

Rising Star: Covington's Rani Gupta

By Eli Flesch

Law360 (June 18, 2021, 3:33 PM EDT) -- Rani Gupta of Covington & Burling LLP has taken a lead role in advising Major League Baseball and Goodwill Industries of Orange County in two major pandemic coverage suits, earning her a spot among insurance practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

THE BIGGEST CASE OF HER CAREER:

It wasn't the case with the biggest dollar amount, but it was still ample at \$100 million.

Gupta says her work co-leading a team representing Health Net for five years in a 13-year dispute over covering ERISA class actions was among her proudest achievements. The team secured nearly \$100 million in coverage after losing two summary judgment rulings, according to Gupta, who was working the case when her side lost the second summary judgment.

But she was the lead writer of the briefs in the successful second appeal, the firm said.

"The case actually outlasted some of the law firms litigating it," Gupta said. "It was both a challenge and an opportunity. It really showed me how, with persistence and strategic thinking, you can really turn a case around."

THE PROUDEST MOMENT OF HER CAREER:

A more recent success, Gupta cites her work defeating a demurrer to throw out a pandemic coverage suit brought by Goodwill Industries of Orange County.

The decision opened the possibility of covering losses Goodwill sustained as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Gupta noted that the decision stands in contrast to the many other federal and state court pandemic suits that have been dismissed.



Rani Gupta
Covington

Age: 39

Home base: Palo Alto

Position: Partner

Law school: Stanford Law School

First job after law school: Law clerk to Judge Sidney Thomas of the Ninth Circuit

"We very carefully crafted our complaint," she said. "The quality of our complaint and the quality of our briefing probably made a difference."

WHY SHE'S A POLICYHOLDER ATTORNEY:

The variety of lawsuits is one of the most attractive parts of the job for Gupta.

The possibility of representing a client as a defendant or plaintiff forces you to get used to both sides, she said, in addition to disputes being litigated in state or federal court or in arbitration. That variety stands in contrast to past work Gupta did in antitrust, she said, which for her mostly focused on federal multidistrict litigation.

"With insurance you really have to be flexible and adapt to the different types of postures you're litigating and places you're litigating," Gupta said.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Being in a team is the first thing that comes to Gupta's mind. Whether it's the more senior partners or the hard-working associates, she doesn't want to let anybody down.

That's in addition, of course, to the clients and the importance of familiarizing them with insurance coverage.

"Being able to help the client and get a great result for the client, but also [to] just relieve their stress in terms of knowledge of insurance coverage is something that's very rewarding."

Gupta also singled out praise for David Goodwin and Donald Brown, partners in Covington's San Francisco office, for giving her opportunities and seeking her opinion.

— *As told to Eli Flesch*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2021 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,400 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2021, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.