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Thomas A. Cox Jr., Esq.: An Attorney on the Move

In an era where attorney movement overall has been stagnant, Thomas A. Cox Jr. recently made a move to one of the country's largest firms, joining the Atlanta office of the national firm Epstein Becker & Green as a partner. Thomas' impressive resume includes a five-year stint as a partner at Johnson & Freeman LLC; and a decade as a government attorney, including work for the U.S. Department of Justice in Washington, D.C.

1. Why did you decide to pursue a career in law?

During my days at Morehouse College, I was a political science major and several of my classmates and I joined the Political Science Pre-Law Club. Before long, we were interested in going to law school. My mother always thought I would become an attorney. And I thought that it would be a way to help people make a good living and engage in advocacy.

2. Compare your platform at Epstein Becker & Green, which you joined in January 2010, to your previous platforms at other law firms?

Epstein Becker & Green is a national law firm. The biggest difference is the ability to attract larger clients with operations across the United States and around the world. There are limitations in attracting these types of clients in smaller firms. Also, with a national firm, my resource base is much more significant.

3. Michael Coleman, Aasia Muskateem, Ceasar Mitchell, Ken Menendez, and now Thomas Cox — a talented array of diverse and well-known attorneys who are all in the same law firm. What do you think has attracted this group to Epstein Becker & Green?

We have a very diverse and talented team. I think it starts with our Atlanta office managing partner Maxine Hicks. Maxine sold me on Epstein Becker & Green, and my understanding is that she sold many others in this group as well. She has a great reputation as a lawyer and an incredible client base; and yet, she encourages us all to not only practice law at the highest levels, but also to build a book of business.

4. You are a litigator, with an employment defense specialty. What kind of things should employers



and managers be looking for regarding the labor initiatives of the Obama administration?

Although the prevailing thought is that organized labor was exceptionally pleased with the President's selection of Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, I do not believe that her appointment should be interpreted as the beginning of an anti-employer Labor Department. The most defining labor initiative thus far was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, which allows Title VII claims to be brought within 180 days of receiving any paycheck affected by an allegedly discriminatory pay decision. There are several congressional initiatives that employers are closely monitoring, among them are the Paycheck Fairness Act of 2009, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, the Healthy Families Act and the FOREWARN Act.

5. You have been partner at several well-known law firms. How can an African American or other minority attorney make a mark at a large law firm?

It starts with hard work. You have to become a very skilled attorney. More importantly, you have to be collaborative; you have to be seen as a team player. When you join a firm as a young attorney you have to work on internal and external branding. You can't just come into the office and close your door.

6. What is your mission in your new job?

I will continue to build a very successful national practice, with a host of large national and international clients. **AT**