

Committee Spotlight: Litigation

Interviews and Profiles

Litigation and Dispute Resolution





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Tell us about your background and your law department.

I am the senior vice president and chief securities counsel for Avis Budget Group, Inc. — where I manage a wide variety of legal matters for the company, which includes securities and corporate finance, litigation, legal operations, regulatory and compliance, corporate governance, corporate law, and public company reporting. Prior to joining Avis Budget Group in 2011, I worked for Caterpillar Inc., where I was responsible for managing securities and corporate finance, financial reporting, and corporate governance matters for the company and its financial subsidiary, Caterpillar Financial Services Corp. Prior to joining Caterpillar in 2003, I served as a senior attorney advisor for the Office of Administrative Law Judges within the US Securities and Exchange Commission. I received my Bachelor's degree from Vanderbilt University, my Juris Doctor degree from Washburn University Law School, and my LL.M. from the Georgetown University Law Center.

Avis Budget Group is a leading global provider of vehicle rental services through several well-known brands, including Avis and Budget, which have more than 11,000 rental locations in approximately 180 countries around the world. Its Zipcar brand, which is the world's leading car sharing network, has more than one million members in the United States, Canada, and Europe. The company operates most of its car rental offices in North America, Europe, and Australia directly, and operates primarily through licensees in other parts of the world. The company is publically traded on NASDAQ and has approximately 30,000 employees.

What interested you in the in-house practice of law and how did you come to be an attorney at the Avis Budget Group?

Before I studied law, I worked for a brokerage firm and a global bank. I enjoy the collaboration and comradery of working in a corporate environment and wanted to blend my love for the law with my love for the stock market. Serving as in-house counsel allows me the best of both worlds. I find professional fulfillment from being able to assist my clients in achieving business results and plotting strategies for future success while at the same time advising on the various legal issues involved in managing the business. When I first interviewed for my position with Avis Budget Group, I heard from many of my eventual clients that they were looking for in-house counsel that they could partner with to manage the business, ensure compliance with the law, and help drive business results. All of this was music to my ears so naturally I jumped at the opportunity.

What is the single greatest challenge that your law department is facing today, and how are you dealing with it?

These days, in-house legal departments are increasingly pressed by their clients to do "more with less," and our department is no exception. For the past two years, our department has undertaken an extensive journey to transform our legal operations to better provide value to the enterprise through the innovative and efficient delivery of legal services. For us, the outcome has been nothing less than revolutionary and has resulted in the creation of a groundbreaking and unique law firm convergence program which, coupled with a legal insourcing strategy and a new legal operations program, has transformed our legal department. As a result, we have dramatically reduced the number of law firms that we use globally from approximately 700 to a panel of seven firms. We created what we consider to be a leading-edge "win-win" outside counsel engagement model that has significantly reduced our

department's annual legal spend by 30 percent, while also allowing the firms on our panel to manage their profit margins in line with business objectives. With a focus on maximizing efficiencies and reducing overall legal costs, our legal insourcing strategy allowed our department to hire additional staff in our US and European operations, while simultaneously reducing the amount of our outside legal spend. To help ensure the continued evolution of our overall project, we also created a new legal operations program and hired a new director of legal operations to oversee the work we have implemented over the past two years. I can go on and on about our project and all of its various aspects, but suffice it to say that we are quite proud of our efforts and the results that we have been able to deliver to the company.

How did you initially become involved with the committee?

I initially became involved with the Litigation Committee through a friend and colleague, Jennifer Mailander, who was chair of the committee at the time. I had been an ACC member for many years and had always enjoyed and appreciated the many presentations and resources that the Litigation Committee provided its members. As a result, I wanted to get more involved with its leadership team. Because I oversee litigation for my company, joining the Litigation Committee provided me with a great opportunity to stay abreast of changes in the laws that impact my practice, while also allowing me to network with other ACC members and contribute to the overall success of the committee.

What are some of the ways that the Litigation Committee provides value to its members?

The Litigation Committee works tirelessly to provide its members with the resources and support that they need to do their job more effectively, while at the same time creating opportunities for them to network with other professionals with similar interests and needs. The committee provides its members with a diverse range of legal resources, including ACC Docket articles, ACC Docket briefings, ACC blog postings, sample forms and policies, newsletters, InfoPAKs, QuickCounsels, Top Tens, CLE eligible webcasts, and live and recorded legal quick hits. We also support an active and ongoing discussion on ACC eGroups, which allows our members to participate in private discussions about issues on which they would like to receive input from other members. The committee also works diligently to support its members who are interested in participating in the committee's monthly webcasts, legal quick hits, and other various resources that will benefit the committee members. The committee also works with its pro bono partner, KIND (Kids in Need of Defense), to assist members in exploring opportunities for personal growth by assisting unaccompanied immigrant minors who need legal representation in legal/deportation proceedings. While all of these examples are not exhaustive of the ways that we strive to add value to our members, one additional area that I would like to highlight is our efforts to sponsor or co-sponsor local roundtable and networking events with various local ACC chapters, which allow our members an opportunity to connect and network in-person on a wide range of litigation topics that matter to them and their companies.

What substantive practice issues does your committee address?

The Litigation Committee seeks to encourage, foster, and assist its members in developing their litigation capabilities by providing resources, training, and educational opportunities in practice areas that are important to them. That said, the scope of substantive practice issues that we seek to address as a committee are rather broad and include issues that impact every member of the ACC regardless of whether they are working in litigation. All members of the ACC are welcome to join the Litigation Committee and will find resources and programming that pertains to some aspect of their substantive practice area. Over the past several months, we have provided valuable resources and programming on a wide range of topics, including activist shareholders, contract drafting to avoid

litigation, artificial intelligence, FAA rules, and litigation considerations for the use of unmanned aircraft, updates to the US Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, and “bet the company” litigation issues. Ultimately, it’s the mission of the Litigation Committee to ensure that our members receive timely resources and programing that provide them the most value from their ACC membership.

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