

Covington Adds Former ITC Chief To Bolster IP, Trade Teams

By Alex Lawson



Law360, New York (May 06, 2014, 12:44 PM ET) -- Covington & Burling LLP has shored up its international trade and intellectual property practice groups in Washington, D.C., with the addition of a former U.S. International Trade Commission chairman who will aid clients in patent probes before that agency and other trade matters, the firm said Monday.

Shara Aranoff comes to Covington after serving for nearly a decade as an ITC commissioner, with stints as both chairman and vice chairman of the agency under her belt. Aranoff said she was looking forward to lending her expertise as a government official to the firm's ITC Section 337 team.

"They have such a well-established and respected Section 337 practice that also still really has potential for growth and development and could benefit from some of the insights I can bring from the standpoint of the decision makers at the agency," Aranoff told Law360.

Aranoff will counsel both petitioners and respondents wrapped into the ITC's Section 337 patent infringement process with steps such as as drafting and responding to complaints, along with various other proceedings carried out before the agency's administrative law judges and full bench of commissioners.

Timothy Hester, chairman of Covington's management committee, said that Aranoff will be a "tremendous" addition to the firm and noted that clients will benefit greatly from her ITC experience.

"She is a highly respected and accomplished regulator, lawyer and authority on global trade matters," Hester said. "We believe that the insights and expertise she has gained from serving in the highest ranks of the ITC, including her two years as head of the agency, will further strengthen our top-ranked Section 337 litigation and international trade practices."

While the bulk of her practice will be focused on Section 337 matters, Aranoff also said she would counsel clients on a broader array of trade policy matters, ranging from trade remedy proceedings to the implementation of new free trade agreements.

During her time at the ITC, Aranoff has been at the forefront of the ongoing debate surrounding

baseless litigation from nonpracticing entities known derisively as patent trolls.

In January, the ITC reversed long-standing precedent and held for the first time that in order to use licensing activities to satisfy the domestic industry requirement for filing suit at the agency, nonpracticing entities must prove that there are products that practice the patent.

That decision drew a strong dissent from Aranoff, who said that the Federal Circuit ruling that the ITC used as the basis for its shift was "ambiguous" and that the new rule could hinder the ability of small companies and startups to use the ITC.

Prior to her appointment to the ITC in 2005 by President George W. Bush, Aranoff served as senior international trade counsel for the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance's Democratic staff, running point on a number of legislative and policy issues.

In her time with the Finance Committee, she helped to pass the last bill to grant trade promotion authority to the White House, the Trade Act of 2002, along with other pieces of trade legislation and also oversaw negotiations at the World Trade Organization and the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Aranoff earned her law degree from Harvard Law School and holds a bachelor's degree from Princeton University.

--Editing by Katherine Rautenberg.