida-based Spiritus Law added two new hires, including a non-attorney lobbyist who is the former secretary of the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation and a partner in its real estate practice.

Spiritus Law, which serves clients in highly regulated industries and transactions, announced last week that it added Halsey W. Beshears, who is the chair of the firm's lobbying and government relations practice, as well as partner Dominic "Nico" A. Romano.

Beshears will expand the firm's advocacy capabilities for clients in the alcohol and hospitality industries in Florida, particularly as they continue to recover from the pandemic, the firm said.

His work at Spiritus will include helping clients with administrative and investigative issues and working as a mediator with government licensing agencies.

"I think sometimes it's easier in government to just say 'No, we can't change this. We can't do this.' And so being able to find a way and help people make a living and make a better life for themselves and their employees, if we can do that and we can help them thrive, that still is what gets me up in the morning," Beshears said in an interview with Law360 Pulse on Monday.

Beshears served as the secretary of the DBPR from 2019 to 2021, when he led the agency through the closures forced by the coronavirus pandemic. During that time, he helped to create operation exemptions that allowed restaurants to keep operating and permitted cocktails-to-go emergency sales authorizations.

Also during that time, he helped some Florida breweries stay afloat by allowing them to reopen during the pandemic if they brought on licensed on-site food vendors.

"The hospitality industry in particular just took it on the chin during the pandemic. And those operators that were able to adapt, move quickly, and take advantage of the opportunities that were given to them like cocktails to-go or having a food license, those were the guys that came out of it more nimble and able to grow and better their business. So we if we could continue to do that for that sector, which I love, that's what I'm going to do. Helping these guys grow their business, change their business and operate within the parameters of the regulated industries, that's my goal," Beshears said.

Before the DBPR, Beshears was a member of the Florida House of Representatives from 2012 to 2019. During that time, he worked on issues related to the state's business climate. He also served as chair of the Business and Professional subcommittee and the Careers and Competition subcommittee and served as vice chair of the energy and utilities subcommittee.



Halsey W. Beshears



Dominic "Nico" A. Romano

"He not only has a wealth of relationships in Tallahassee but he also has an intimate knowledge of regulatory laws and a unique ability to bring people to the table. Those are true assets to our clients who are interested in long-term changes and solutions that would allow them to reposition their operations much faster in the event of another pandemic. Halsey will work closely with Florida agencies and elected officials to address their concerns," Robert Lewis, Spiritus' co-founding partner, said in a statement.

One particular advantage that Beshears might have in his new career is "knowing the rules of the game" from his time as secretary and serving in the legislature.

"Most people don't and they just don't have the time, tenure, or the want to dive into study and know the exact rules or the parameters of regulated industries. And so in my short tenure working for the state, that's what I had to do. So I think having that intimate knowledge of it, is what will help me help them," he said.

He earned a bachelor's of social science from Florida State University and a master's in Entrepreneurship from the University of Florida.

Romano's practice focuses on the laws governing business and transactional matters, including real estate, financial services, corporate, infrastructure, development and hospitality. He will also handle alcoholic beverage matters for the firm.

Spiritus Law said that the addition of Romano will expand the firm's real estate and transactional capabilities when it comes to clients in the alcohol and hospitality spaces who may need help with zoning or real property-related matters.

"The complexities of real estate and transactional law require experienced attorneys to ensure a smooth closing," Lewis said. "Having had several restaurants as tenants during his time as a commercial real estate adviser for more than 20 years makes him a great addition to Spiritus."

Romano has advised real estate investors, facilitated deal making and drafted and negotiated purchase and sale agreements. He has also coordinated the closing of property deals, leases and evictions, the firm said.

"Spiritus Law has a modern view of economic and business factors that influence Florida's real estate market few firms recognize," Romano said in a statement. "The opportunity to support the firm's goals for legal innovation while building upon their existing reputation for excellence is very exciting to me. I look forward to growing my practice here."

Most recently, Romano worked as a commercial real estate adviser and dealt with transactions, negotiations and processes for multi-family and retail properties. His clientele includes several restaurants, which the firm says gives him a unique advantage thanks to his understanding of both tenants and landlords.

Earlier in his career, Romano was the deputy vice president of CQ, an infused beverage company, according to his LinkedIn profile. In that role, he was responsible for planning, directing and controlling all financial and administrative operations.

At the same time, Romano also worked in private practice and worked on matters such as corporate transactions, new business formation, real estate transactions, landlord-tenant, collections and litigation.

In that work, he helped to identify risks as well as proposed alternatives to mitigate any potential challenges in proposed transactions and managed the day-to-day of a multifamily portfolio and attended to its legal matters, such as leases and evictions.

Romano is a graduate of St. Thomas University School of Law. He earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Florida.

In addition to being licensed to practice law in both Florida and Washington, D.C., Romano is also a licensed Florida real estate sales associate.

Romano wasn't immediately available for an interview Monday.

Spiritus Law describes itself as an entrepreneurial regulatory and business firm. It offers legal services in a whole slate of areas, including alcohol and tobacco law, hospitality law, commercial and residential development, land use and zoning, real estate transactions, government relations, banking and lending, general commercial retail, including the retail sale of regulated products, and public-private partnership transactions.

--Editing by Alyssa Miller.

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