

## Rising Star: Gibson Dunn's Lindsay Paulin

By Daniel Wilson

*Law360 (August 14, 2024, 2:04 PM EDT)* -- Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP's Lindsay Paulin's work in high-profile and novel cases, such as a dispute that helped convince the Pentagon to abandon a controversial \$10 billion cloud contract, has earned her a position among the government contracts attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.



### The biggest case of her career:

Paulin's practice encompasses transactional, advisory and bid protest work, and she's been involved in several high-profile and groundbreaking cases throughout her career, including Pratt & Whitney's ongoing dispute with the government over how to account for the cost of engine parts supplied by foreign collaboration partners under the federal Cost Accounting Standards — an issue of first impression currently before the Federal Circuit.

But her highest-profile work was as Gibson Dunn's lead government contracts counsel for Amazon Web Services Inc. in its protest over the U.S. Department of Defense's \$10 billion Joint Enterprise Defense Initiative, or JEDI, cloud computing contract, a rare government contracts dispute that drew mainstream attention.

"The JEDI bid protest was incredibly interesting, and probably the most newsworthy case I've worked on," Paulin said. "Aside from the issues in the case, having that many stakeholders on such a fast-moving and high-profile matter really challenges the whole team to stay nimble and collaborative to ensure everyone's swimming in the same direction, and doing so quickly. It was really a unique, challenging and rewarding case to be a part of."

After the JEDI contract was awarded to Microsoft Inc. in October 2019, AWS alleged there were improprieties in the award process, and Paulin helped AWS win a preliminary injunction against the deal, sending the DOD back to the drawing board.



**Lindsay Paulin**  
Gibson Dunn

**Age:** 35  
**Home base:** Washington, D.C.  
**Position:** Government contracts practice co-chair  
**Law school:** George Washington University Law School  
**First job after law school:** Associate at Gibson Dunn

The DOD subsequently re-awarded the contract to Microsoft. Paulin then represented AWS in a renewed protest and helped AWS defeat motions to dismiss that protest. The DOD eventually canceled the JEDI deal outright in July 2021, simultaneously announcing that it would launch a multi-award replacement, the Joint Warfighting Cloud Capability program, and AWS was one of several companies eventually awarded a slot on JWCC.

#### **Why she's a government contracts attorney:**

While still in college, Paulin worked as an intern at the DOD general counsel's office, and also in a part-time position in the legal support team of a federal contractor, roles that "provided some initial insights into the range of important work that the contracting community does to support the federal government," she said.

That interest was further fostered by her studies at George Washington University Law School, recognized as having "one of the top government procurement programs in the world," then pushed over the top once she joined Gibson Dunn, which has a "free market" system allowing associates to explore multiple options before locking down a career path, Paulin said.

"Ultimately, it was when I started working with the all-star government contracts team here at Gibson, and really getting my hands dirty, that I fell in love," she said.

#### **What motivates her in her work:**

Paulin has been highly driven in her career, leading to her elevation to partner at the start of 2022 and to co-chair of Gibson Dunn's government contracts practice in May 2023, making her among the youngest attorneys ever appointed by the firm to lead a practice group. What has been particularly motivating for her is the "collaborative team environment" that the firm encourages, she told Law360.

"When I'm surrounded by smart, creative people on my matters — whether that's the client team, the Gibson Dunn team, co-counsel, consultants — and we're all working towards a common goal, that really challenges me to bring my A-game to the table, to think outside the box, and to try to stay one step ahead," she said.

#### **Her proudest moment as an attorney:**

Alongside her government contracts work, Paulin is also an active participant in Gibson Dunn's pro bono practice, representing clients such as victims of domestic violence seeking protective orders and people seeking asylum in the United States.

A particularly proud moment came from one of those cases, working with a client from Honduras with a young daughter, representing her in both affirmative and defensive proceedings between 2016 and 2019 to secure asylum in the U.S. — and eventually permanent residency in 2022 — after her flight from the country, where she had been attacked and raped by a gang member.

"Seeing her relief upon being granted asylum, and excitement upon getting her permanent resident status, and knowing that our team made a meaningful difference in that woman's life was incredibly rewarding," Paulin said.

*--As told to Daniel Wilson. Editing by Michael Watanabe.*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2024 Rising Stars winners after reviewing nearly 1,200 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2024, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*

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