

APPELLATE HOT LIST

A SPECIAL REPORT

Our 2017 special report features an elite group of lawyers and law firms that posted hard-fought wins at the U.S. Supreme Court or in federal circuit courts. How do they do it? Luckily, these appellate aces offer great advice: listen to colleagues, answer the question, read good writing and, in oral argument, position yourself like a jazz musician—always be ready to improvise. Presenting this year's honorees in their own words, edited for clarity and length.

—Lisa Helem

Williams & Connolly

■ **TELL US ABOUT YOUR TOP U.S. SUPREME COURT OR FEDERAL CIRCUIT COURT VICTORY OVER THE PAST YEAR AND HOW YOU AND YOUR TEAM ACHIEVED THE WIN.** We had two great victories in the Supreme Court this year [*Henson v. Santander* and *Midland Funding v. Johnson*] but I'm proudest of the victories involving our newest partners, Allison Jones Rushing and Amy Mason Saharia—Allison in the Second Circuit in *Ritchie v. Coventry First*, and Amy in the Eighth Circuit in *Howard and Associates v. National City Bank*.

The quality of our junior partners and associates who focus on appellate litigation is second to none.

There's no magic secret to achieving victories other than hard work. You can't coast



Kannon Shanmugam

on your reputation in this business—if you do, sooner or later you'll be found out.

■ **HOW DID YOUR FIRM APPROACH APPELLATE SUCCESS OVER THE PAST YEAR?**

We never take success for granted. As I always tell our associates, you're only as good as your last brief or argument. We aim to treat every case like it's the most important one we've ever handled.

■ **WHAT PRACTICE ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE YOUR YOUNGER SELF?**

1. Take every opportunity you can to stand up in court or even to engage in public speaking. For most of us, oral advocacy is an acquired skill.

2. Read good writing in any form you can find it. The best writers are voracious readers.

Responses submitted by Kannon Shanmugam, head of Williams & Connolly's Supreme Court and appellate litigation practice.