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Morrison & Foerster Partner Nominated to D.C. Court

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Robert Salerno. Photo: Diego M. Radzinski/NLJ

Morrison & Foerster partner Robert Salerno was nominated Monday for the District of Columbia Superior Court, the White House announced.

Salerno's practice focuses on white-collar defense and commercial litigation. He's been a partner at Morrison & Foerster since 2006 and serves as the pro bono partner for the Washington office.

If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Salerno would replace Judge Robert Richter, whose retirement this fall creates a fourth open seat in Superior Court.

Salerno's nomination comes several weeks after Superior Court officials pressed the Senate to act on three pending nominees to the court: Magistrate Judge William Nooter, who was nominated in July 2013; Steven Wellner, the principal administrative law judge for unemployment-insurance appeals; and Sherry Trafford, a staff attorney in the mental health

division of the city's Public Defender Service. Wellner and Trafford were nominated in November 2013.

In a Sept. 10 letter to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., Superior Court Chief Judge Lee Satterfield warned of the "adverse impact" of having too few judges, especially in Family Court. With Richter's upcoming retirement, he said, the criminal and civil divisions "will also experience significant challenges."

Satterfield urged the Senate to act on the pending nominees before members left for a preelection break earlier this month, but that did not happen.

"Our mission is to serve the community by handling the important decisions we are entrusted with fairly, justly and efficiently," Satterfield wrote in his letter to Reid. "It is my hope that before Congress adjourns that the Senate will vote on the pending nominations so that we can better serve the people of the District of Columbia."

Salerno could not immediately be reached for comment. Before joining Morrison & Foerster, he was a partner at DLA Piper. Since 2008, he's served on hearing committees of the D.C. Board on Professional Responsibility, which hears local attorney discipline cases.