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MVP: Covington's Christopher Sipes

By **Dani Kass**

Law360 (November 17, 2026, 4:00 PM EST) -- Christopher Sipes, the co-chair of Covington & Burling LLP's patent litigation group, helped AstraZeneca dodge $108 million and $42 million verdicts originally won by units of Pfizer, earning him a spot as one of the 2026 Law360 Intellectual Property MVPs.



His biggest accomplishments over the past year:

Sipes cited two victories against Pfizer units, one for AstraZeneca, and another for both AstraZeneca and Daiichi Sankyo.

In 2022, an Eastern District of Texas jury had found Daiichi Sankyo's blockbuster breast cancer treatment Enhertu infringed a patent covering Seagen Inc.'s own blockbuster antibody-drug conjugate Adcetris, and awarded $41.8 million. Pfizer purchased Seagen in 2023.

The Federal Circuit reversed in December, saying the patent didn't hold up under Section 112 of the Patent Act, given that it didn't meet written description or enablement standards.

On appeal, Sipes had represented Daiichi and its partner AstraZeneca, which had intervened.

"Seagen filed a patent application that was extremely broad. It described ways of constructing antibody-drug conjugates, and in particular, attaching drugs to antibodies, which captured just about any possibility without delineating what the right ones were," Sipes said. "There were trillions of possibilities encompassed by what they filed. Essentially, they filed an application that would allow them to down the road describe anything."

Then in July, the Federal Circuit affirmed a patent invalidation that let AstraZeneca escape a jury's $107.5 million verdict in favor of Pfizer-unit Wyeth. A Northern District of Illinois judge, sitting in Delaware, had granted AstraZeneca judgment as a matter of law in 2024.

The litigation is over AstraZeneca's blockbuster lung cancer treatment Tagrisso, which is in a class of drugs referred to as EGFR inhibitors. The Federal Circuit likewise found the patents weren't enabled.

"One of the issues that is becoming increasingly important in life sciences IP is the balance of not applying 112 in a way that impairs patents protecting real innovation, while allowing it to serve its purpose of preventing overreach from applicants who seek to have claims that are broader than what they actually invented," Sipes said. "I think both of those cases are examples where the Federal Circuit did a good job of delineating the scope of 112 in a way that, obviously helped our clients, but also helped to illuminate the right contours of the law."

What motivates him:

Sipes said his personal connection to the underlying drug developments is part of what motivates him. That was particularly true in the [Tagrisso] case, he said.

"I've had a number of oncology cases," he said. "Cancer runs in my family. My father died from lung cancer. In fact, he was on the first generation of EGFR inhibitors [which had a] problem with resistance. So here I was then doing a case, sadly after he passed, solving that problem."

Why he's an IP attorney:

Being a litigator was part of Sipes' plan, but patent law was not.

"That was in the early days of Hatch-Waxman Act patent litigation," he said. "So I picked up a couple of life science patent litigation cases just because they were just starting and they looked interesting."

"I find development of new drugs and biologics very interesting and meaningful," he continued. "I like working with inventors. I like working with innovators. I like the idea of moving medical science clients forward. I like the experts I work with. I really respect the people I work with and [can] learn a lot from them."

His advice to attorneys:

Sipes urged attorneys to pursue opportunities that come their way. Being willing to take on new challenges was how he found patent law, and how he ended up representing a victim of McCarthy-era blacklisting and representing the first U.S. Marine to be discharged for announcing he was gay.

"Don't say no," he said. "I didn't come to the firm to be a patent litigator, but I really like it. I got here somewhat by accident. Somebody came and said, 'Are you interested in this case?' I said, 'It sounds interesting.' When you're a young lawyer — and I would say even as an old lawyer — try to say yes."

--As told to Dani Kass. Editing by Amy Rowe.

Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2026 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 1,000 submissions.

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