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## WilmerHale Welcomes Sean Thornton as Partner in Boston Office

DECEMBER 2, 2025

Seasoned financial services and regulatory lawyer [Sean Thornton](#) has joined WilmerHale's Boston office as a partner and member of the Financial Institutions Group and International Trade Group. Thornton brings a wealth of experience in anti-money laundering (AML), sanctions compliance, export controls, and other complex regulatory matters, following more than a decade in senior in-house roles at a major financial institution and law firm and distinguished government service.

"Sean's rare blend of private practice, government service, and significant in-house experience in AML, sanctions, and other regulatory areas makes him an invaluable addition to our team," said [Anjan Sahni](#), WilmerHale's Managing Partner. "His perspective from both the public and private sectors—especially his leadership at BNP Paribas and the U.S. Department of the Treasury—will be a tremendous asset to our clients navigating today's shifting enforcement landscape."

"Clients are navigating a dynamic and increasingly challenging trade and compliance landscape. Sean joins WilmerHale's deep bench of experts in this space, bringing invaluable expertise in managing complex sanctions matters. We are delighted to welcome him to WilmerHale," said David Ross, Chair of the firm's International Trade, Investment and Market Access Practice Group.

"WilmerHale's Financial Services group stands out for its depth of knowledge and dedication to client success. Our team's broad experience allows us to tackle the most complex challenges in the industry, and Sean's arrival further strengthens our ability to deliver comprehensive solutions to our clients," said [Franca Harris Gutierrez](#), Chair of the firm's Financial Institutions Practice.

Thornton joins WilmerHale after serving as Managing Director and Head of Legal Financial Security for the Americas at BNP Paribas since 2014, where he led legal strategy for the bank's US AML and sanctions compliance globally, and where he helped manage implementation of extensive global remediation following the largest sanctions enforcement action in U.S. history.

Prior to BNP Paribas, Thornton spent seven years as Chief Counsel of the Office of Foreign Assets Control at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, where he directed legal support for regulatory and enforcement activities, and played a key role in the development of major sanctions frameworks.

"After more than a decade practicing in-house, I am looking forward to leveraging my experience to

help a variety of clients manage increasingly complex regulatory challenges,” said Thornton.

“WilmerHale’s reputation as a leader in this space and its deep bench in financial institutions regulation and enforcement – not to mention a highly collaborative culture and commitment to the highest principles of ethical responsibility in the legal profession– made it the clear choice for the next chapter of my career.”

Thornton earned his BA, magna cum laude, from Harvard College, and his JD, cum laude, from Georgetown University. He clerked for Judge John Steadman on the DC Court of Appeals before beginning his legal career in private practice and later joining the Treasury Department.