

MVP: Mayer Brown's Bronwyn Pollock

By **Ganesh Setty**

Law360 (September 14, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT) -- Bronwyn Pollock of Mayer Brown LLP landed the dismissal of a slew of proposed class actions against a travel insurer over COVID-19 trip cancellations and helped secure favorable rulings for Zurich in numerous pandemic-related business interruption suits, landing her a spot among Law360's 2022 Insurance MVPs.

HER BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENT IN THE PAST YEAR:

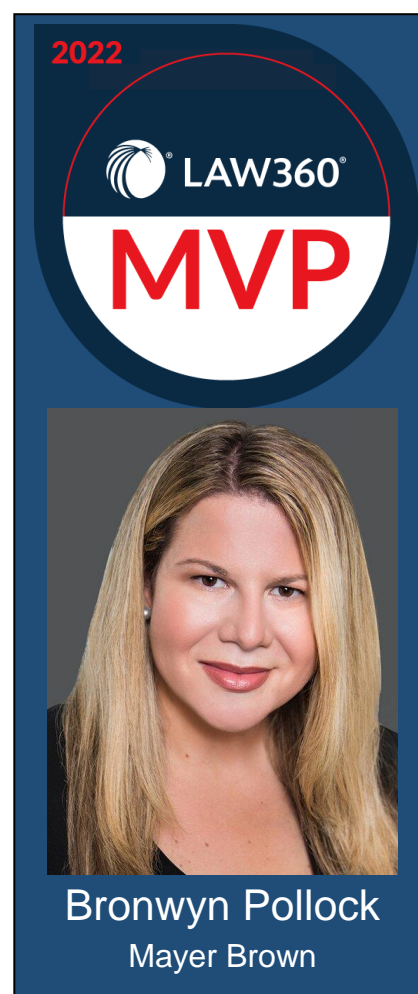
Pollock said her biggest accomplishment this year was the dismissal of a multidistrict litigation against travel insurer Generali's U.S. branch, which faced more than a dozen putative class actions from policyholders seeking coverage for their trip cancellations during the pandemic's early months.

In December, U.S. District Judge John G. Koeltl granted the insurer's motion to dismiss the suits and compel some claims to arbitration. He found, in part, that the plaintiffs' trip cancellations were caused by government stay-at-home orders, which fell under an exclusion barring coverage for travel restrictions imposed by a governmental authority.

While the Generali policies granted coverage for quarantine orders, the judge found the policies' exclusion did not render coverage illusory. A person could be required to quarantine at their home to prevent the spread of illness, but such an order could not be described as a "travel restriction imposed for a certain area" as the exclusion provided, Judge Koeltl said. He further noted none of the stay-at-home orders enforced isolation like a typical quarantine, since the plaintiff policyholders were still allowed to leave their homes for "several purposes."

The travel insurer has since been fighting some of the coverage claims on appeal, while other plaintiffs have since voluntarily dismissed their claims, court records show.

"It's quite challenging and unusual to obtain a dismissal in an MDL at the outset, and I'm very proud of



the work we did to obtain that result for our client," Pollock said.

HER BIGGEST CHALLENGE IN THE PAST YEAR:

Pollock said her biggest challenge this year has been working amid the pandemic with less frequent in-person interactions with clients and colleagues, though she said she's grateful in-person meetings have become more frequent.

The increased flexibility and efficiencies of remote work also carry some drawbacks, she noted.

"It also can be very challenging to create personal boundaries with the start and end times of our day, and in particular for junior lawyers who may not be receiving the same kind of training that they would in person," Pollock said. "It's important for junior lawyers to maintain in-person connectivity with their colleagues and clients so that they can receive the same high-quality training that they would otherwise receive in person."

HER PROUDEST MOMENT IN THE PAST YEAR:

Pollock's proudest moment this year had nothing to do with the cases she has litigated. Instead, she said it was seeing her 9-year-old daughter's growing appreciation for how the law shapes issues impacting everyday life.

Another Mayer Brown partner, Nicole Saharsky, proved to be an ideal source for Pollock's daughter as she crafted a persuasive speech about the importance of gender equality in sports. Saharsky was the "super talented Supreme Court lawyer" who led a Mayer Brown team in its representation of U.S. Women's National Soccer Team players in the appeal of their equal pay case, Pollock said.

"It was really wonderful to see how she has developed a love of the law and recognizes its importance in our public policy and community," Pollock said of her daughter.

OTHER NOTABLE CASES SHE HAS WORKED ON:

Pollock helped secure wins in numerous suits Zurich has faced related to policyholders' pandemic business interruption claims.

In January, for example, a Pennsylvania federal judge found a microorganism exclusion blocked coverage for the manager of more than a dozen Philadelphia-area restaurants, while a New York federal judge ruled that a New Jersey gym failed to show COVID-19 caused direct physical loss or damage to property.

As appellate courts have "resoundingly decided these issues in favor of insurers," Pollock stressed that Zurich's wins were a real team effort between the insurer and other defense counsel.

HER ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:

"I have a lot of advice for junior lawyers," Pollock said. "First, we have all been through a lot in recent years. The practice of law can be very stressful, and it's really important for junior lawyers to be kind to themselves, to be resilient and to stay focused on their well-being and the well-being of colleagues."

"The second piece of advice I would offer is to be proactive in building and maintaining professional relationships, to get out of the office and meet people for lunch, go to client events, get to know your colleagues," she said.

Lastly, Pollock said junior attorneys should take advantage of in-person training and mentorship with senior associates, partners and clients as much as possible.

"That's very difficult to replicate on a remote basis," she said.

— *As told to Ganesh Setty.*

Law360's MVPs of the Year 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 2022 MVP winners after reviewing more than 900 submissions.

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