

Rising Star: Steptoe & Johnson's Amy Lentz

Law360, New York (August 4, 2017, 4:18 PM EDT) -- Steptoe & Johnson LLP's Amy J. Lentz has spent the past decade ascending through the firm's trade practice, primarily with her intensive work on landmark World Trade Organization cases challenging U.S. tariffs on behalf of the Chinese government, earning her a spot among the international trade attorneys under 40 being honored by Law360 Rising Stars.

WHY INTERNATIONAL TRADE:

About all Lentz knew as she neared the end of law school in 2007 was that she was interested in some kind of international practice, be it in the realm of litigation, export control compliance or sanctions. A summer internship at Steptoe whetted her appetite for the WTO dispute settlement process, which has kept her busy since joining the firm full time in 2007.

"When I was a summer associate, I did a project for one of the partners who does primarily WTO dispute settlement," Lentz said. "I enjoyed the project, and when I came back as an associate, we had just been hired to do China's first big offensive case at the WTO. That was my first two years, doing this offensive case on behalf of the government of China, and I loved it, and I never stopped."

WHAT KEEPS HER MOTIVATED:

Many corners of the trade practice can be somewhat rote or mechanical, but what drew Lentz to the WTO realm was the variety and new opportunities posed by each new case.

Indeed, any number of policy areas can come under the microscope in WTO litigation. While Lentz's most significant work has focused on challenging U.S. duties, she's also litigated disputes centering on e-commerce, tax and industrial policy. It is that freshness that keeps her

RISING
 ★★★★★★
STAR



Amy Lentz
Steptoe & Johnson

Age: 35

Home base: Washington, D.C.

Position: Partner

Law school: University of Virginia School of Law

First job after law school: Associate at Steptoe & Johnson

coming back for more.

“What keeps me interested in WTO dispute settlement is that ... by and large, the disputes are so different,” she said. “It’s different agreements, [and] you become an expert in a completely different area for the purpose of a dispute and that’s what keeps me interested in it going forward, the chance to learn something new with each new dispute.”

ON FINDING MENTORS:

Young women in BigLaw regularly face a litany of challenges as they look to climb the corporate ladder, but Lentz said she was drawn to Steptoe because of the chances it provides its female attorneys.

While Lentz is the only woman in the WTO dispute settlement group, the rest of the firm’s trade roster is stacked with influential female attorneys, led by trade policy practice head Susan G. Esserman.

“She was actually a big part of the reason why I came to the firm in the first place,” Lentz said of Esserman. “Women’s issues are important to her, and she worked hard to develop female associate talent and to make sure we were all getting the experiences that our male colleagues were getting.”

PROUDEST MOMENT:

At the outset of her tenure at Steptoe, Lentz observed a colleague deliver a multihour argument to the WTO’s Appellate Body in a case that saw China mounting a challenge to U.S. countervailing duties. The argument centered on whether Chinese state-owned firms constituted “public bodies” capable of doling out subsidies that warranted CVDs from the U.S.

It was an impressive presentation of a complex issue, one which reared its head again years later in a new Chinese challenge of CVDs, this time with Lentz running the show. Earlier this year, she was tasked with making the same argument as China monitors U.S. efforts to comply with an adverse decision against its duties. For Lentz, it represented a neat coda to her decade of work on the two cases.

“For me to go from being a first-year associate being so impressed and having that be one of the reasons I wanted to stick with this, to come full circle and be doing that argument on that issue myself was just a really nice moment,” she said.

— *As told to Alex Lawson*

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2017 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,200 submissions. This interview has been edited and condensed.

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