

THE NATIONAL LAW JOURNAL

APRIL 8, 2013

An **ALM** Publication

MIDSIZE

HOT LIST

A SPECIAL REPORT

The National Law Journal here spotlights 20 law firms that in no way are stuck in the shadows cast by giant competitors. As clients demand better value for their legal spend and potential laterals more satisfaction from their careers, these firms know they're in a good spot. They also know that it takes keen business strategy to capitalize on that position. The firms we've selected for our Midsize Hot List are led by forward-thinking attorneys who are guiding their organizations in new practice directions, amassing more business in mainstay practices and spreading into new regions. They all have one thing in common: They're midsize, and they like it. —LEIGH JONES

Hollingsworth LLP

MIDSIZE HOT LIST

A SPECIAL REPORT

Hollingsworth LLP



With a focus on mass torts, Hollingsworth LLP has positioned itself as a lower-cost alternative for companies facing high-stakes class actions. Without the overhead of multiple offices and with a nearly one-to-one ratio of partners to associates, the Washington firm can charge less than heavily leveraged competitors with costly leases in cities around the globe. It eschews lateral hires from other firms in favor of developing homegrown talent.

Hollingsworth LLP is known for defending mass-torts cases that turn on the testimony of expert witnesses, including suits over chemicals, medical devices and drugs. With 65 lawyers, it is renowned for knocking out plaintiffs' experts during *Daubert* hearings that establish the credibility of the witnesses to testify—and often is brought in by larger firms specifically to handle *Daubert* matters.

"They're really experts in these kind of pretrial hearings," said Kenneth Feinberg, former special master of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund and a well-known mediator who has worked on cases involving Hollingsworth LLP. "They specialize in this area of the law that is very important but is often overlooked."

The firm's expertise wasn't overlooked by DynCorp International Inc., a U.S. government contractor sued in 2001 under the Alien Tort Claims Act by a group of Ecuadorans who alleged that their health, animals and farms had been damaged by DynCorp's spraying of a herbicide aimed at killing coca plants in neighboring Colombia.

Although U.S. lawyers often try to knock Alien Tort Claims suits out of U.S. courts, Hollingsworth LLP chose to fight the suit here. Last year, its lawyers successfully excluded the testimony of the plaintiffs' last remaining witness through the *Daubert* process, resulting in a dismissal of the entire suit by a federal judge in Washington.

Contrast DynCorp's strategy with that of oil company Texaco Inc., sued by a group of Ecuadorans over toxic sludge



ERIC LASKER

dumping in the Amazon. Now a part of Chevron Corp., the oil company used other law firms that chose to fight the case in Ecuadoran courts and was hit with an \$18.2 billion judgment in 2011—leaving it paying legal bills from dozens of firms that are trying to prevent enforcement of the verdict around the world.

"That's what can happen in these types of litigations when you make a mistake early on," said partner Eric Lasker, who along with Hollingsworth LLP partner Rosemary Stewart, handled the DynCorp suit. "Clients come to us because we've been doing this type of litigation for 30 years."

—JASON McLURE

“

Clients come to us because we've been doing this type of litigation for 30 years.

”