

MVP: Pillsbury's Tamara Bruno

By Eli Flesch

Law360 (September 24, 2021, 4:41 PM EDT) -- Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP's Tamara Bruno represented a Northrop Grumman unit in securing more than \$100 million in coverage for an underlying securities class action, a leading accomplishment for the institutional policyholder representative, earning her a spot among Law360's 2021 Insurance MVPs.

WHY SHE'S AN INSURANCE ATTORNEY:

Bruno values learning about the broad range of issues and industries she's dealt with over the course of her career, including the energy industry, tech start-ups, hospitality and professional sports. That ability to get involved in anything is a huge draw for her.

"I was really drawn to it because there's honestly nothing insurance doesn't touch," she said. "I've asked folks over the years: If you think of something insurance doesn't touch, tell me."

Bruno — whose work includes liability coverage, directors and officers disputes, and cyber insurance — also said she wanted to be a strong advocate for policyholders to balance out the great representation insurers benefit from in litigation.

"The insurers are represented by expert counsel who are steeped in the area and the market, and I really felt that policyholders needed and deserved advocates with the same level of expertise," she said.

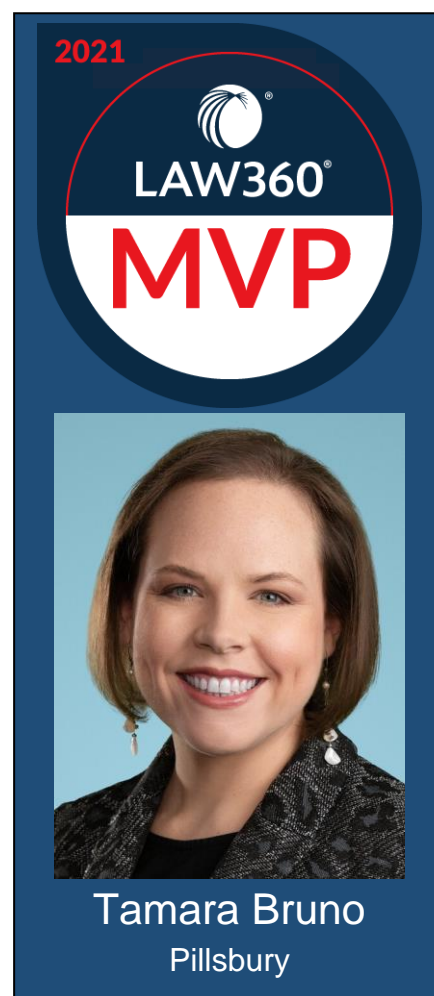
"There's a lot more insurance companies can get away with if the policyholder doesn't have counsel or has less experienced counsel."

And as ever, Bruno is motivated to help clients to recover losses and move forward as a business.

"At the end of the day we collect money for our clients, and they end up with a check," she said.

HER BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT THIS YEAR:

Bruno pointed to her work on behalf of the Northrop Grumman unit as a directors and officers coverage



suit that was particularly interesting and of-the-moment. The underlying suit implicated three towers of D&O coverage, she said, making the suit complex and unusual, all the while underscoring trends in corporate transactions.

The favorable ruling she earned from the Delaware Superior Court added to what had been a paltry body of law on "bump-up" exclusions, she said. Those exclusions often concern payments that can be seen as an increase in the purchase price of a company,

"This was a great opportunity to get a court to look at the language and opine on a number of aspects on the language and how the exclusion actually works, which gives guidance to all sorts of policyholders who may be dealing with claims arising out of transactions, and how that language applies to their particular transaction," Bruno said.

The case also involved the question of how to determine which D&O policy applies to claims relating to a major corporate transaction or acquisition, which she described as a major issue in the D&O market. She said determining which insurer is responsible for a pre-merger or post-merger policy can be tricky with several carriers all pointing fingers.

"We try to help the policyholders who are there in the middle going, 'Hey, somebody's got to cover this thing. It can't be that nobody does,'" she said.

HER BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS YEAR:

As it has for many attorneys and firms, the coronavirus pandemic has raised new challenges for Bruno and her colleagues that have led to a busy work environment. That's in addition to the economic hit many clients have taken in one way or another.

"Anytime you have economic issues or economic uncertainty, you have [the] insurance industry tightening the purse strings, and taking positions that are just radical, and that we wouldn't have seen, I think, in an easier market," Bruno said.

That could extend even to carriers digging in on routine claims, she added, saying she's had to fight more on all issues, even beyond coverage claims specific to the pandemic.

HER ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:

Bruno thinks this is a challenging time to be a young lawyer, especially given that a lot of junior attorneys haven't been able to work with their teams other than remotely.

But she also suggested that there's a lot of opportunity. What's different between now and the financial crisis of 2008-09, around when Bruno started her career, is that there's a lot more work, she said. That's for insurance, but she said young lawyers could also dive more into new topics in regulatory issues and litigation.

"Younger attorneys need to really take hold of that opportunity," she said. "They need to think about what's going to hold their interest in the long term, right? Careers are long. But I think they can look at busy issues or emerging issues right now."

Understanding what kind of practices to get involved in, and how to look at a firm's finances and how their workers are paid are all important skills, Bruno added.

"Try to find a practice that you're going to feel passionate about," she said.

— *As told to Eli Flesch. Editing by Kelly Duncan.*

Law360's MVPs 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 2021 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.

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