

## MVP: Willkie's Rachel C. Strickland

By Rick Archer

*Law360 (September 16, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT)* -- Over the last year, Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP's Rachel Strickland has represented such diverse parties as retail wholesaler Global Brands Group, noteholders of car rental giant Hertz and talc injury claimants in the Imerys Talc America Chapter 11, earning her a spot as one of Law360's 2022 Bankruptcy MVPs.

### **HER BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

Strickland said her biggest accomplishment over the last year was acting as a mediator of disputes between the Chapter 7 trustee of LeClairRyan and a former member of the law firm.

"It was particularly great for me because my reputation in the market is as a litigator, where I'm known for battling through adverse situations. It was meaningful to be asked to be a mediator, and I was thrilled with how it turned out," she said.

She said it was a "complicated" mediation with "a lot of challenges and a lot of emotions on the part of the litigants."

### **HER PROUDEST MOMENT:**

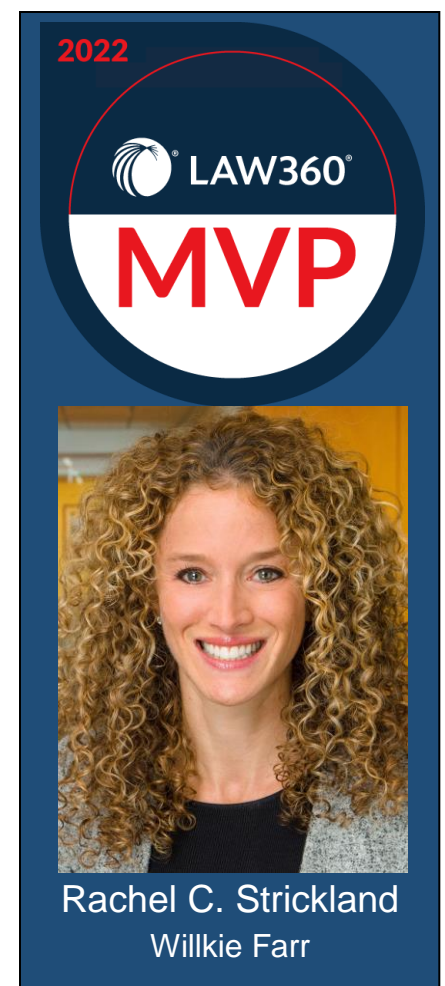
She said her proudest moment was seeing Willkie's bankruptcy group recognized for the diversity of its work, which over the last year included representing holders of more than \$1.6 billion in unsecured Hertz notes and representing Global Brands in its Chapter 11, where the team secured global creditor settlements and a consensual bankruptcy plan.

### **HER BIGGEST CHALLENGE:**

She said a major challenge recently has been managing the training of new associates in the current remote work environment to ensure they are constantly learning and growing.

For example, giving an associate face-to-face experience by having them sit in on a meeting is no longer a simple matter, she said.

"These things don't happen naturally, they have to be planned," Strickland said.



#### **WHAT MOTIVATES HER:**

"Winning," she said. "I get personally invested in the outcome, and I navigate client issues like they are my own problems, which is motivating for me."

She said one case that was very personally motivating for her was the Imerys Talc America matter, where she led the team representing the official committee of talc injury claimants.

Strickland led the Willkie team throughout these cases in high-stakes litigation against J&J and others, investigating and pursuing potential claims, and negotiating and litigating a bankruptcy plan that appropriately compensates personal injury claimants and will ultimately provide for a litigation settlement trust, according to Willkie.

#### **WHY SHE'S A BANKRUPTCY ATTORNEY:**

She said bankruptcy work is "never dull" and that she is constantly learning new things about various industries.

"I really like learning how different businesses tick and what makes them successful and vulnerable," she said.

#### **OTHER NOTABLE CASES SHE'S WORKED ON:**

She said one other notable case lately was the Chapter 11 of PWM Property Management, the owner of a New York City office tower, where she led the team representing a mezzanine lender.

The lenders initially sought to dismiss the case as a workaround of their rights, but reached a settlement with the debtors before the Chapter 11 plan was approved at the end of August and became effective in September, she said.

"It took us a long time, but we got the right results," she said.

#### **HER ADVICE FOR YOUNG ATTORNEYS:**

She recommended that young lawyers undergo a yearly "gut check" to make sure their current position is still a good fit and that they're not simply staying at a job on autopilot.

"When I was an associate, I forced myself to interview for a job every year, whether I wanted to move or not. It helped me understand my market worth and served as a gut check that I was where I wanted to be," she said.

— *As told to Rick Archer.*

*Law360's MVPs of the Year are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals, and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.*