



In the News

Texas Powerhouse: Munck Wilson

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Law360 (August 5, 2021, 2:03 PM EDT) — Munck Wilson Mandala LLP attorneys leaned into the firm’s emphasis on teamwork to guide major transactions and secure litigation wins that earned it a spot as a 2021 Texas Powerhouse, including a \$2.3 billion technology acquisition and \$85.9 million trade secret trial verdict.

Initially founded in Dallas in 1997 with five technology-focused intellectual property attorneys, Munck Wilson has since expanded in firm size — with additional offices in Austin and Los Angeles and a contingent in Miami — and practice areas. As of May 1, the firm now boasts 61 Lone Star State attorneys plus 14 nationwide who focus on complex litigation, mergers and acquisitions, entertainment and sports law, employment disputes, cannabis and more.

Managing Partner Bill Munck said the firm’s team-oriented atmosphere helped it continue growing and providing top-notch legal services despite the coronavirus pandemic.

“We’ve always been very team-oriented, and the pandemic brought us back together,” Munck said, adding the Dallas office reopened in May 2020 for attorneys who want to work from there.

Munck said the firm’s cohesion guided it to an \$85.9 million jury verdict win for light sensor maker AMS Sensors USA Inc. at an April damages retrial of a 2008 trade secrets and contract dispute in the Eastern District of Texas. The new award against Renesas Electronics America Inc. topped a previous verdict in 2015 that awarded AMS \$77 million in damages but was vacated by the Federal Circuit in May 2018 after the court found jurors wrongly awarded Renesas’ profits to AMS.

The Munck Wilson trial team had been regularly meeting and practicing together in-person before the trial and were more “in sync” than opposing counsel, Munck said.

Michael McCabe, the firm’s co-chair of litigation, said the AMS win also demonstrates the depth of the firm’s bench. Munck Wilson has numerous attorneys licensed to practice before the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and others who know the ins and outs of the technology behind patents but might not be litigators. They all work closely together for trials, he said.

“We have a wealth of resources in the firm,” he said.

In March, the firm’s intellectual property and litigation teams notched another win by aiding Intellicentrics Inc. in invalidating a patent asserted against it by Repifi Vendor Logistics Inc. The Munck Wilson team convinced an Eastern District of Texas judge that Repifi’s patent for a smartphone app that checks in visitors to an access-controlled environment was an unpatentable abstract idea under the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2014 ruling in *Alice Corp. v. CLS Bank*.

Jenny Martinez, the firm’s other co-chair of litigation, said the win for Intellicentrics is a rarity in the Eastern District of Texas, which is often seen as a patent-friendly venue.

“Those types of motions are often denied,” she said. “That was a big win.”

The AMS and Intellicentrics cases fall into Munck Wilson’s niche practice of complex intellectual property technology cases, Martinez said, which the firm has been dominating for years.

But the firm’s corporate practice also had a good year, advising two industry-changing mergers and acquisitions. Corporate Partner Randy Ray said the firm has seen an uptick in corporate activity over the past two years that doesn’t seem to be slowing down any time soon.

“While the business community might have taken a beat [during the pandemic], they didn’t rest very long,” he said.

In January, the firm represented CarOffer, an automated vehicle trade platform headquartered in the Dallas suburb of Plano, Texas, in the \$275 million sale of its majority interest to CarGurus, a leading online car marketplace. Under the deal, CarGurus acquired a 51% interest in CarOffer with the ability to purchase the remaining equity over the next three years.

Ray said the sale was an “incredible success story” for CarOffer, which launched in August 2019. Munck Wilson has represented CarOffer since its inception, Ray added, and represented one of its principles for more than 15 years.

“We have in-depth knowledge and familiarity,” Ray said. “We’re ingrained into the company.”

In April, the Munck Wilson team advised software company Tyler Technologies Inc., which is also based in Plano, Texas, in its \$2.3 billion all-cash purchase of NIC Inc., a company that provides digital government solutions and payment services. The purchase was Tyler Technologies’ largest acquisition and its first purchase of a publicly-traded company.

Ray said Munck Wilson is looking to add corporate attorneys and round out its practice in the near future. –Editing by Ellen Johnson.

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