

MVP: Jenner & Block's Jessica Ring Amunson

Law360 (November 28, 2018, 12:06 PM EST) -- Jessica Ring Amunson, co-chair of Jenner & Block LLP's appellate and Supreme Court practice and chair of the firm's election law and redistricting practice, successfully argued in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Class v. U.S.*, persuading the justices to rule that criminal defendants can challenge the constitutionality of laws they already pled guilty to breaking if they didn't explicitly waive the right to do so, earning her a spot as one of **Law360's 2018 Appellate MVPs**.

HER MOST SUCCESSFUL MOMENT THIS YEAR:

Amunson's career highlight this year was when she prevailed in the Supreme Court case *Class v. U.S.* She convinced the judges to side with a criminal defendant who wanted to challenge the constitutionality of the statute under which he was convicted.

"It was really not a case most people expected we would win, and it's a case that has really important ramifications for many criminal defendants," Amunson said.

WHERE YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD OF HER:

Earlier this year, Amunson won a significant victory in a high-profile case about whether a Twitter account is a "public forum" under the First Amendment. Amunson worked with another Jenner & Block attorney, Tassity S. Johnson, and served as co-counsel with the Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University. The team successfully argued that it is unconstitutional for President Donald J. Trump to block his critics on Twitter.



The suit was brought by the Knight First Amendment Institute and seven Twitter users who were blocked from seeing or replying to the president's tweets. The Twitter users contended that when the president blocked them from his personal account, @realDonaldTrump, it blocked their access to official statements that Trump provides to the general public and prevented them from replying to tweets he issued. A Manhattan federal judge ruled in May that the president's blocking of critics is unconstitutional, rejecting the U.S. Department of Justice's argument that the president's actions don't violate anyone's First Amendment rights.

The case is currently on appeal in the Second Circuit, and counsel for Trump and White House social media director Daniel Scavino recently filed a request for an oral argument.

HER MOST CHALLENGING MOMENT:

After the Supreme Court held in June 2017 that 28 districts drawn by the North Carolina General Assembly were unconstitutional racial gerrymanders, the General Assembly was forced to redraw the districts. Amunson argued in the Supreme Court that when the maps were redrawn as a result, the General Assembly failed to remedy the racial gerrymandering in four districts, and committed independent violations of state law in redrawing five additional districts.

In an opinion issued on June 28, the Supreme Court agreed with the Jenner & Block attorney's arguments that the General Assembly had not properly remedied the racial gerrymandering in four districts. They further agreed that the remedial plan for those four districts drawn by a special master should replace the General Assembly's plan.

She said the most challenging part was the timing of the midterm elections.

"You're always running up against the clock of election deadlines looming," Amunson said.

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Amunson said when she was in law school, she didn't expect to work at a law firm. Now, she feels like she's found a place to do work she really cares about. The Harvard Law School alumna said she values balancing the type of cases she works on, and Jenner & Block empowers her to do so.

"I feel lucky that I've been able to combine a public and private practice where we're able to achieve terrific results for our clients while also, hopefully, doing some public good," Amunson said.

— As told to Amanda James

Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2018 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 1,000 submissions.

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