

## Rising Star: Mintz Levin's Lavinia Weizel

By Shawn Rice

*Law360 (June 11, 2021, 2:32 PM EDT)* -- Lavinia Weizel of Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky & Popeo PC has represented London reinsurers in a suit over obligations for a more than \$130 million judgment involving environmental contamination and defended an insurer against a series of cyber liability claims, earning her a spot among the insurance law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### **HER BIGGEST CASE RIGHT NOW:**

Weizel has spent the better part of 2020 litigating a reinsurance case in Massachusetts federal court on behalf of a group of London-based reinsurers against their cedent — an insurance company. The dispute concerns liability for environmental contamination and reinsurance contracts dating back to the early 1970s.

"It's not every day that I'm asked to master the facts of a case whose docket sheet spans nearly my entire life, or to decipher the handwriting on 50-year-old reinsurance contracts," Weizel said. Her approach to the daunting challenge is to roll up her sleeves and dig into the case.

The case presents her with a host of issues ranging from the possible application of English law to the reinsurance contracts and if a cedent may allocate a settlement after a court judgment.

"When you're faced with a huge knot that seems impossible to untangle, you just have to start somewhere," Weizel said. "You poke around the edges, patiently, carefully, and eventually, the knot explodes into a bunch of tiny, individual knots. And then you just untie them, one by one."

A current pending summary judgment motion will decide if the case moves to trial in September.

### **HER PROUDEST MOMENT AS AN ATTORNEY:**

"It's so hard to pick just one," Weizel said.



**Lavinia Weizel**  
Mintz Levin

Age: 39  
 Home base: Boston  
 Position: Associate  
 Law school: Boston College Law School  
 First job after law school: Law clerk to former Justice Francis X. Spina of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

But Weizel is proud of her pro bono work as part of a team that drafted and lobbied for legislation in Massachusetts that would serve as aid to survivors of human trafficking. That pro bono work stems from her early days working in a crisis center for survivors of domestic and sexual violence.

"Through that experience, I came to see the critical role that attorneys can have both in representing individual clients, and in advocating for systemic legal reform," she said.

The team along with Weizel successfully pushed for the legislation that would create a streamlined procedure to enable human trafficking survivors to vacate certain criminal convictions.

After two years of lobbying efforts, the Massachusetts governor signed the bill into law in 2018.

"I'm committed to pro bono work as part of my practice because I think lawyers have a unique ability — and responsibility — to promote a more just society," Weizel said.

#### ***WHAT MOTIVATES HER:***

Weizel says her career is motivated by three principles: a desire to help clients, perfectionism and the mentoring and collaboration in the industry.

"There is little that is more satisfying than helping my clients to navigate a process and achieve their desired outcome," Weizel said. Each day is a new opportunity to do her best work, she added.

Weizel also complimented the incredible mentorship and collaboration within the Mintz insurance practice group.

"Our group is led by two women who serve as fantastic mentors and role models to all of the associates in our group, and I've been lucky to work with both of them throughout my time at Mintz," she said.

#### ***WHY SHE'S AN INSURANCE ATTORNEY:***

Weizel's path wasn't directly set on insurance coverage, having previously worked appellate clerkships.

But her first research assignment at Mintz hooked her on insurance coverage litigation. That assignment presented Weizel with the chance to answer challenging questions without an easy answer.

"It opened my eyes to the fact that insurance coverage litigation so often turns on our ability to answer just these sorts of questions," Weizel said, adding the benefits of having "rigorous analysis, careful thought, and real creative problem-solving" to resolve these questions.

#### ***ON HOW THE LEGAL INDUSTRY WILL CHANGE IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS:***

Weizel said one positive note from the COVID-19 pandemic has been the accelerated adoption of video-streaming technology in all aspects of the legal industry. The technology can be seen in strategy sessions and client meetings as well as mediations, depositions, appellate arguments and even trials.

"I don't expect to be replaced by a robot in the next decade, but I do expect to have one in my arsenal," she said.

As life returns to normal, Weizel said much of these changes will remain for two reasons — significant efficiency and cost savings.

The drawbacks weren't nearly as bad as some analysts predicted, Weizel said, offering her experience with 17 "highly successful" virtual depositions of experts and fact witnesses in her own cases.

Particularly with e-discovery in litigation, Weizel explained the industry has been trending upward with its use of machine and artificial intelligence to streamline and manage large quantities of data and information.

"This is the new frontier for litigators — working with our clients to determine how best to leverage the benefits of these tools while evaluating and mitigating the potential risks at every turn," Weizel said.

— *As told to Shawn Rice*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2021 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,400 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2021, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*