

Insurance Group of the Year: Pillsbury

By Hailey Konnath

Law360 (December 8, 2020, 6:11 PM EST) -- Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP's insurance recovery and advisory attorneys have recovered more than \$1 billion for big-name clients over the past year, landing it a spot among Law360's Insurance Groups of the Year.

The insurance group has also reviewed more than 1,000 client policies for COVID-19 coverage, according to the firm. Among other high-profile clients, the firm has been retained by Zoom Technologies, New York University and the California Public Employees' Retirement System.

Mark Plumer, a partner in the firm's D.C. office, told Law360 that the insurance group's success can be attributed in part to the variety of expertise its attorneys bring to the table and the deep breadth of knowledge across other practices at the firm. The group encourages its lawyers to take aggressive, creative positions in their work, he said.

Notably, the Pillsbury team snagged a major victory for Northrop Grumman Corp. in April, convincing a Third Circuit panel to unanimously affirm that Axis Reinsurance Co. must fund its defense of an Employee Retirement Income Security Act class action.

Pillsbury lawyers also prevailed in their representation of global software company Solera Holdings Inc., securing an early win allowing the company to continue pursuing \$39 million in coverage for costs it incurred in a stockholders' challenge to its buyout by Vista Equity. The Delaware's July 2019 decision was a ruling of first impression nationally.

"We've had a lot of big wins and important wins," partner Joseph Jean told Law360. "But in order to get to that number, you also need to have a large portfolio of wins."

And they pulled all that off while grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, said Jean, who's based out of the firm's New York City office. The group was already busy but has seen a "dramatic uptick" in work stemming from the pandemic, he said.

"Our overall response of our group during the pandemic was second to none," he said. He added, "We continue to work very hard for our clients during this period and really rallied to the call."



Plumer said that the group has worked tirelessly through the pandemic — mostly from home — to keep winning.

And the group has also managed to grow during the pandemic and expects to expand in the future, Jean said.

The insurance recovery and advisory group has ballooned in recent years, doubling in size between 2016 and 2020, according to Plumer. To date, the group has nearly 70 lawyers across eight offices, according to the firm.

It's one of the largest insurance practices in the U.S., Plumer told Law360.

"It's not simply about size — it's also about scope of practice and having people who have specialties that matter to our clients," he said.

Although the practice has grown quickly, it's grown in a measured way, bringing in practitioners with skills in different areas who are at the top of their game, Plumer said.

Jean said that moving forward, the practice group is working on increasing its diversity. The group wants to widen its focus as well as add more geographic, ethnic and gender diversity, he said.

"Let's face it — the law industry has a lot of work to do," he said.

--Editing by Gemma Horowitz.