Introducing America’s Elite Trial Lawyers

In the last year, plaintiffs lawyers helped their clients win billions of dollars in awards—in fact, the 100 largest verdicts of 2013 yielded more than $10 billion in recoveries. That sum is likely to be equaled or surpassed in 2014. The ripple effects of these wins reach beyond dollars, with plaintiff offers helping in many cases to reshape public policies or reform corporate behavior.

Recognizing the impact of this work, The National Law Journal and Law.com this year teamed to select law firms that are doing the most creative and substantial work on the plaintiffs side.

The result is our inaugural list of America’s Elite Trial Lawyers. The 50 firms named here pulled in big victories in complex cases that have a wide impact on the law and legal business.

To create our list, we vetted more than 100 firms, poring over nominations and reporting on performance. We recognized the work of the firms as a whole, understanding that successful trial work is usually the result of a team effort.

To qualify for inclusion, firms had to have scored at least one significant plaintiffs win between Jan. 1, 2013, and June 30, 2014, and possess an impressive track record of wins within the past three to five years. A “significant win” meant prevailing in a bench or jury trial or in a major settlement where the stakes were high—for example, a substantial amount of money was at stake or the outcome could have affected litigation strategy or results in similar cases nationally. Also, firms had to devote at least 50 percent of their litigation resources to plaintiffs work and derive half or more of their revenue from plaintiffs-side activities. Firms with higher percentages of plaintiffs-side work were considered.

Among the factors we considered in selecting firms were:
• Performance in significant cases, including key filings, victories at trial and settlements;
• Verdict dollar amount, size of punitive damages, cash settlements;
• Complexity of procedure and substantive law;
• Duration of case, and number of class members;
• Willingness to take on large cases and to persevere in the face of adversity;
• Volume of cases handled in a particular time period (sum of accumulated verdicts or settlements);
• Novelty of the claim, cause of action or theory of recovery;
• Impact of litigation results that changed a government or business practice;
• Feedback or acknowledgment from the bench;
• Firm size in relation to impact or recovery amount.

We’ll say more about the winners in print and online on Sept. 29. Until then, we offer the list of honorees in alphabetical order.

Baren & Gaud
Benedict, Allen, Crow, Methvin, Portis & Miles
Berger & Montague
Bernstein Liebhard
Bernstein Liebowitz & Bershad
Bashein Law Firm
Clifford Law Offices
Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll
Cotchetti, Pits & McCarthy
Egel Law
Friedman Boyd Hollander Goldberg Urias & Ward
Gaier, Gair, Consolino, Steigman, Mackauf, Bloom & Rabinowitz
Gibbs & Bruns
Girardi Keese
Gruber & Eichenhofer
Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro
Hare Wynn Newell & Newton
Hausfeld
Herman Herman & Katz
Hilliard Munro Gonzales
Kaplan Fox & Kimmel
Klim & Specter
Kohn, Kohn & Capostatico
Koreal Tillyer
Labaton Sucharow
The Lanier Law Firm
The Law Offices of Franklin L. Branson
Levin, Fishburn, Sedran & Berman
Leff Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein
Maize SALTER & Freeman
Milberg
Morgan & Morgan
Morley
Morrison & Foerster
Napoli Bern Ripka Siskinduk
Neufeld Scheck & Brustin
Nichols Kaster
Pannill Shea & Boyle
Patchen Oster
Pratout Umprey Law Firm
Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd
Robbins, Kaplan, Miller & Cremers
Robinson Caughey Robinson Shapiro Davis
Sachs Heldman
Seeger Weiss
Simmons Hanly Conroy
Sullivan Pappain Block McGrath & Cannavo
Susman Godfrey
Tyack & Zavarelli
Weitz & Luxenberg