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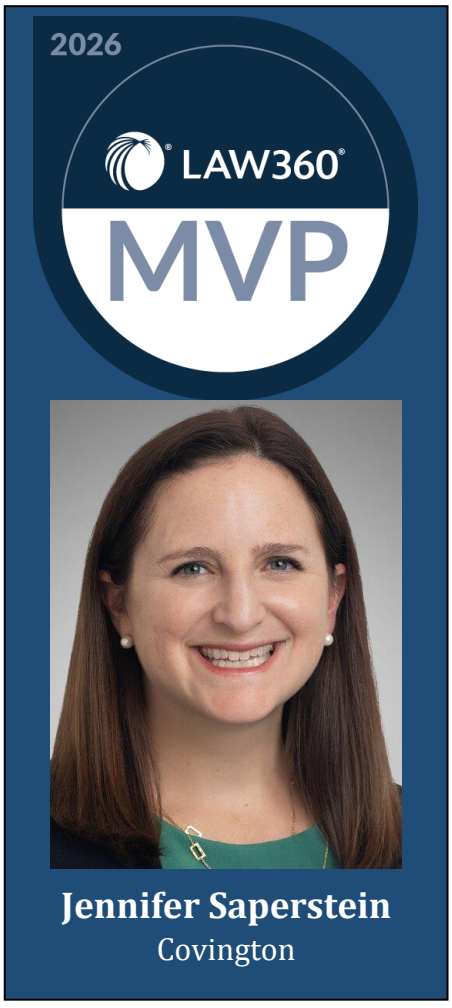
MVP: Covington's Jennifer Saperstein

By **Sarah Jarvis**

Law360 (November 23, 2026, 4:00 PM EST) -- Jennifer Saperstein of Covington & Burling LLP has continued to guide Hino Motors Ltd. through various compliance reforms following the Toyota unit's $1.6 billion emissions fraud deal with several regulators, earning her a spot as one of the 2026 Law360 Compliance MVPs.



Her biggest accomplishment:

Saperstein steered Hino's compliance reforms and helped the company complete certain compliance obligations under a criminal and civil resolution with the U.S. Department of Justice, the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the California Attorney General's Office and the California Air Resources Board.

That work has included presenting the company's remediation progress to enforcement authorities, overseeing external compliance testing and preparing annual compliance reports — the first of which Saperstein submitted this past spring, according to Covington.

"The resolution itself was significant and reflected the company's exemplary cooperation and extensive remedial measures and investment in compliance during the course of the investigation," Saperstein said. "But I'm equally proud that we helped the company build a compliance framework and a compliance team that has carried it forward into the future, including over the past year during their post-resolution obligations."

As part of its resolution, Hino admitted to manipulating emissions and fuel-economy test results for more than 100,000 diesel vehicles it sold in the U.S. Hino pled guilty to a single criminal conspiracy charge and was sentenced to a five-year probation term during which it cannot import its diesel engines into the U.S., and the company was ordered to implement certain compliance, ethics and reporting structure reforms.

Saperstein said she's proud of helping the company move from resolving the complicated enforcement matter to having a forward-looking and sustainable focus on its compliance program.

Her biggest challenge:

Saperstein said the biggest challenge she faced this past year was helping clients navigate a period of uncertainty regarding white collar enforcement priorities amid a rapidly changing technology landscape.

As the DOJ and other enforcement agencies have carried out significant organizational changes and announced new areas of enforcement focus, chief compliance officers' remits have expanded to include areas they haven't historically covered, she said. And at the same time, recent advances in artificial intelligence have raised a host of compliance issues, from questions about legal privileges to corporate governance issues regarding AI tools.

"We're all navigating technological changes with AI that are occurring at a pace and scale that I haven't previously encountered in my career," she said. "That creates challenges both in terms of how I personally adapt to using these tools in my own practice, but also advising clients both on the use of AI in their compliance programs, as well as around compliance and governance issues around the use of AI."

Why she's a compliance attorney:

Saperstein said she appreciates getting to work every day with clients that are proactively and creatively thinking about preventing problems, or addressing past problems. She described compliance work as a partnership and collaboration that includes lawyers, clients, client contacts and their business counterparts.

She said she enjoys being part of the team that helps fix a problem and lets organizations emerge from an issue with a stronger foundation for conducting business ethically and compliantly.

"There's rarely one right answer to a compliance problem. We have to find the solution that works for this particular company or organization at this particular time and with these particular leaders," she said. "I get to combine legal judgment with a deep understanding of our clients' businesses, and that's really fun."

Her advice for junior attorneys:

Saperstein encouraged junior attorneys to become indisputable masters of the factual record and to proactively suggest strategies and possible solutions to their teammates. And she urged them to find work they enjoy doing and colleagues they enjoy doing it with, saying that will go a long way when they experience long days and challenging matters.

She added that for junior attorneys doing compliance work in particular, it's important to remember that while it can be easy to say no to a proposed activity or plan that seems risky, that will only be the right answer on rare occasions.

"It's a lot harder, but get creative," she said. "Think about mitigation steps or alternative paths that can help a client achieve its goals without taking on undue risk. It's cliché, but trying to get to yes is important for compliance attorneys."

--As told to Sarah Jarvis. Editing by Linda Voorhis.

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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