

## Rising Star: Gibson Dunn's Rachel Levick

By Peter McGuire

*Law360 (July 13, 2023, 9:17 AM EDT)* -- Rachel Levick, a partner at Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP, cut a huge deal to resolve diesel emissions violations by Mercedes-Benz, helped win total victory for an oil company facing a remediation lawsuit in Indonesia, and regularly advises major automobile companies on emerging compliance issues, earning her a spot among the environmental law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### *The biggest case of her career:*

Levick was a crucial member of the team that negotiated a \$1.5 billion settlement with California and federal regulators to resolve environmental allegations against Mercedes-Benz diesel engine emissions that emerged after the highly publicized Volkswagen tailpipe cheating scandal.

Thanks to unrelenting work during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Levick's team was able to secure Mercedes a financial settlement that was minor compared to what Volkswagen was forced to pay and excused the carmaker from third-party monitoring, according to Gibson Dunn.

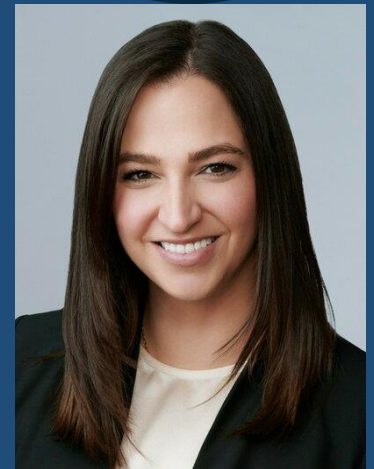
Working out that deal meant scrambling up a steep learning curve to understand intricate emissions technology. The closest Levick got to a science degree was college courses in political science, she said, but she emerged with the technical know-how to work with Mercedes engineers on a software update that met the settlement's injunction order.

"It was very technically complex," Levick said. "I don't have a technology or engineering background, so my job makes me learn a new industry or technology every time I get a new challenge or client."

### *The most interesting case she's worked on recently:*

Levick helped lead a Gibson Dunn team in a full-bore Indonesian

2023



**Rachel Levick**  
Gibson Dunn

**Age:** 35

**Home base:** Washington, D.C.

**Position:** Partner

**Law school:** University of Pennsylvania Law School

**First job after law school:** Associate at Gibson Dunn

courtroom defense of a major oil and gas client accused of failing to clean up properties after decades of drilling on Sumatra's Rokan Block, in a nearly \$1.8 billion lawsuit.

Successfully guiding the case meant learning an entirely new jurisdiction and court system, standards of practice and tradition, Levick said. The work paid off — Gibson Dunn helped local Indonesian counsel and attorneys from King & Spalding secure a comprehensive victory for the oil company after more than a year of court proceedings, a win confirmed by an appeals court early this year.

"I think it was the outcome we were pushing for, a litigated favorable verdict," Levick said. "One of the key goals of our strategy was to stave off future legal claims that we view as without merit."

#### ***What motivates her:***

Levick considers clients and colleagues among her top motivations. Providing the best service for clients is a core value, but equally important is the camaraderie and unity that come with working as part of a good team, she said.

As an up-and-comer herself, Levick has provided outreach to younger Gibson Dunn associates and offered guidance for the future leaders and professionals at the firm, a culture that echoes the support she received from firm partners in her own career, she said.

"I'd like to pay it forward," Levick said. "As attorneys we offer significantly better service to clients when we are enjoying and engaged in what we do, and having buy-in from teams is really key to achieving that goal."

#### ***Why she's an environmental attorney:***

Levick said she fell into the environmental field. She vividly recalls her first day at Gibson Dunn passing by an associate tacking boxes of exhibits to the wall of an office. Intrigued, Levick asked to join the case and wound up working on a weeklong federal bench trial seeking Superfund cost recoveries from the U.S. government.

That set the course of her career, Levick said. The unique blend of legal history and context overlaid by complicated regulatory regimes lets her work across the board — from litigation in state courts to counseling clients on environmental compliance.

"It is something new and challenging every day, which makes sure there is never a dull moment at work," Levick said.

#### ***On the future of the industry:***

Levick is on the front lines of emerging environmental issues, including through representation of a manufacturing client in "forever chemicals" litigation and counsel to major automakers in suits over federal vehicle emissions standards.

That expertise will become even more valuable to her automotive clients amid the coming transition from internal combustion to zero-emissions engines, with regulations already proposed by California and the Biden administration. The rise of socially conscious investing and calls for environmental, social and governance policies in major corporations is another area that demands expert advice and counseling, Levick added.

"I consider myself very fortunate to be an environmental attorney because it is an expertise that will only continue to be relevant to our clients across the board," Levick said.

*--As told to Peter McGuire.*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2023 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of May 1, 2023, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*

---

All Content © 2003-2023, Portfolio Media, Inc.