

Rising Star: Gibson Dunn's Geoffrey Sigler

By **Gavin Broady**

Law360, New York (March 27, 2013) -- Gibson Dunn & Crutcher LLP partner Geoffrey Sigler represents some of the biggest names in the insurance industry, and his recent successful defense of a proposed \$2 billion class action against AIG and others is one of a string of high-profile wins that have made him one of Law360's top five young insurance attorneys.

The 37-year-old earned a spot on the Law360 Rising Star roster through his work with a number of major insurers who rely on him to handle some of their most sensitive matters. In the past year, Sigler has racked up wins not only for industry giants like American International Group Inc. and Aetna Inc., but also health insurance industry trade group America's Health Insurance Plans.

"I'm fortunate enough to work at a firm that values general litigation ability as well as substantive expertise in multiple areas, which has allowed me to develop a practice that involves a fair amount of litigation," Sigler said. "I find these cases interesting because they involve significant legal issues, complex factual records and sophisticated litigants on each side."

Sigler delivered a decisive win for client AIG in December, when a Washington, D.C., judge threw out a \$2 billion putative workers' compensation class action brought by the employees of various government contractors, based largely on the strength of his federal preemption arguments.

The dispute, *Brink v. XE Holding LLC*, was brought against a host of major insurers and major contractors over allegations that those contractors withheld health benefits from badly wounded war-zone workers.

Representing lead insurer AIG, Sigler took the lead in preparing motions to dismiss for the insurer defendants based on preemption under a federal workers' compensation statute. In December, a D.C. judge tossed the suit after finding the plaintiffs had breached protocol established under the Defense Base Act barring court review except as a last resort.

Sigler has also represented Aetna in two major multidistrict proceedings launched against it in the last 15 years, both of which sought billions in damages over conspiracy claims brought by medical providers against various insurers.

Under Sigler's counsel, Aetna in March 2012 scored a major win when the Eleventh Circuit unanimously affirmed the dismissal of a declaratory judgment action brought by several plaintiffs — including the American Medical Association, several state medical societies and individual physicians — after

agreeing those claims were barred by an injunction Aetna received as part of its settlement in related multidistrict litigation.

Meanwhile, Sigler helped Aetna reach a December settlement in the second of those MDLs, styled In re: Aetna UCR Litigation, under which the insurer agreed to pay up to \$120 million to put to rest racketeering and antitrust claims with no admission of wrongdoing. Preliminary approval of that settlement remains pending, according to the firm.

"Representing Aetna has been an interesting experience, as we've seen the evolution of the class action over the course of these cases," Sigler said. "There is a rigorous focus on development of factual records and on an examination of legal issues early on."

Sigler's strong 2012 showing also included a win for health insurance industry trade association America's Health Insurance Plans, or AHIP, which successfully brought an Employee Retirement Income Savings Act preemption challenge against the extension of Georgia's "prompt pay" statute to cover employers' self-funded plans.

Sigler guided AHIP in preparing its challenge, which resulted in the a Georgia court's issuance of a preliminary injunction against the statute extension on Dec. 31 — the day before the changes were set to go into effect — based on those preemption arguments.

--Additional reporting by Max Stendahl. Editing by Katherine Rautenberg.