

Rising Star: Sutherland's Thomas Warren

By **Richard Vanderford**

Law360, New York (April 15, 2010) -- A leader in energy transactional practice who recently helped Oglethorpe Power Corp. seal over \$250 million in acquisitions while still finding time to make his own firm greener, Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP's Thomas Warren has earned a spot among Law360's 10 energy attorneys under 40 to watch.

Warren, a 39-year-old partner in Sutherland's Atlanta office, co-leads the firm's renewable energy practice but is often called on for his tremendous M&A experience, such as when Oglethorpe wanted to acquire two power plants.

Not content to be a go-to man for major transactions, Warren has also convinced management of the need for a sustainability committee and now leads the group's internal sustainability program, which aims to reduce Sutherland's environmental impact.

"We said, 'Let's not do this on an ad hoc basis, let's actually develop a mission here and get this approved at the highest level of the firm so we can undertake a real project here,'" Warren said of the push.

Convincing Sutherland's 425 independently minded lawyers to change their ways was not easy, said Herbert Short, head of the firm's national energy and environmental practice and a mentor to Warren.

"Tom took a very practical approach knowing our culture and really created a very positive environment to embrace sustainability practice without dictating rules," Short said.

Warren has managed to build consensus for an internal culture shift, in small areas, such as getting attorneys to think about things like their light-bulb use and teleconferencing, and bigger ones, including moving several firm offices into LEED-certified buildings and beginning a program to track flights in the hopes of reducing carbon emissions.

He also even managed to involve a client in his firm's green push, purchasing renewable energy certificates from Element Markets LLC. Devotion to clients is a staple of Warren's practice, Short said.

While working on an intense LNG project in December, for example, Short approached Warren — an attorney in high demand at the firm — to see if he would take on yet more work for Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative.

"I'm sure he worked every day in December except Dec. 25," Short said.

“He doesn't turn down work,” and he gives “110 percent” to the firm, setting an example for associates under him, Short said.

Though more modest about his achievements, Warren agreed. “Sometimes it takes until 3 in the morning or working all weekend to get it right,” he said. His practice is not one where you can work from 8 until 6 and call it a day, he said.

A high-honors graduate of Duke University School of Law who came to Sutherland as a second-year associate, Warren began in securities before specializing in energy transactions.

As an energy lawyer, he provides broad expertise for an impressive roster of clients, from Oglethorpe and Wolverine to the North American arm of Norwegian energy giant Statoil.

In consultations with firm leaders about what's going right at Sutherland, Warren's name comes up more than any other partner's, Short said.

“He's so bright, and so capable,” he said. “A lot of people want to work with Tom.”

Warren, though, sees more work ahead — growing his practice and helping as many clients as he can.

“I don't think I've made it yet. I'm still making it,” Warren said.