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How Gibson Dunn's Talent Pipeline Leads to Excellence, in SCOTUS Practice and Beyond

By Dan Roe

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What You Need to Know

- Gibson Dunn was named a finalist for The American Lawyer's Litigation Department of the Year award.
- Over the past two years, the firm has represented high-value clients in tech and energy as well as pro bono clients such as veterans and small businesses.
- The firm has logged almost 100 hours of pro bono per lawyer in 2024.

For hardly the first time in its 135-year history, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher found itself involved in some of the most consequential legal battles of the year.

The firm's recent caseload—from May 2023 to May 2025, for the purposes of our awards—has included a summary judgment win for OpenAI in a first-of-its-kind generative AI defamation case, a series of victories for Chevron in climate change tort litigation, the overturn of the Federal Trade Commission's non-compete ban, a \$667 million jury verdict against Greenpeace, a win for Uber and its independent contractor labor model, a U.S. Supreme Court win for Slack that narrowed the scope of securities liability for public companies, and another Supreme Court victory that allowed states to criminalize camping in public under the Eighth Amendment.

Gibson Dunn also maintained an active pro bono practice, breaking a prior 2023 record for firmwide pro bono hours by amassing 206,000 hours in 2024, or more than 96 hours per attorney.



(l-r) Thomas H. Dupree Jr., Helgi C. Walker, Barry H. Berke, Theane Evangelis, and Trey Cox, partners with Gibson Dunn & Crutcher.

The law firm's constant presence in high-stakes, high-profile litigation has helped it lock down a pipeline of talented young lawyers, said global litigation group co-chair Helgi Walker. "I think these young people are some of the smartest around—the shrewdest around—and they vote with their feet ... for the third year in a row, we got six former SCOTUS clerks," Walker said.

U.S. Supreme Court Cases

Six years ago, Gibson Dunn litigators began a process that would eventually upend homelessness policy across the country.

Back then, the firm's attorneys attempted to have the Supreme Court review the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit's ruling in *Boise v. Martin*, which held that the Eighth Amendment limited cities from

enforcing laws against encampments. The high court declined to review the case, and the city of Grants Pass in Oregon hired Gibson Dunn after it was sued by a group of residents, including Gloria Johnson, in *Johnson v. Grants Pass*.

In June 2024, the Supreme Court ruled in the city's favor, with Justice Neil Gorsuch writing that the court had misapplied the Eighth Amendment's prohibition of cruel and unusual punishment. "We convinced the court to take it, and that took five years," said partner Theane Evangelis.

Gibson Dunn also scored a Supreme Court victory for Slack Technologies in *Slack Technologies v. Pirani*, in which Fiyyaz Pirani sued Slack over a "materially misleading" registration statement—a violation of Section 11 of the Securities Act of 1933.

In June 2023, the court ruled unanimously in favor of Slack as Gorsuch opined that Section 11 required plaintiffs to prove that they purchased registered shares, as opposed to unregistered shares, in past offerings.

Then, in February 2025, the Ninth Circuit adopted Gibson Dunn's arguments on remand and dismissed the case against Slack with prejudice.

Gibson Dunn has won six cases (five unanimously) during the award period. Other recent wins include *Truck Insurance Exchange v. Kaiser Gypsum*, in which the court decided unanimously for Truck Exchange that insureds had a right to be heard in the Chapter 11 reorganization plans of their insureds, overturning decades of precedent to the contrary.

The firm also prevailed for Dewberry Group in *Dewberry Group v. Dewberry Engineers*, a trademark infringement dispute between two real estate development companies. A unanimous decision for Dewberry Group vacated a \$43 million award against the company after the firm successfully argued that the funds belonged to legally distinct corporate affiliates.

Big Tech's Go-To Firm

Gibson Dunn also scored several wins for Big Tech clients. In addition to its victory for Slack, the firm won another securities case for Coinbase in a challenge to the Securities and Exchange Commission's

denial of a Coinbase petition for new rules, elucidating the commission's views on applying federal securities laws to digital assets.

A unanimous U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit panel held that the SEC's denial of the rule-making petition was arbitrary and capricious under the Administrative Procedure Act and instructed the agency to issue a more thorough explanation.

Gibson Dunn also successfully defended OpenAI in a defamation case over a generative AI output involving radio host and gun rights advocate Mark Walters. Per Walters' complaint, ChatGPT had hallucinated and accused him of embezzling funds from the Second Amendment Foundation.

In May 2025, OpenAI's motion for summary judgment was granted by Judge Tracie Cason of the Superior/State Court of Gwinnett County, Georgia. The court ruled that reasonable readers of the statement would not interpret it as factual thanks to ChatGPT's warnings and disclaimers about the potential for hallucinations. Gibson Dunn litigators were also able to position Walters as a public figure, burdening him with the "actual malice" standard for defamation.

The firm also had a role in preserving the status quo in the gig economy when it represented Uber Technologies in two lawsuits that aimed to reframe the company's independent contractors as full-time employees.

In the Eastern District of Pennsylvania case *Razak v. Uber Technologies*, Gibson Dunn achieved a dismissal after two split juries both favored Uber. Simultaneously, the firm litigated *Campbell V. Uber Technologies*, a Massachusetts state court case that alleged driver misclassification by Uber and Lyft under state law.

In Campbell, Gibson Dunn negotiated a settlement that saw Uber agree to adopt changes mirroring those in California's Proposition 22, a ballot initiative backed by rideshare companies.

"We've been in the trenches for years and had experts and knew how important the themes were that we developed, and we really believe in this issue, and that's why we went to trial," Evangelis said. "Putting drivers on the stand to talk about how the platform works for them was key."