

Vorys Expands Pittsburgh Office with Addition of Energy Lawyers Venum and Zabela

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[Michael K. Venum](#)

[Keith A. Zabela](#)

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Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP announced today that two experienced Pennsylvania energy attorneys, Michael Venum and Keith Zabela, have joined the firm in its Pittsburgh office.

“Michael and Keith have worked with some of the nation’s top oil and gas producers,” said Kevin Gormly, a partner in the Vorys Pittsburgh office. “We’re looking forward to working with both Michael and Keith and believe they will further strengthen our firm’s nationally recognized energy practice.”

Venum comes to the firm with more than 20 years of legal experience. He represents exploration and production companies and midstream operators in regional land development matters and counsels these companies on local zoning, road use, municipal ordinance challenges and general real estate matters. Venum has successfully obtained land development approvals for well pad sites; central facilities, including compressor stations; pipelines; and metering stations in Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ohio. In addition, he served as the lead attorney in the on-going Middlesex Township zoning challenge based upon the *Robinson Township* decision. Venum has published extensively on energy law and other topics related to oil and gas and land use and currently serves as an adjunct professor in California University of Pennsylvania’s Land Management Program. Prior to joining Vorys, he was a partner in Burleson LLP’s Pittsburgh office. He also has experience working as in-house counsel at Cricket Communications, Inc. and at Crown Castle USA.

“Vorys is a great fit for me,” Venum said. “I am excited to join a firm with such a robust zoning and land use regulation practice; their experience will be a real benefit for the clients that I represent.”

Zabela joins Vorys with 10 years of experience focused on oil and gas law. His practice includes counseling clients on oil and gas titles, operational issues and transactional matters. Zabela has advised clients on due diligence, leasing, acquisitions and divestitures, operating agreements, joint development agreements, purchase and sales

agreements, royalty issues, curative matters and all other facets of day-to-day operations. He has represented large title insurance companies in the resolution of title claims involving lien priority, estate, bankruptcy, foreclosure and other title issues. Zabela has authored and presented on oil and gas title issues. Prior to joining Vorys, he served as the managing partner of Burleson LLP's Pittsburgh office.

"The energy industry faces both opportunities and challenges in the coming years," Zabela said. "I am excited to join the respected lawyers at Vorys and guide our clients down a path of continued success."

The Vorys energy group has been named one of the best energy practices in the nation on the *U.S. News and World Report*/Best Lawyers "Best Law Firms" list. The group was also named a top rated practice with a "high profile in acting for entities from the energy and natural resources sectors," by Chambers and Partners. Attorneys advise the firm's energy clients on all types of transactional work, from simple leasing and well-field service contracts to sophisticated joint venture and asset transactions, financing agreements and hedging programs. Members of the energy group also represent clients before state and federal courts, arbitration panels, state permitting agencies, public utilities commissions, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Ohio and U.S. Environmental Protection Agencies as well as the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Vorys attorneys have also advised energy businesses on tax issues that arise from oil and gas exploration.

About Vorys: Vorys was established in 1909 and currently has nearly 375 attorneys in seven offices in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland and Akron, Ohio; Washington, D.C.; Houston, Texas; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Vorys currently ranks as one of the 200 largest law firms in the United States according to *American Lawyer* magazine. To learn more about Vorys, visit vorys.com.