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California Powerhouse: Robbins Geller

By **Hailey Konnath**

Law360 (August 24, 2023, 2:03 PM EDT) -- Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd LLP continues to rack up major wins in California litigation, including securing a record-breaking $5.6 billion settlement in an antitrust class action against Visa Inc. and Mastercard Inc. and billions of dollars in recoveries in opioid litigation, earning the firm a spot on Law360's Regional Powerhouses.

Over the last year, the San Diego-based firm remained a leader in securities and class action litigation in the Golden State and across the country, earning it a spot as one of Law360's California Powerhouses. Notably, Robbins Geller helped land what's believed to be the largest antitrust class action settlement in the credit card litigation, which challenged Visa and Mastercard's interchange fees. Robbins Geller represented merchants claiming the fees violated the federal Sherman Act as well as California's Cartwright Act.

The Second Circuit upheld that blockbuster settlement in March.

A team of Robbins Geller attorneys, alongside co-counsel, also represented the city and county of San Francisco in its effort to hold Walgreens accountable for the opioid crisis. That team secured a ruling in favor of San Francisco following a closely watched bellwether trial in August 2022. A California federal judge found Walgreens liable for creating a "public nuisance" by failing to perform due diligence and report suspicious opioid orders. Other manufacturers, distributors and pharmacies settled before closing arguments in the trial. In May, Walgreens agreed to a $230 million deal.

On top of that, Robbins Geller's opioids team secured nationwide settlements with Walmart Inc., CVS Health Corp. and Walgreens in the broader multidistrict litigation totaling more than $13 billion.

And the firm made headlines by steering litigation against Twitter, now known as X, that resulted in the largest approved class action settlement of 2022: $810 million to resolve allegations the social media giant overstated user engagement.

Darren Robbins, a founding partner at the firm, helped form Robbins Geller in 2004. Since then, it's grown to include 162 California-based attorneys with offices in both San Diego and San Francisco.

The firm has established a reputation for achieving the best results for its clients, Robbins said. And that's thanks to its conservative approach to both case selection and operations, which allow Robbins Geller to maximize client recoveries, Robbins said.

"My partners live a conservative lifestyle, so we can maintain large cash balances to invest in our cases," he said. "There's never pressure to resolve a case before its time."

When Robbins Geller attorneys take a case, "It's going to be prosecuted vigorously and prosecuted with an eye toward trial," Robbins added.

As a result, nine-figure recoveries have become almost commonplace for the firm, he said.

"Allowing a case to settle at the appropriate time or to get tried if there's not an appropriate settlement is really important," he said.

In California, the firm represents a wide variety of clients in various industries: pension funds, hedge funds, insurance companies, mutual funds — even smaller individual investors.

Earlier this year, the firm secured a $300 million settlement for Wells Fargo & Co. investors claiming they were harmed when the bank hid misconduct in its auto insurance practices. That settlement came on the eve of trial following more than four years of litigation and certification of an investor class in August 2022.

In their suit, the shareholders claimed Wells Fargo improperly charged hundreds of thousands of customers for unneeded collision protection insurance. More than 274,000 customers were also put into delinquency for vehicles that were wrongly repossessed due to that additional expense, they alleged. And Wells Fargo had known about the problems since at least 2016, the investors added.

The firm also secured a rare victory for plaintiffs in a securities fraud trial against Puma Biotechnology Inc. and its CEO. In that case, investors claimed that the company misrepresented the results of a drug trial of its only product, painting a rosier picture of the breast cancer treatment than was accurate.

That led to a $54.25 million settlement in August 2022, representing 100% of the total damages claimed by investors. It was an "unprecedented result" for a securities case, according to the firm.

Robbins said the firm doesn't prosecute its cases "with a macro view." Some cases may not result in the biggest dollar amounts, but those results may still mean significant recoveries for plaintiffs, he said.

"Our focus is maintaining the commitment to excellence, commitment to quality," he said.

--Additional reporting by Aaron Keller, Bonnie Eslinger, Dorothy Atkins, Lauren Berg and Rachel Scharf. Editing by Kristen Becker.
