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WOMEN

TOP WOMEN LAWYERS 2019

Debra Wong Yang

Equipped with the steadfast insight of a former judge and United States attorney, Debra Wong Yang is at the helm of the crisis management practice at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP.

From the mass shooting at the MGM Grand Casino in Mandalay Bay to the so-called Bridgegate scandal that faced New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, Yang and her team have helped corporations and individuals navigate the most challenging events.

“It’s really coming in to assist a corporation or an individual in a much broader perspective where challenges were multifold,” Yang said as she described her role as the crisis management co-chair at Gibson Dunn. “By multifold, I mean where maybe you have civil litigation, maybe you have international litigation, you can have regulatory inquiries, government inquiries, from federal, state and local prosecutors. You can have administrative oversight issues, but it is sufficiently big enough that it can have incredible harm to one’s reputation.”

Yang was appointed in May 2002 by President George W. Bush as the first Asian-American woman to serve as a U. S. Attorney.

“I have to say the U.S. attorney’s office was tremendous training. The kinds of decisions I had to make in that role that affected people’s livelihood but also affected people’s lives, was to me of the highest import,” she said.



During her time as U.S. Attorney of the Central District of California, Yang sat on the attorney general’s advisory community as well as the White House corporate fraud task force.

“So I’m used to looking at things from a very global level and viewing massive amounts of cases,” Yang said. “I think over time that’s allowed me to really understand

GIBSON, DUNN & CRUTCHER LLP
LOS ANGELES

Practice Type:
Crisis management, white collar and criminal defense

all the different iterations and possibilities and solutions for different types of matters.”

When she was called in to handle the Bridgegate matter facing Christie after he was accused of closing the George Washington Bridge for political reasons, Yang’s legal team at Gibson Dunn conducted more than 70 witness interviews and reviewed more than 250,000 documents in barely two months, according to a Gibson Dunn spokesperson. The result of the investigation was a 345-page investigative report, including more than 600 accompanying exhibits, which cleared Christie of any wrongdoing, according to the Gibson Dunn spokesperson.

Yang said she is at her best “when there’s a lot going on with a lot of challenges facing a company and they need somebody to navigate through in a way that is thoughtful, strategic, precise and coordinated.”

— Blaise Scemama