

Rising Star: Weil's Pravin Patel

By Emily Johnson

Law360 (July 22, 2024, 2:03 PM EDT) -- Pravin Patel of Weil Gotshal & Manges LLP successfully defended refrigerator maker Dometic Corp. against multiple class actions asserting billions in damages filed in Florida and California, defeating allegations its refrigerators for RVs leaked coolant and had design defects, earning him a spot among the class action practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

His biggest case:

Patel said representing Dometic was the biggest case of his career.

"It was one of those cases, I was involved early on in my career, and it went through so many iterations and machinations," Patel said. "I feel like anything you can experience in a class action, I experienced it all in a series of class action, which made it one of the coolest as well as the most challenging cases."

The firm secured summary judgment in the Florida case in 2017. The following year, the firm stamped out the plaintiffs' bid to create a multidistrict litigation outside of Florida and persuaded a court to consolidate the cases in Florida.

In 2019, Dometic defeated class certification, although the Eleventh Circuit reversed that decision. On remand, Dometic won its bid to exclude the plaintiff consumers' expert, which led to the action being withdrawn with prejudice, Patel said.

Dometic didn't pay or admit wrongdoing and was released from the claims in March 2023.

"Ultimately we were able to achieve a fantastic result for our client," Patel said. "At the end of the day, that's why we do what we do and why I do what I do, is to service the clients and get good results for them."



Pravin Patel
Weil Gotshal

Age: 37
Home base: Miami
Position: Partner
Law school: University of Chicago Law School
First job after law school: Associate at Weil

His most interesting case:

Patel said that the most interesting case he has handled recently was securing dismissals for three novel class actions alleging Burger King didn't disclose its use of PFAS in its food packaging. A class action filed in April 2022 in California alleged the burger chain's packaging contained per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances — which can cause cancers, thyroid disorders and other illnesses — despite Burger King's assurances that its products are safe.

Representing the fast food giant, Patel argued that federal law preempts plaintiffs' claims and that the plaintiffs didn't put forth actionable fraud-based claims.

"They were serious allegations," Patel said. "These are allegations that have become more and more prevalent over the last couple of years."

Patel said that getting out of a suit at the motion to dismiss stage is rare, making the case an interesting one.

"Over a very short period, like five or six months, we were able to get all of those cases dismissed at the motion to dismiss stage," Patel said. "Those cases ... why it's personally gratifying [for me] is because when you can get out of a case very early on, it's rare, especially because of the standard at the motion to dismiss stage."

He said it felt tremendous to secure the dismissals and "having them stick for our client who wasn't doing anything wrong."

The firm used multiple strategies throughout the litigation to get the result it sought, Patel said.

"We believe we made strong and innovative arguments, but at the same time, it wasn't just about the motion papers," he said. "It was the lead-up and the setup that we employed, the conversations we were having with plaintiffs' counsel. Then you take our motion papers on top of that and other strategies that we employed related to arbitrability and things like that ... that's what led to, ultimately, the plaintiffs agreeing to the dismissals."

His proudest moment as an attorney:

Patel said he is deliberate in his work and life about having an appreciation for the small things. He said those moments "really add up," and he tries to "take all those moments in."

"When you have a client that gets embroiled in litigation for several years, and then you're able to get the result that you know is the right result for that client, that's a really proud moment," Patel said.

Those moments include getting the claims dismissed in the Burger King case. He said he is proud he was able to get the client out of the suit at the motion to dismiss stage.

Patel said he takes pride in handling matters involving voting rights issues and the unlawful detention of undocumented immigrants, and in his pro bono work.

"The results I have achieved in those cases, because they impact so many people — those moments, getting the results that we did via settlement or mediation, those were tremendous, because you see the human reaction of your client, and you see the good that you're doing in the world," Patel said.

Watching younger attorneys develop their skills and taking on opportunities also makes him proud, he said.

"I work with some phenomenal lawyers and seeing young lawyers come into their own, or take opportunities, or watching someone through their first deposition or defend their deposition, or do a phenomenal job at their first oral argument — those moments ... almost [make me feel] like a proud older brother or parent," he said.

His other notable cases:

Patel said he is defending Los Angeles Dodgers superstar Shohei Ohtani and the MLB Players Association against a proposed class action brought on behalf of individuals who said they lost money after relying on their endorsement of FTX, the failed cryptocurrency exchange.

Patel said they are fighting the allegations, saying his clients weren't involved in fraud.

"Substantively, the issues involved in the case are interesting, but when the cases you are working on are also reported on by ESPN and CBS Sports, it adds a different flavor," Patel said. "I grew up a sports fan so being able to work on these sports law cases has been really interesting."

Patel said he's also defending oil company PetroChina in a dispute alleging the company prevented personal protective equipment from heading to the U.S. at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The case involves the Chinese Communist Party and issues of sovereign immunity, according to the firm.

--As told to Emily Johnson. Editing by Lakshna Mehta.

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2024 Rising Stars winners after reviewing nearly 1,200 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2024, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.
