

Cohen Vaughan Builds Up Construction Group With New Chair

By Tracey Read

Law360 (September 30, 2025, 7:00 AM EDT) -- Cohen Vaughan LLP has hired a trial lawyer who is an expert on New York labor law and construction site accidents to serve in the newly created position of national construction practice chair, the firm announced on Tuesday.

Partner Kelly A. McGee joins from Goldberg Segalla LLP, where she was a co-chair and leader of the construction group. In her new role, she said she will be reunited with two former Goldberg Segalla teammates.

"This position where I am right now is a place I've wanted to be for a long time," McGee told Law360 Pulse in a recent interview. "It's a goal that I've had for a while."

McGee said Cohen Vaughan has the culture of collaboration and transparency that is important to her.



Kelly A. McGee

"This is a tight-knit ownership group, and the group is made up of hand-selected people," she said. "And this group is talented. They're generous with their time. They really sat down with me in the beginning stages and explained everything to me. It is collaborative, in that every decision that's made within this small group is made together. And I really appreciate that."

McGee will oversee catastrophic accident and construction defect litigation and trials, safety risk management, contract drafting and negotiation, contract disputes, insurance and indemnity counseling, liens and appellate strategy to ensure responsive and consistent service for the firm's construction business and insurance clients.

McGee has tried dozens of cases, defending construction site accident and construction defect cases, catastrophic injury and wrongful death, property damage and products liability matters, the firm said. She represents clients such as building and landowners, general contractors, construction and site safety managers and trade subcontractors in cases involving falls from elevated work platforms, including scaffolds, ladders, man lifts and stairways, and cases involving falling objects, including steel beams, construction materials and equipment, the firm said.

She has also defended product liability claims against construction equipment manufacturers.

McGee said she chose construction as a specialty because she enjoys learning the industry from her clients.

"I love the construction clients," she said. "On almost every case, I'm learning something about construction. I could talk to you about scaffolds, about pouring cement, about lanyards. I could talk to you about, you know, rebar. Things I never knew about and certainly wouldn't learn in law school, I learned from my clients. I also find with the construction clients, they are truly passionate about what they do. They love what they do. They care about their businesses. They care about their clients just like we do. So that is the number one thing about construction law that I like the best."

McGee is sought out for her expertise on New York Labor Law Section 200, 240(1), and 241(6), under which plaintiffs regularly seek some of the highest jury verdicts in the state, the firm said.

Right now, McGee said, fraud claims stemming from whether an accident did in fact occur, as well as the

potential for nuclear verdicts in certain construction cases, are among the big trends in her space.

"New York is the only state that has an absolute liability statute against owners and general contractors in construction cases," she said. "So that alone creates an issue. Then you have an evolving law that's kind of expanding the original intent of the law, which kind of allows cases to come in that don't necessarily belong in that space. So that creates an issue."

The nuclear verdicts usually come into play on the height-related accidents, whether it's someone falling from height or something falling onto them, and they usually involve clients who work in a labor union and have had surgeries, she said.

The New York State Bar Association twice selected McGee to serve as editor-in-chief of its Construction Site Personal Injury Litigation treatise reviewing all aspects of New York labor law claims, including examination of appellate court decisions that carve out new exceptions and build upon traditional interpretations of the law, the firm said. She is also an active member and former committee chair of the New York chapter of Professional Women in Construction.

"We specifically targeted Kelly to lead our construction practice across the footprint of our firm and beyond," Richard J. Cohen, Cohen Vaughan chair and chief development officer, said in a statement. "She's an excellent lawyer, exceptional human being and long-time friend, adding to our strong leadership team and expanding our capability to serve the construction industry, throughout New York state and nationally."

Before joining Goldberg Segalla in 2017, McGee was a partner at Litchfield Cavo LLP and Lewis Brisbois Bisgaard & Smith LLP. She began her legal career as an associate at Cullen & Dykman LLP after graduating from Touro University Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center.

Cohen Vaughan **opened in January**, following a combination of Philadelphia-based insurance defense firm Vaughan McLean LLC, Pennsylvania defense litigation firm Deasey Mahoney & Valentini Ltd., and Cohen Cunningham DeRose Higgins Lyon LLP. The latter firm was founded by Richard J. Cohen, who was a founder and former managing partner at Goldberg Segalla.

Besides New York and Pennsylvania, the Philadelphia-founded litigation firm has offices in Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Maryland and New Jersey.

--Additional reporting by Xiumei Dong. Editing by Nicole Bleier.