

## MVP: Steptoe & Johnson's Stephanie Sheridan

By **Sophia Morris**

*Law360 (November 26, 2019, 2:42 PM EST)* -- Steptoe & Johnson LLP's Stephanie Sheridan advises clients including Kohl's and Macy's on high-profile, challenging cases whose outcomes have major implications for retailers around the U.S., landing her among Law360's 2019 Retail & E-Commerce MVPs.

### **HER BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT:**

Sheridan said that, for her and her team, one of the biggest achievements this year has been consistently staying current on cutting-edge issues and litigation developments in the retail space. She pointed to the recent resurgence in deceptive pricing class actions as one example of this, noting with pride that Steptoe continues to be highly sought after by retailers involved in class action litigation.

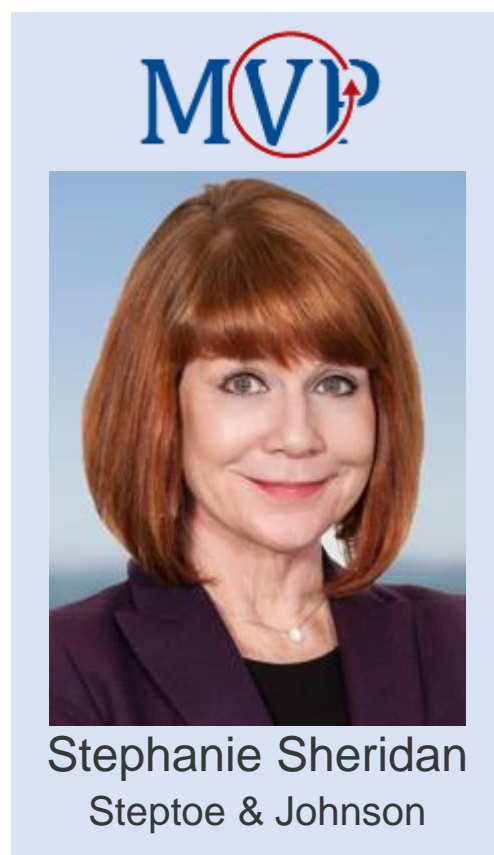
These pricing lawsuits, which pose significant challenges for the industry given their scale and the liability exposure at issue, had started to die down in the last couple of years, but are now being filed regularly in new jurisdictions, Sheridan told Law360. She and her team are representing clients such as Kohl's Corp. and Macy's in some of the new suits.

"This year, we saw a very robust resurgence [of pricing litigation], but with some twists," Sheridan said. "We saw them filed in new jurisdictions and we saw some twists in some of the claims. We are handling six or seven of those new cases, certainly more than any other single firm, and we are in all the new jurisdictions and all the new claims."

### **HER GREATEST CHALLENGES:**

In the retail space, things move incredibly quickly, Sheridan noted. Keeping up to speed on the latest developments, whether it be new legislation or a rise in certain types of litigation, is challenging, but it allows Sheridan and her team to help clients handle any potential claim they may face.

"As soon as we see another trend on the horizon, be it a new proposed law, or a new claim that we've



seen either as a threatened lawsuit or an actual lawsuit, we immediately issue alerts to our clients so that they can be apprised of what's out there," Sheridan said. "We help them do whatever we can to address the issue so that they are not vulnerable."

Sheridan added that pricing issues continue "to be a very difficult issue for the industry to grapple with." She and her team advise both online and in-store retailers by auditing their pricing programs in order to help them develop programs that lessen their potential exposure to these kinds of claims.

Another challenge, Sheridan explained, is that pricing claims are not only being brought by plaintiffs' firms. "They can also be brought by government entities, so we've seen activity where state attorneys general have issued warning and initiated enforcement actions against retailers," Sheridan said, adding that she is representing Macy's in an enforcement action brought by the Los Angeles City Attorney.

#### ***WHY SHE'S A RETAIL ATTORNEY:***

Sheridan said she started her retail practice area in 2006 after representing several retailers in class actions and realizing the companies all used different firms for different needs. Her goal was to create a one-stop shop that could handle all of her clients' business needs.

The retail practice also draws on the expertise of Steptoe attorneys from other practice groups, Sheridan said. For instance, regulatory attorneys can provide insight to retailers that are expanding to sell CBD products. And attorneys specializing in blockchain and cryptocurrency concerns, along with others with U.S. Treasury Department experience, are able to advise on potential issues regarding new customer payment mechanisms like Afterpay, she said.

Sheridan added that the retail industry fascinates her. "Keeping up with all the new developments is something that's exciting and I look forward to," she said.

#### ***HER ADVICE FOR YOUNG ATTORNEYS:***

Sheridan stressed how crucial it is for younger attorneys to get their feet wet. "I think it's smart to make sure that you're getting as much experience as you can," she said. "If you want to be a litigator, [it's about] making sure that you have courtroom experience, and having the ability to handle a case from soup to nuts."

"Having the opportunity to have direct client contact so that you're building relationships and understanding what clients want and like" is also important, she added.

As is "picking something that is a specialty area that you're passionate about," Sheridan said. "It's human nature that people are going to be more interested and more successful in an area where they have more interest."

— *As told to Sophia Morris*

*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 2019 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.*