

With Democracy Practice, Kline & Specter Takes a National Aim

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What You Need to Know

- Kline & Specter has launched a Democracy Practice, looking to take on national public service work opposing the Trump administration.
- A number of attorneys at the firm are engaged with the practice, which also collaborates with outside attorneys on a case-by-case basis.



Kline & Specter's Shanin Specter. Courtesy photo

Philadelphia plaintiffs firm Kline & Specter's new "Democracy Practice" is a break from the firm's traditional case mix, but alongside co-founding partner Shanin Specter's prolific use of social media, it's a way to build the firm's national profile.

The "Democracy Practice," which Specter described as a formalization of the firm's preexisting public facing work, officially launched this year and handles cases such as Kline & Specter's recent King's Bench petition that seeks to allow independent voters in Pennsylvania to vote in primary elections.

While the new, nationally focused practice doesn't come completely out of left field—Specter cited his firm's historic "public-mindedness" and previous cases centered on protecting the right to trial

by jury and opposing caps on damage awards—it's certainly a divergence from the work that has built the firm's reputation.

A look at the firm's website shows some of its main practice areas as medical malpractice, products liability, and vehicle accidents, all traditional plaintiffs' firm practices. The firm also lists a civil rights practice, although Kline & Specter's website notes the firm only handles civil rights cases involving serious injuries or deaths.

Those practices, however, are part of the firm's paid work; Specter noted that the firm is not being paid for any of the work that falls under the democracy practice.

"All these efforts have arisen organically. We aren't charging for any of this work. But we are excited to contribute to these causes, and the professional satisfaction this brings is the best form of compensation," he said.

Although Specter and the firm's website did not provide a specific number of attorneys included in the practice, Specter indicated that a fair number of its over 50 attorneys were engaged with the practice, including co-founder Tom Kline and well-known appellate practitioner Chip Becker. Others involved in the practice include appellate partner Andra Laidacker, appellate attorney Corrie Woods, and litigation associate Helen Lawless, and Specter further indicated that the practice often collaborates with lawyers at other firms on a "project by project basis."

"Lawyers are the backbone of the rule of law and democracy. Especially in times of extreme stress, we lawyers must be public facing in protecting our democratic values and systems," Specter explained. "Most recently, we've felt compelled to assist law firms—some of whom are our adversaries in civil litigation—as they've been targeted by the administration."

It's a stance that Specter has been increasingly vocal about on social media, dating beyond Kline & Specter's role in crafting an amicus brief signed by law students in support of firms litigating against the administration's executive orders designed to suspend security clearances and intimidate clients. Not only that, but the firm has put advertising dollars towards supporting its Big Law peers fighting the administration, and Specter has not shied away from posting public critiques on LinkedIn aimed at firms who opted to strike deals with the administration rather than face an executive order.

"It's important that lawyers know what is happening and what are their opportunities to help," Specter said of his online presence.

And even before Trump began targeting the legal industry, Kline & Specter was already making national headlines by suing Trump for defamation on behalf of a group of men known as the

“Central Park Five,” who were exonerated on rape and assault charges from 1989 and whom the president described as killers during his campaign in 2024.

“Our democratic institutions and legal system are threatened. We are neither looking for thank you’s, nor are we getting many. Leaning into these issues and knowing we are helping is deeply satisfying for all of us,” Specter said.

Kline & Specter’s engagement with the issues raised by Trump’s executive orders against the industry align with a larger trend of midsize firms taking a more prominent role in opposing the administration as well.

Firms such as Keker Van Nest & Peters, a midsize litigation firm based in San Francisco, have also made waves in the media criticizing the administration; attorneys at smaller firms have also banded together to make their displeasure with the administration known, such as the LinkedIn group General Counsels United and the newly formed Pro Bono Litigation Corps, crafted to take on public interest litigation Big Law might now be loathe to take up.