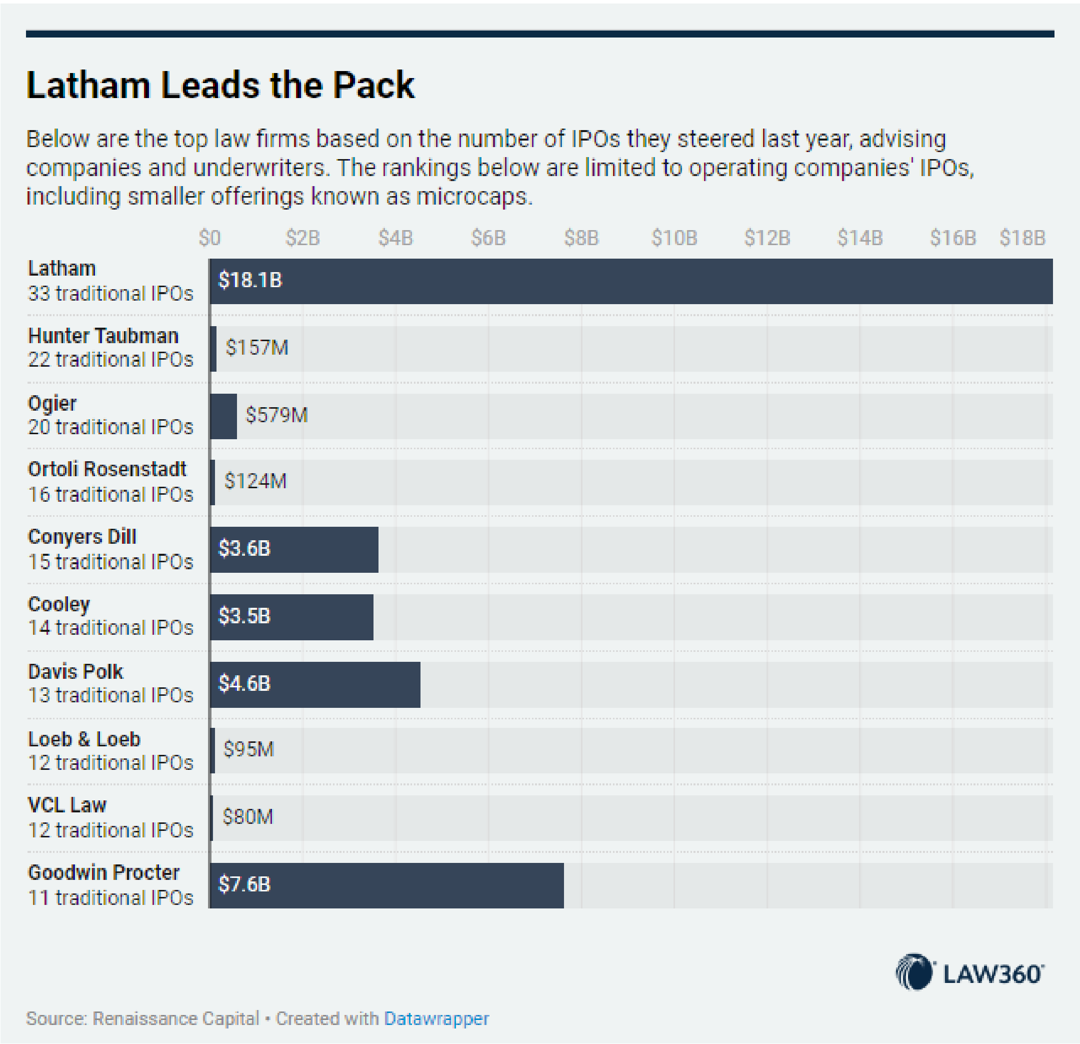
Portfolio Media. Inc. | 230 Park Avenue, 7th Floor | New York, NY 10169 | www.law360.com
Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

Latham Grabs Top Spot For 2024 IPOs By Large Margin

By **Tom Zanki**

Law360 (January 14, 2025, 9:41 PM EST) -- Latham & Watkins LLP guided more initial public offerings than any law firm in 2024, capturing a diverse mix of large listings for companies that seized opportunities to go public as the broader IPO market inched toward recovery, new data shows.



Latham took part in 33 IPOs that raised more than $18 billion last year when representing companies or their underwriters. The firm ranked first both in the number of offerings and proceeds raised by vast margins, according to data released this week by IPO research firm Renaissance Capital.

The offerings came during a rebuilding year for IPOs as activity slowly returned to pre-pandemic norms. Some 150 IPOs raised $29.6 billion last year, marking the second straight annual increase.

IPOs typically have at least two law firms guiding each listing — one each for the company and its underwriters — or more if the offering includes third-party shareholders or spans multiple jurisdictions. Altogether, 169 law firms worked on 2024 IPOs involving operating companies, a total that rose to 212 law firms when counting offerings by special purpose acquisition companies, according to Renaissance Capital.

Four listings over one billion dollars helped catapult Latham to the top spot, mostly notably real estate investment trust Lineage Inc.'s $4.4 billion IPO, the largest of 2024.

Among other IPOs exceeding $1 billion each, Latham guided underwriters for private equity-backed cruise operator Viking Holdings Ltd. and sporting goods giant Amer Sports Inc., and it represented aerospace services provider StandardAero Inc.

The capital markets heavyweight also led sizable venture-backed technology IPOs that fell short of $1 billion, including social media platform Reddit Inc. and software startup Service Titan Inc., plus it guided underwriters for hospital-billing firm Waystar Inc. and cybersecurity provider Rubrik Inc. Safety inspection company UL Solutions Inc., and underwriters for community-based healthcare provider Bright Spring Health Services Inc. tapped Latham as well.

Latham's broad reach in terms of industry and geography, plus its extensive relationships with clients at various stages of the capital-raising process, proved beneficial last year, a period when no particular sector dominated the IPO pipeline, said partner Ian Schuman, global chair of the firm's capital markets practice.

"We can't afford to be industry-specific," Schuman told Law360 Tuesday. "We will continue to invest across the board and across industries because each individual relationship for us is so much more important than just the IPO itself."

Latham partner Stelios Saffos said guiding diverse companies helps the firm anticipate changes in market dynamics and investor sentiment, boosting its credibility with clients.

"We find that regardless of who's going public and which industries are busy, the scale that we're operating at across all different industries helps us continually refresh our knowledge base, so that we're not sitting out any particular cycle," said Saffos, vice chair of the firm's capital markets practice. "We're constantly able to deliver that fresh market perspective to our clients."

And IPO momentum appears to be picking up in 2025 as early year filings indicate an active pipeline. For that trend to continue, Schuman said it's critical that interest rates stabilize — there is some uncertainty regarding whether the Federal Reserve will continue to cut rates and how much — so market participants can forecast with confidence.

Compared to 2023 and 2024 — two years in which many IPO prospects postponed plans to go public amid recurring bouts of volatility and delayed rate cuts by the Fed — the growing backlog of IPO candidates suggests a stronger recovery this year.

"There is more conviction and real positivity around the ability to take companies public in this market," Saffos said.

Apart from last year's large listings in the neighborhood of $1 billion, few midsize IPOs went to market. But a flood of microcap companies managed to go public, keeping smaller law firms busy. Hunter Taubman Fischer & Li LLC ranked second on Renaissance Capital's table after guiding 22 IPOs that raised $157 million, helping small companies from China and Hong Kong list in the U.S.

Among larger firms, Silicon Valley-based Cooley LLP took 14 U.S. companies public that raised a combined $3.5 billion across the technology and life sciences sectors. Twelve of those IPOs were raised by venture-backed companies.

New York-based Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP got a boost from domestic and foreign IPO clients, including Finland-based Amer Sports, and steered 13 offerings that raised $4.6 billion. Goodwin Procter LLP, based in Boston's biotech hub, guided 11 IPOs that raised $7.6 billion. Goodwin's largest deal was representing underwriters for Lineage.

When counting SPACs, which are shell vehicles that raise money through IPOs before merging with a private business that inherits the shell company's stock listing, Ellenoff Grossman & Schole LLP ranked first with 25 SPAC offerings that raised $4.6 billion.

SPACs were also coming off a steep correction that followed a historic boom around 2020-2021, a frenzy fueled largely by near-zero interest rates and government stimulus.

After two years of plummeting issuance, new SPAC listings stabilized in 2024 and began to rise in the second half of last year as experienced dealmakers returned to the market. Ellenoff Grossman guided underwriters on the year's largest SPAC offering, a $350 million IPO in August by energy-focused EQV Ventures Acquisition Corp.

Douglas Ellenoff, one of the firm's founding partners, expects SPACs will remain a viable path to public markets for select companies. He noted that overvaluations of recent years weren't unique to the SPACs but impacted venture capital and private equity as well.

"We continue to believe in the SPAC industry and never left our post, unlike many U.S. law firms, that there is a continued need for an alternative method for private companies to transition into the public markets," Ellenoff told Law360.

Capital markets and M&A advisers generally expect a relaxed regulatory climate under a second Trump presidency, and Republican majorities in Congress will spur dealmaking in 2025. Ellenoff said the optimism should boost SPACs too.

"With the changing administration, we fully expect 2025 to see a year-over-year increase in both the number of floated SPACs and the amount raised," Ellenoff said. "Although the enthusiasm could be tempered by poorly received announced deals from the class of 2024 — from what we've seen so far and what we know to be in the pipeline — I'd suspect it's more likely to accelerate, particularly with what we believe will be all the crypto transactions that are likely to be pursued and announced."

--Editing by Emily Kokoll and Drashti Mehta. Graphics by Ben Jay.
