

Crowell Adds Product Liability Defense Pro In Calif.

By **Matthew Guarnaccia**

Law360, New York (January 25, 2016, 5:35 PM ET) --

Crowell & Moring LLP has added a former Mintz Levin Cohn Ferris Glovsky & Popeo PC member to the firm's corporate product liability defense group in San Francisco, who will chair its food and beverage practice, the firm said on Monday.

Michelle Gillette comes to Crowell with more than 20 years of experience litigating class action and product liability cases in California state and federal courts for corporate clients in the cosmetics, pharmaceutical and food industries.

"Crowell is allowing me to have all aspects under one roof. Not just advertising, or regulatory. ... It's all in one place. That's the big draw," Gillette said.



Michelle Gillette

Gillette comes to the firm from Mintz Levin, where she was hired in 2013 as part of the company's then-fledgling product liability group. Her work focuses mainly on defending companies in the cosmetics, over-the-counter drugs, pharmaceutical and food industries against class actions.

As chair of Crowell's food and beverage practice, Gillette brings experience working with various corporate clients. For example, while working with the firm Keller & Heckman LLP in 2012 she was part of the team representing Jamba Juice Co. in a class action over synthetic ingredients in make-at-home smoothies. The suit was combined with another in 2013, and settled in December 2014, stipulating that Jamba Juice would pay \$425,000 and agree to stop mislabeling its products "all natural."

"There has been a lot of litigation in the food industry in the last five years," Gillette said. "It's starting to mature, starting to go to trial. My goal is to further the defense of these actions beyond just settlement, and to show that defendants still have a chance, that they can take a case to trial and win it."

Gillette has experience in California consumer protection statutes, including its False Advertising Law and Consumer Legal Remedies Act, and federal matters, including the Lanham Act, the Magnuson-Moss Act, and "Made in USA" claims.

Gillette has also represented companies in lawsuits involving unfair competition, unfair business practices, false or misleading advertising, trade secrets, torts, breach of contract and patent infringement matters.

In addition to litigation, Gillette provides advice, risk management, trade secret protection and product liability risk assessments.

Before coming to Mintz Levin's product liability group as a member in 2013, Gillette was a partner at Keller & Heckman, where she worked mainly product liability and intellectual property matters, including cases before the International Trade Commission.

Gillette earned her bachelor's from the University of Texas, Austin, in 1988 and her law degree from the University of Southern California Law Center in 1995. She is a member of the American Bar Association Food and Supplements Committee, the American Bar Association Product Liability Committee and California Women Lawyers.

--Editing by Stephen Berg.

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