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Law360 Names Firms Of The Year

By Kevin Penton

Law360 (January 20, 2026, 8:01 PM EST) -- Eight law firms have earned spots as Law360's Firms of the Year, with 48 Practice Group of the Year awards among them, achieving milestones such as high-profile litigation wins at the U.S. Supreme Court and 11-figure merger deals.

Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP and Covington & Burling LLP shared the top spot with seven wins each; Sullivan & Cromwell LLP, Latham & Watkins LLP, WilmerHale and Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP tied with six wins each; and Davis Polk & Wardwell LLP and Kirkland & Ellis LLP had five wins each.



Some firms credit their success to the broad range of capabilities that they can offer to clients, and the spirit of collaboration between their attorneys that leads to positive results.

"We see increasingly that clients are focused on our collaborative, team-based culture — and lack of origination or billing credits — as something that sets Covington apart," said Doug Gibson, Covington's chair.

Other firms point not only to their global presence, but to their ability to strategically deploy it to get the best results for their clients.

"We have a truly integrated global platform, but what matters most is how effectively we use it — matching the right expertise to each matter and executing at the highest level," said Barbara Becker, Gibson Dunn's chair and managing partner.

Here are the 2025 Firms of the Year:

Gibson Dunn

Gibson Dunn succeeded before the Supreme Court in a case considered one of 2025's top trademark rulings, as the justices in February unanimously reversed a Fourth Circuit decision that had upheld that affiliates of a real estate development company could be liable in a trademark suit.

The Supreme Court determined that a Virginia federal court did not have authority under the Lanham Act to order disgorgement of profits from affiliates of the litigation's only defendant, Dewberry Group

Inc., as the affiliates had not been defendants in the case. The award had ultimately reached nearly \$47 million.

Gibson Dunn was one of five firms to be recognized by Law360 for its energy practice, including for its work in guiding Essential Utilities in its all-stock merger with American Water Works. The deal would unite the two major regulated water and wastewater providers into a public utility with a pro forma market capitalization of about \$40 billion, an enterprise value of about \$63 billion and 4.7 million customers in 17 states, according to the September announcement.

Becker noted that Gibson Dunn's Practice Group of the Year wins in energy, life sciences, telecommunications and media and entertainment demonstrate how the firm works to use its expertise in various industries to create optimal legal teams that can stretch across different offices and practices.

"We bring the full strength of Gibson Dunn's integrated platform to these industries, across litigation, regulatory, investigations and transactions, delivering excellence for our clients," Becker said.

Covington

Covington represented the American Clinical Laboratory Association as the laboratory industry group and others in March successfully challenged the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's authority to regulate laboratory developed testing services, or LDTs, as devices.

The association had argued in two consolidated summary judgment motions that the FDA doesn't have the power under the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act to oversee lab-developed tests. A Texas federal judge vacated the rule and kicked it back to the FDA for further review.

Covington's life sciences team was also part of the second-largest pharmaceutical deal of 2025, advising Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis AG as it bought Avidity Biosciences for approximately \$12 billion. Novartis boosted its neuroscience portfolio by acquiring the U.S.-based Avidity, which is developing targeted RNA therapeutics for neuromuscular diseases.

Since October 2024, the firm secured four appellate wins at the Eighth and Ninth circuits on behalf of Papa John's and Bloomingdale's, which both faced website privacy class actions. The putative class actions alleged violations of state privacy and wiretapping laws through the clients' use of behavioral data platform operator FullStory's website analytic tools.

In a June ruling, the Ninth Circuit refused to reinstate a customer's proposed class action against Papa John's, finding that, as the pizza chain was a party to the communications, it couldn't be held liable for spying on its own conversation.

"Clients are continuing to recognize that we deliver higher-value services through our collaborative approach and commitment to excellence, to diversity and to practice succession," Gibson said. "These competitive strengths give us all of the tools necessary to remain and thrive among the greatest law firms in the world."

Sullivan & Cromwell

The Supreme Court in June overturned the D.C. Circuit and ruled that fuel industry groups represented by Sullivan & Cromwell could challenge the EPA's Clean Air Act waiver that allows California to set its

own greenhouse gas emissions standards for vehicles.

The 7-2 majority determined that fuel producers would have standing to challenge the waiver, as they would be economically harmed by California vehicle emissions standards that aim to reduce gasoline consumption. The court said invalidating those regulations would lead to more gas-powered cars, and as a result, more sales of liquid fuels.

Sullivan & Cromwell also successfully advised commercial broadband providers as the Sixth Circuit in January 2025 upended the Federal Communications Commission's net neutrality rules.

The appellate court ruled that the providers cannot be regulated as telecommunications common carriers, a decision that 2025 Law360 Appellate MVP Jeffrey Wall anticipates will bring finality to the net neutrality debate and clarify the types of regulations that are allowed on a federal level.

"We're staying strong in areas of strength, and then using that to lever into areas that we think are growing," said firm co-chair Scott Miller, who pointed to Sullivan & Cromwell's naming as one of the Fintech Groups of the Year as an example of how the strategy is succeeding.

Latham

Latham had a role in several of the largest deals of the year, including representing the financing sources in private equity firm Sycamore Partners' \$23.7 billion acquisition of Walgreens Boots Alliance, advising Macquarie Asset Management in its approximately \$40 billion sale of Aligned Data Centers, and advising Silver Lake as part of the buying group for Electronic Arts Inc. in an approximately \$55 billion deal.

The Walgreens deal — which was announced in March and finalized in August — called on Latham's capital markets team to leverage its knowledge of the healthcare and retail industries and its experience working with private and public financings, such as hybrid capital and direct and syndicated lending, according to the firm.

Latham also succeeded before the Supreme Court, securing a 9-0 ruling in favor of a client with epilepsy and intellectual disabilities who had been denied an accommodation of evening instruction. The court determined in June that, under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act, children with disabilities do not need to satisfy a certain liability standard when they allege education-related discrimination, but rather are subject to the same liability standards as other plaintiffs.

The firm also successfully represented Oklahoma State Attorney General Gentner Drummond before the high court in May, as the justices' 4-4 ruling — Justice Amy Coney Barrett recused herself — affirmed a state court's ruling on the constitutionality of a state law that requires public charter schools to be "nonsectarian" in how they operate.

"We look back at 2025 as a year of roaring success for our firm," said Charles Ruck, global chair of Latham's corporate department. "Rewards or accolades aside, we helped our clients through large and marquee transactions around the world, in every single one of the industries that we are focused on as a team."

WilmerHale

WilmerHale scored a series of triumphs for PNC Bank in a longstanding battle against United Services Automobile Association over mobile check deposit patents, including the Federal Circuit in June wiping out two jury verdicts that totaled nearly \$223 million.

USAA subsequently sought for the Supreme Court to step in, arguing in August that the Patent Trial and Appeal Board had been inconsistent by invalidating claims in two of the patents, yet had reached a different decision in a similar challenge brought by Wells Fargo. The high court rejected the petition in October.

WilmerHale in September secured a summary judgment victory for Meta in a longstanding antitrust suit in which a putative class of Facebook users contended that the company monopolized an asserted market for personal social networking.

The win came after U.S. District Judge James Donato in January 2025 refused to certify a class of consumers who alleged that Meta would have to pay users for their data if it didn't lie about privacy safeguards. The judge held that the motion was undone by the inadmissible opinions of an economist on the subject of antitrust injury.

Law360's recognition of WilmerHale points to how its teams work to address client matters creatively and with clarity and focus, said Anjan Sahni, WilmerHale's managing partner.

"These recognitions reflect the extraordinary skill, tenacity and hard work of our lawyers and business professionals, as well as the power of our collaborative culture," Sahni said.

Skadden

Skadden represented Union Pacific as the railroad giant looks to acquire Norfolk Southern at an enterprise value of \$85 billion, in what was the largest mergers and acquisition deal of 2025.

Skadden and Covington are both advising Union Pacific as the company looks to create the country's first transcontinental railroad, in a deal announced in July that pegged the enterprise value of the combined company at approximately \$250 billion.

The firm also advised Air Lease Corp. as part of a \$28.2 billion deal announced in September to take the Los Angeles-based aircraft lessor private, with Apollo Global Management, Brookfield, Sumitomo Corp. and SMBC Aviation Capital serving as the investor group.

Skadden led a dozen initial public offerings in the fintech industry in 2025, including crypto-friendly trading platform eToro's upsized \$713 million IPO in May, Circle's upsized \$1.1 billion IPO in June, and crypto exchange Gemini's oversubscribed \$425 million IPO in September.

As Skadden continues to have a leading presence in the global M&A landscape, the firm has strategically enhanced its offerings through lateral hires in its corporate, litigation and regulatory practices, said Jeremy London, Skadden's executive partner.

"Our unwavering commitment to guiding clients through their most complex and high-stakes legal

challenges by harnessing the full power of our global platform is reflected in our outstanding results," London said.

Davis Polk

Davis Polk advised Intra-Cellular Therapies Inc., a biopharmaceutical company focused on therapies for neuropsychiatric and neurological disorders, on its \$14.6 billion sale to Johnson & Johnson, in the largest biotech deal of the year. The deal was announced in January 2025 and closed in April.

The firm also advised Novo Nordisk as it swooped in with an unsolicited offer to acquire obesity drugmaker Metsera in October, weeks after Pfizer had announced plans to acquire the company for up to \$7.3 billion.

While Pfizer ultimately closed the deal for approximately \$10 billion, the unusual two-step process deal structure proposed by Novo triggered a huge bidding war over Metsera, and led industry watchers to wonder how the unique deal structure may affect transactions and structures in the sector.

Davis Polk advised RXR as the real estate company and Elliott Investment Management teamed up in August to buy 590 Madison Ave. from the State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio for nearly \$1.1 billion, the first single-asset commercial real estate deal to hit 10 figures in New York City in 2025.

Davis Polk aims to maintain a culture of excellence and teamwork that ultimately sets the firm apart from other firms in the industry, said Neil Barr, Davis Polk's chair and managing partner.

"We work exceedingly hard to earn our place in the market as among the best in every area in which we practice," Barr said. "And we are proud that clients — new and established — this year continued to call upon us for their most sophisticated, sensitive, bet-the-company situations."

Kirkland

Kirkland also was a factor in some of the largest deals of the year. The firm advised the buying group in the \$55 billion EA deal; Walgreens Boots Alliance in its \$23.7 billion acquisition by Sycamore Partners; and Artificial Intelligence Infrastructure Partnership, MGX and BlackRock's Global Infrastructure Partners as the \$40 billion buyers of Aligned Data Centers from Macquarie Asset Management.

In February, Kirkland prevailed in a highly anticipated opinion by a Delaware federal court that was the first to rule on whether infringement in artificial intelligence training is protected by fair use.

U.S. Circuit Judge Stephanos Bibas — who sat by designation from the Third Circuit — granted partial summary judgment to Thomson Reuters on direct copyright infringement, determining that Thomson Reuters' Westlaw platform's key number system and more than 2,200 headnotes used to create tech startup ROSS Intelligence's product were original enough to be protected by copyright.

Kirkland views its success as a reminder that it needs to keep evolving, learning and improving, said Jon Ballis, chairman of the firm's executive committee.

"We're thankful that our clients have trusted us with many of their most important matters, and that

our talents and dedicated lawyers continue to choose our firm," Ballis said. "We don't take any of that lightly."

--Additional reporting by Al Barbarino, Tom Zanki, Ivan Moreno, Katie Buehler, Theresa Schliep, Jade Martinez-Pogue, Yeji Jesse Lee, Bonnie Eslinger, Najiyya Budaly, Gina Kim, Ryan Davis, Keith Goldberg, Christopher Cole, Cara Bayles, Rae Ann Varona, Bryan Koenig, Isaac Monterose and Andrew McIntyre. Editing by Nicole Bleier.

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