

Robbins Law Group Debuts Lobbying Arm

Atlanta attorney **Richard Robbins**, whose law firm **Robbins Ross Alloy Belinfante Littlefield** already has a strong government relations legal team, has inaugurated a new lobbying affiliate.

The new lobbying arm, **Robbins Government Relations**, draws heavily on the expertise of government lawyers who developed their political acumen during the administrations of former Georgia Govs. Sonny Perdue and Nathan Deal. The team also includes a former aide to Sen. Sam Nunn, D-Georgia, two attorneys who have worked for two secretaries of state, and former legislative counsel to former Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Alabama, who's now the U.S. attorney general.

Robbins called the lobbying affiliate "a natural extension" of his firm's government law practice—one that has "been years in the making." Robbins said he anticipates it "will grow substantially over the next two years."

RGR officially opened for business Oct. 2.

Robbins said RGR came to fruition after he and partner **Joshua Belinfante** recruited **Roy Robinson** and **Rollin Downs**. Robinson is a longtime lobbyist and former aide to Nunn, and Downs is senior associate vice chancellor of government relations and economic development for the state Board of Regents and Perdue's former deputy chief of staff.

Belinfante, former executive counsel to Perdue, and Downs will serve as co-managing members of RGR.

Robbins' expansion will compete with lobbying arms affiliated with Atlanta-based Troutman Sanders, Alabama firm Balch & Bingham's Atlanta office, and Dentons, which built a strong Georgia lobbying practice after it merged with Atlanta firm McKenna, Long & Aldridge.

Robbins said the lobbying affiliate's major players have political pedigrees that are "hard to match." He added the affiliate was created, in part, to recruit Robinson and Downs, who aren't attorneys but whom he dubbed "the dynamic duo."

Robbins also said the creation of Robbins Government Relations will allow the law firm to sidestep potential conflicts with its other clients.

Robbins Government Relations has also recruited:

- **David Dove**, former chief of staff and legal counsel to Secretary of State Brian Kemp and a veteran of Kemp's ongoing campaign for governor on the Republican ticket.
- **Vincent Russo**, former executive counsel to Kemp and former Secretary of State Karen Handel, now a U.S. representative from the state's Sixth District and veteran of their political campaigns.

- **Ryan Teague**, former executive counsel to Deal and current Georgia Republican Party finance chairman.
- **Kimberly Anderson**, former legislative counsel to Sessions.

The lobbying staff may be heavy on Republican political expertise, but Robbins said he does not want to be pigeonholed as Republican or Democrat.

“I think it’s very important, not only from a philosophy point of view but from a business point of view. ... The idea of saying, ‘I’m a Republican, I can help you,’ or ‘I’m a Democrat, I can help you,’ is meaningless to someone who wants to get the job done,” Robbins said.

“Let’s face it,” he added. “Georgia is turning purple. It is, I believe, a business mistake and a strategic mistake to be branded as we only work with Republicans or we only work with Democrats.”

Robbins also said his firm is small but nimble.

“When they go global, we go local,” he said. “That’s our strategy. We are not just another branch office. We are laser-focused on Georgia.”

“We have no Singapore office, no Paris office, no London office,” he added. “The vast majority of clients are looking for people who are really, really well-regarded and really, really plugged in in Georgia. ”

Belinfante said that, until now, he has largely represented clients in front of state administrative agencies or the courts. But the creation of RGR extends that representation to executive agencies, too.

He said his role has been, until now, “To assist our clients who have lobbyist already retained. That’s how I got to work with Roy Robinson. He and I have shared clients for a decade now.”

“A lot of our clients’ problems can be resolved through the legislative branch more easily and effectively than through the judicial branch,” Belinfante said. “Or our clients may have a win in the judicial branch that may need to be protected in the Legislature, particularly clients who are highly regulated and particularly when legislation or regulations pass that govern what they do.”

“I think anyone can go down to the Capitol and try to advance a particular position. What having a lobbying arm does is give us a full-time commitment at the Capitol that we did not have prior to hiring Rollin and Roy.”