

MVP: Mayer Brown's John Nadolenco

By Y. Peter Kang

Law360 (November 5, 2024, 12:02 PM EST) -- John Nadolenco of Mayer Brown LLP helped General Motors Co. beat a defective airbag proposed class action and make a graceful exit from another class action over battery fires in Chevrolet Bolt electric vehicles, earning him a spot as one of the 2024 Law360 Transportation MVPs.

His biggest accomplishment this year:

Nadolenco said his biggest accomplishment was closing the books on three high-profile cases around the same time: winning the dismissal of a putative class action against GM over potentially defective airbags in 400,000 vehicles, settling a Chevy Bolt class action over allegedly defective batteries and winning a trade secrets trial involving EV technology.

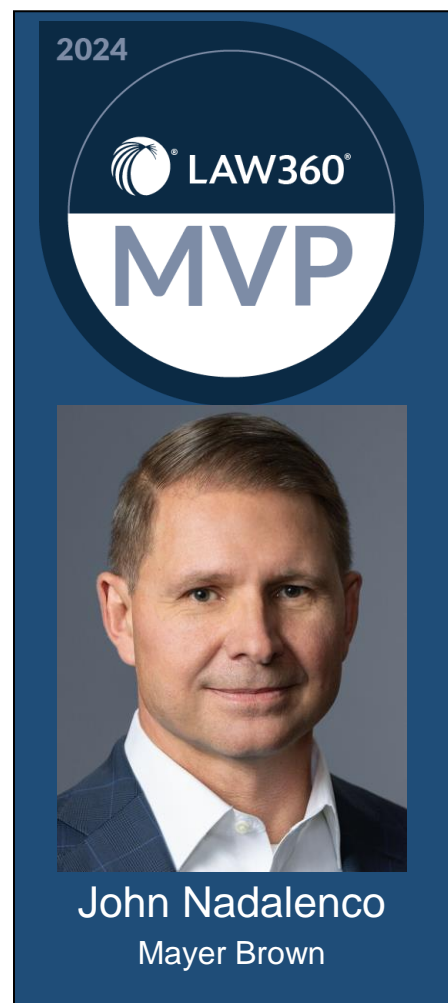
"It wasn't a single thing, it was the variety of things that we were able to accomplish for a number of different cases," he said. "We were able to get a pretty big class action dismissed, then we were able to work on a very, very complicated settlement including varying parties and get that accomplished and get preliminary approval not that long ago. And then, we also tried a case."

He added, "With the variety of service offerings that we have for the transportation industry and our other clients, it just shows the capabilities of our team that focuses on the transportation industry."

His biggest challenge this year:

Nadolenco, who serves as the managing partner of Mayer Brown's Los Angeles office, said dealing with the nuances of the GM class action over Chevy Bolt battery fires was the biggest challenge for him because, in addition to the client's legal issues, he also had to contend with aligning the automaker's interests with longtime business partner LG, which manufactured the EV batteries at the heart of the case.

"They were both sued, but they're also really strong business partners," he said. "We had to essentially grapple with both business issues and legal issues in the litigation vis-à-vis the plaintiffs."



Because of the differing dynamics of the case, Nadolenco said, his team had to remain sensitive to the company's business relationship with LG during the settlement negotiations.

"It made for a very, very complicated and intricate set of discussions on how to resolve that matter," he said.

On what motivates him:

The attorney said he is motivated by the wide range of issues that can pop up with any given case.

"The variety is what gets me up in the morning," he said. "It's interesting work."

In just one year, to be able to win a major class action at the pleading stage, prior to discovery, and then be able to settle such a complicated class action like the Chevy Bolt case is fulfilling work, according to Nadolenco.

"Every day I'm working on something new, some other aspect of either a case or the industry," he said. "And it's really interesting work. I'm lucky to do it."

His advice for junior attorneys:

Nadolenco said he often tells young lawyers to develop in-depth knowledge of the industry they are dealing with, which will make a huge difference in the type and quality of legal and practical advice they are able to provide.

"Know the industry," he said. "One of the things that clients really appreciate is not just giving them legal advice. A lot of lawyers can just give them legal advice and tell them what the law is in a particular area, but the lawyer that knows the industry and can appreciate the business impacts of some of the advice you're giving, that's what helps distinguish you."

He added that, "I think there's a marked difference in telling a client, 'Here's the law in this particular case,' versus telling a client, 'Hey, here's the law in this particular area, and here's how it applies in your business and your business is a little different for this reason, and so this might be the practical impact that that law is having for you.' That's really different, those two pieces of advice, and I think the clients prefer the latter."

--As told to Y. Peter Kang. Editing by Melissa Treolo.

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