

Ex-DOJ Fraud Attys Switch To Civil Focus At Boutique Firm

By [Phillip Bantz](#) · [Listen to article](#)

Law360 (August 25, 2026, 3:00 PM EDT) -- Criminal fraud prosecutors commonly pursue careers as white collar defense lawyers after exiting the [U.S. Department of Justice](#), but a group of ex-DOJ lawyers who have recently joined national litigation boutique [AXS Law Group](#) are embarking on a path less traveled.



Former U.S. Department of Justice criminal fraud prosecutors Kyle Hankey, Andrew Jaco, Anna Kaminska and Dermot Lynch are now focused on plaintiff-side civil litigation as new partners at AXS Law Group's expanding office in Washington, D.C. Pictured are (from left) Hankey, Jaco, Kaminska, law clerk Charlie Lott and Lynch. (Courtesy of AXS Law Group)

Since AXS opened its Washington, D.C., office earlier this year about three miles down the road from Main Justice, the firm has added four former fraud prosecutors, including two new hires announced Tuesday, who are focused primarily on representing plaintiffs in civil litigation.

The hires reflect a [broader trend](#) of more lawyers leaving the DOJ and Big Law to join or launch boutique law firms, often spurred by either disillusionment with changing government enforcement priorities or dwindling opportunities at elite firms.

The most recent DOJ Criminal Division Fraud Section alums to join AXS are Dermot Lynch and Andrew Jaco. They now work alongside former senior federal prosecutors Kyle Hankey and Anna Kaminska, who [arrived at AXS](#) in February and March, respectively.

Hankey, who has played a key role in growing AXS' team of former prosecutors in D.C., served as an assistant chief in the Fraud Section, where he handled an array of criminal prosecutions, including some major fraud cases against defense contractors. He also helped secure the 2023 [convictions](#) of three former executives of Chicago-based health tech startup [Outcome Health](#) in a \$1 billion fraud scheme.

Hankey had watched many of his former DOJ colleagues leave the DOJ and join large law firms as white collar defense attorneys, but he chose an alternate path that offered an opportunity to build a different type of civil-focused practice, while also pursuing a similar overarching goal, he told *Law360*.

"The ultimate objective is to seek justice for wrongs that have been committed by people who committed fraud," he said. "We're representing our clients, fighting for them to get justice for the wrongs that happened to them — just as we did at DOJ."

AXS, which also has offices in Miami and Los Angeles, aims to double the number of lawyers in its D.C. office by year's end, possibly with the addition of more former federal fraud prosecutors, according to AXS founding partner Jeff Gutchess.

Ex-prosecutors bring years of experience investigating complex fraud cases and boiling down complicated fact patterns to deliver

compelling, understandable narratives to juries, giving them a "skill set that few other lawyers have, certainly civil plaintiffs' lawyers," Gutchess said.

"That's what makes this [D.C.] team so special," he added.

As prosecutors, Lynch, Jaco, Hankey and Kaminska helped the government secure billions of dollars in judgments through fines or restitution and have decades of trial experience.

"We're able to translate that expertise in gathering the right facts and looking at novel approaches to the law and applying that in a civil context now," Lynch said.

Kaminska, for instance, spent nearly 13 years as a federal prosecutor, served as a chief in the Fraud Section and was lead counsel in an array of white collar-related prosecutions, including foreign bribery, pandemic-relief fraud, money laundering and complex accounting fraud cases.

Jaco played a key role in securing a historic 2024 [conviction](#) in a Florida federal criminal trial centered on an alleged \$300 million fraud scheme involving the sale of a cryptocurrency token called Hydro. The case marked the first time a jury found that a cryptocurrency qualified as a security under federal law.

The D.C. team's civil practice focus includes corporate misconduct, securities fraud, government procurement fraud and healthcare fraud — overlapping with many of the same areas that the team focused on as criminal prosecutors. The firm is also growing a False Claims Act and qui tam or whistleblower practice.

While at the DOJ, Lynch said he helped secure guilty verdicts in two separate, multimillion-dollar healthcare fraud prosecutions that did not involve whistleblowers, which he now sees as an opening to explore through his civil practice.

"There were plenty of people who could've brought that fraud to the attention of the government but didn't," he said. "Something we're trying to do now is ensure that we're building up this plaintiff-side qui tam practice and looking at where there are unique opportunities."

The team also has an eye on international trade fraud, according to Hankey.

"We're actively involved in a trade fraud matter already, having been here just a matter of months," he said.

In addition to the ongoing expansion of the D.C. office, AXS is also looking to open an office in New York, Gutchess told Law360.

"We have a lot of cases in New York already, and we have a lot of lawyers admitted in New York," he said. "So that's a natural next step for us."

--Editing by Janice Carter Brown.

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Anna Kaminska

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