

Rising Star: Gibson Dunn's Perlette Michele Jura

By Allison Grande



Law360, New York (April 29, 2014, 7:38 PM ET) -- Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP partner Perlette Michele Jura has helped spearhead the creation of the firm's thriving transnational litigation practice group and successfully guided companies such as Intel Corp. and Dole Food Co. through complex, cross-jurisdictional disputes over toxic torts, landing her a spot among Law360's top product liability attorneys under 40.

In less than a decade, the 34-year-old Rising Star has already gained a reputation as a leader in the growing fields of complex and transnational litigation, playing a critical role in a number of high-profile matters including birth defect suits brought against Intel, challenges to an Ecuadorian court's unprecedented \$9.5 billion pollution judgment against Chevron Corp. and a \$97.4 million judgment in a Nicaraguan court against Dole over alleged pesticide-related injuries among banana farmers.

"Perlette is a recognized expert within and outside the firm in the emerging area of transnational litigation," said Pat Dennis, who chairs the firm's environmental litigation and mass tort practice group. "She's a very strong lawyer in all respects, and I'm happy for her to take any role on a case, because she can do everything from brief writing to arguing before the court so well."

Jura most recently displayed her ability to handle all aspects of complex litigation that crosses jurisdictional lines through her work on a series of trans-generational toxic tort cases filed against Intel in Delaware state court.

The four cases sought to hold Intel liable under either Arizona or Colorado law for allegedly using chemicals to make semiconductor chips that caused workers to have children with birth defects.

Jura took the lead in drafting Intel's dismissal briefs and co-argued with Dennis the motions, which focused on the pitfalls of permitting plaintiffs to assert pre-conception tort claims.

"It was important to get the court focused early on the danger of permitting preconception tort claims, given that the liability tied to these types of claims could be potentially limitless if they were allowed to proceed," Jura said.

The strategy has paid off, with three of the cases either having been dismissed by the judge or voluntarily dropped since the beginning of the year, and the fourth having been whittled down to contain only a sole remaining premises liability claim.

While the Intel cases did not extend outside the U.S., as many of Jura's matters do, they still allowed her to showcase her knack for working on issues that extend outside the venue in which the case has been filed.

"She was faced with some very difficult issues in those cases because the claims arose out of activities that occurred in different states, but she is just a tireless research and writer and handled them very well," said Dennis, who has worked closely with Jura on the cases for the past three years.

Jura has been steadily building up her expertise in complex litigation disputes since joining Gibson Dunn in 2005, following a one-year clerkship with the Ninth Circuit and her graduation from Stanford Law School in 2004.

Capitalizing on her interests in international, constitutional and appellate law, Jura immediately became involved with the firm's burgeoning transnational litigation practice.

"It was my dream to find a job where I could practice in both constitutional and international law," she said. "I was very fortunate to have been brought into the transnational law area when I first started at the firm. It's an incredible way to learn about the laws throughout the world and to work with a wide range of clients and judicial systems."

While still an associate, Jura teamed with several of her colleagues — including partners Randy Mastro, Theodore Boutrous, Scott Edelman, Andrea Neuman and William Thomson — to transform the firm's growing transnational litigation docket into one of the first formalized practice groups dedicated to the topic, which was launched in 2010.

Jura credits much of her success to the support of her colleagues, who allowed her to play a key role in several matters while still an associate.

Her early efforts included taking the lead in the core coram vobis briefing that helped Dole secure the dismissal of U.S.-filed toxic tort claims alleging that pesticide dibromochloropropane, or DBCP, caused reproductive harm and co-chairing oral arguments in the firm's successful effort to convince the Eleventh Circuit to block recognition and enforcement of a \$97 million toxic tort judgment awarded by a Nicaraguan court against Dole.

"I was lucky to work with brilliant partners that gave me a lot of responsibility, showed me the ropes and worked collaboratively with me," she said, adding that younger attorneys "should not hesitate to ask partners for advice and take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way, even if it requires you to go out of comfort zone."

Jura, who became partner in January 2013 in the first year in which she was eligible, has also been a core member of the Gibson Dunn team that has been working since 2009 to cut down a headline-grabbing \$9.5 billion pollution judgment against Chevron that was allegedly secured through fraud, and has played a lead role in defending Altria and Philip Morris USA in six toxic tort actions brought in Delaware on behalf of Argentine tobacco farmers claiming that exposure to pesticides on locally owned

farms caused birth defects in their children.

While still in its relative infancy, Jura predicts that the transnational practice area will only continue to grow in the coming years, and says that she looks forward to being on the forefront of the cutting-edge issues.

“In-house legal teams are starting to realize the danger of having a siloed approach to litigation, and that they need to have a more global perspective,” she said. “Helping to shape a developing area of law is incredibly rewarding, and I like being part of the dialogue.”

--Editing by Emily Kokoll.

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