

## Rising Star: Covington's David Zionts

By **Amanda James**

*Law360 (October 2, 2019, 6:38 PM EDT)* -- Covington & Burling LLP's David Zionts has successfully represented companies facing new applications of the Anti-Terrorism Act, leading to the creation of new legal precedents, and has also represented the city of Los Angeles in a case against the U.S. Department of Justice over its policy for administering policing grants, earning him a spot as one of five appellate law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### **THE BIGGEST CASE OF HIS CAREER:**

Zionts represented Deutsche Bank in a case decided by the Seventh Circuit in December involving the application of the Anti-Terrorism Act. The panel sided with Zionts' client and ruled that the German bank could not be held liable under the ATA for a U.S. soldier's death because the bank's violations of U.S. sanctions were too far removed from the soldier's death.

The growing number of lawsuits alleging companies are responsible for terrorist acts abroad appeal to Zionts, who likes a challenge.

"It's gratifying to put together a strategy to address this new area of law," Zionts said.

### **WHY HE'S AN APPELLATE ATTORNEY:**

The intellectual nature of appellate law interests Zionts, who said he enjoys diving into the key legal issues in a case.

"I like having a back-and-forth with judges who are deeply engaged and read up on the issues," Zionts said. "The appellate area is quite intellectual but at the same time it's very pragmatic and practical because you're solving clients' problems."

### **OTHER NOTABLE CASES:**

Zionts represented the city of Los Angeles in challenging

## RISING ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ STAR



**David Zionts**  
Covington & Burling

Age: 36  
Home base: Washington, D.C.  
Position: Partner  
Law school: Harvard Law School  
First job after law school: Clerk for Chief Circuit Judge Merrick B. Garland of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit

actions taken by the Justice Department that allegedly targeted sanctuary cities through a program designed to offer grants to community police officers. With his team, he secured two injunctions against the DOJ's attempts to withhold federal grants from police departments that didn't participate in federal immigration enforcement and favor departments that addressed illegal immigration.

"A lot of cities like LA have made a judgment that it's in their best interest not to take part in federal immigration enforcement and we've seen a lot of effort by the current administration to go after sanctuary cities," Zions said.

He argued that the new policy violates separation of powers.

**WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:**

Zions also works on international disputes and recently represented the government of Ukraine in cases against Russia before the International Court of Justice.

"I'm motivated by solving hard problems and, ultimately, practicing law is about our clients and finding creative solutions to their problems," Zions said. At Covington, he appreciates the opportunity to take a creative and out-of-the-box approach.

— As told to Amanda James

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2019 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,300 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 years old as of April 30, 2019, in order to be considered for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*