

Rising Star: Gibson Dunn's Greta Williams

Law360 (August 6, 2018, 2:13 PM EDT) -- Greta Williams of Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP scored back-to-back wins for a Sprint contractor in two New York wage-and-hour suits and played a major role in the investigation of sexual harassment allegations against a Vox Media executive who was ultimately fired, making her one of five employment attorneys under 40 selected by Law360 as Rising Stars.

HER BIGGEST CASES:

Williams has been called on to look into claims of sexual harassment in a number of #MeToo investigations, including the one Vox Media launched after the company's editorial director was accused of sexual harassment in late 2017. Vox retained Gibson Dunn in the wake of the allegations and Williams was one of the two lead lawyers handling the probe.

Williams and another Gibson Dunn attorney conducted interviews, advised the company on personnel and policy changes and steered it through media attention, which led to the highly publicized termination of the executive, Lockhart Steele.

Williams and two colleagues are also heading up the investigation into the sexual misconduct allegations leveled against Steve Wynn, the former chairman and chief executive of Wynn Resorts. The company's board of directors turned to Gibson Dunn in February, and so far, Williams and her team have conducted 114 witness interviews and reviewed three million documents.

Speaking broadly of her work in the #MeToo movement, Williams said it's difficult but worth it.

RISING
★★★★★
STAR



Greta Williams
Gibson Dunn

Age: 37

Home base: Washington, D.C.

Position: Partner

Law school: University of California, Berkeley School of Law

First job after law school: Associate at Gibson Dunn

“It’s incredibly challenging work but it’s incredibly rewarding to help clients navigate these very tricky, very sensitive issues,” Williams said. “I’ve interviewed many women over the last nine months who have made allegations of sexual harassment and assault in the workplace, and it’s difficult for them and often painful for them to talk about it.”

Williams said she believes her team’s work in this area is creating change for the better.

“We’d like to think that our work is really helping to make the workplace safer and more comfortable,” Williams said. “We’re helping companies improve their culture in a way that is more respectful and more welcoming for all of its employees.”

HER PROUDEST MOMENT:

After outsourced sales specialist Credico was accused of misclassifying their employees as independent contractors, Williams spearheaded the drafting of two summary judgment motions that helped the Sprint contractor dodge two separate suits in New York federal court in late 2017.

“It was a very gratifying and important win for the client which was facing a number of copycat suits like this all over the country,” Williams said. “So these cases set an important precedent that our client, Credico, did not jointly employ the individual sales agents and that in any event, they were exempt from minimum wage and overtime laws under the outside sales exemption.”

The employment pro noted that she and her team faced formidable adversaries.

“We had smart lawyers on the other side, in one of the cases we had the Lichten & Liss-Riordan firm out of Boston, and they’re very well respected in the independent contractor misclassification space,” Williams said.

“I really lived and breathed this case for well over a year,” Williams added.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Williams said in addition to the energy she gets from working with “the best and the brightest lawyers around,” she’s continually striving to be a role model for young female attorneys at the firm.

“It motivates me to want to be a good role model to the more junior lawyers at my firm, particularly the women, to motivate them and to show them that partnership at a large law firm is doable,” Williams said.

The young partner acknowledged that there's still a long road ahead for women in the legal industry.

"We still have a ways to go in terms of getting more women to make partner and who want to stick it out in this demanding business," she said.

OTHER NOTABLE WORK:

Williams is currently representing Amazon in a potentially massive class action brought in December accusing the online retail giant of discriminating against older workers by limiting the audience of their Facebook job advertisements to only younger users.

"That's a very novel type of claim and a very interesting area of the law," Williams said. "That case is really just getting going."

— *As told to Anne Cullen*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2018 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,200 submissions. This interview has been edited and condensed.