

Hariklia “Carrie” Karis



Hariklia “Carrie” Karis of Kirkland & Ellis LLP’s trials practice won 3M’s first bellwether trial dealing with allegations it sold faulty earplugs to the military, and she successfully represented pharmaceutical company Allergan in settling opioid-related litigation, earning her a spot as one of Law360’s 2022 Trials MVPs.

Her biggest accomplishment this year:

Karis is known for leading large, “bet-the-company litigation,” as her firm puts it, and this past year was no exception. Her caseload included wins in multiple multidistrict litigation trials covering various topics, which she counts as her greatest accomplishment.

“I really do think for me the greatest accomplishment was the ability to move from one case to another and achieve those great results,” she said. “Because when we talk about the cases that I’ve worked on over the past year, they really did involve completely different subject matters, completely different teams, completely different scenarios and circumstances.”

She singles out her work for 3M Co., though, as her single greatest accomplishment over the past year. Karis was the lead attorney for two of 3M’s 27 bellwether trials in multidistrict litigation involving 250,000 claimants — making it the largest MDL ever in the United States, according to Kirkland. Attorneys from Kirkland and Dechert LLP have achieved 14 victories for 3M out of the 27 cases.

“Achieving the first victory in the 3M MDL, when I suspect on the plaintiffs’ side, their view was that we would never win a case, was quite an accomplishment,” she said. “Those are challenging cases for a variety of reasons, and the ability to pull together a team and get a jury to side with 3M, which I really felt then and feel now was on the right side of this, was a huge professional and personal milestone.”

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How she’s able to handle large, complex cases:

For Karis, being successful in big, high-stakes cases means having the right teammates.

“The greatest factor to success is surrounding yourself with excellent teams, and I’ve been really fortunate — and I will say selective — in doing that. Shout out to Kirkland, candidly,

for having so many fabulous younger lawyers that I can trust and rely on to help me work out cases or to jump into cases,” she said.

Karis also said “significant commitment” to her clients drives her work.

“It requires long days, many hours, lots of constant thinking, if you will, about your cases and your clients’ matters,” she added.

Her biggest challenge this year:

Karis said tackling a variety of high-profile cases and then jumping into others she previously had no involvement in — for example, ongoing litigation against various opioid manufacturers and distributors — was her biggest challenge.

She had to quickly learn the case for her client, Allergan, whom she “felt, and I still feel, was very much in the right.” She joined the case a few months before trial and reached a settlement in July before the courtroom battle began.

“I spent the next three months in San Francisco on trial, and we settled, as you likely know, on the eve of trial with a public settlement of \$12 million in San Francisco for our client’s opioid responsibility, which I can say proudly was a very good result.”

Other notable cases:

Besides leading two trials for 3M and her involvement in opioid lawsuits, she also represented Actavis Inc. in an August 2021 trial in the Northern District of Illinois examining allegations that the company’s

testosterone products cause heart attacks.

After a multiweek trial in another multidistrict litigation case, jurors delivered a verdict in less than an hour, marking the first defense win in a heart attack case involving testosterone replacement therapy, according to Kirkland.

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She also worked on litigation involving the Florida International University bridge collapse that killed six people and injured 10 others, triggering 24 lawsuits. Karis represented the peer reviewer for the project, Louis Berger U.S. Inc., during four years of consolidated litigation in Florida. She successfully argued several motions that led to disclosure of key documents that helped her client achieve favorable results in each case.

“None of those cases ended up going to trial. All of them settled,” Karis said.

Why she’s a trial attorney:

Karis said she has enjoyed advocacy — choosing a side and arguing her point — since grade school.

“My dad, rest his soul, used to joke with me that I should be a lawyer,” she said.

Karis’ parents immigrated from Greece, and neither of them graduated from high school or attended college “because of the circumstances in which they grew up.”

“And so even being told I should be a lawyer seemed like such a long shot, but not in my dad’s eyes,” Karis said. “He would always encourage me and say, ‘You would make a great lawyer.’”

Advice for young attorneys:

Karis encourages every young attorney to be open to every opportunity that comes their way.

“There is no substitute for actual experience of doing something rather than watching,” she said. “I would advise them to learn from everyone whose path they cross — their mentors, their opponents. Incorporate it in what they do, develop their own style and then do what they love to do. If you do those things, I think there is minimal to zero chance that you won’t succeed at whatever you choose to do.”

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