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Entertainment Law

CALIFORNIA'S TOP ENTERTAINMENT LAWYERS OF 2015

RICHARD L. (RICK) STONE

Lawyers have been known to vow to take cases all the way to the Supreme Court. In the landmark Aereo litigation, Stone went even further.

Representing broadcast television companies in a copyright suit against a defendant that retransmitted programs over the Internet without authorization, Stone served as lead counsel at every stage including at the high court, where his clients prevailed.

He then continued to safeguard their interests when Aereo sought to qualify for the compulsory copyright license available to cable providers. When Aereo lost that battle and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, Stone represented the broadcasters in those proceedings and reached a settlement in June.

"They certainly did not go quietly into the night," Stone said of his persistent foe in *WNET v. Aereo*. "It was an interesting dispute from beginning to end. We wondered when they would come to their senses."

At the Supreme Court, the broadcasters brought on former U.S. Solicitor General Paul D. Clement of Bancroft PLLC for the argument. "He worked with briefing we supplied," Stone said. "We have been the architects of the case strategy ever since the district judge in New York denied us a preliminary injunction."

The issue in the case merited an all-out

litigation effort because of the stakes involved.

"It would have put an end to the networks' retransmission consent regime as we know it," Stone said. "If you take that leg of the stool out from under their business model, it would have changed the broadcast network industry — and not for the better. It would have left the networks without the resources to fund quality programming."

Jenner & Block LLP

Los Angeles

Entertainment and intellectual property law

Stone said his work is demanding, rewarding and sometimes maddening.

For one client, whom he declined to name, a bitter civil suit went on for two years before he reached a settlement with an opponent he identified only as a "significant producer."

"We settled on the eve of trial over the final hurdle: The seating arrangement in the studio cafeteria," Stone said, and you could sense him roll his eyes over the phone. "It had to do with the location of the geographical center of the cafeteria space. We had



to set up a batphone so the producer could get immediate satisfaction for any violation. Once we ironed out that wrinkle, we were fine. It's kind of a crazy industry."

In litigation over the source for plots in the TV biker drama "Sons of Anarchy," Stone deposed Hells Angels. "Never heard so many F-bombs in my life," he said.

— John Roemer