

Rising Star: Crowell's Brian Tully McLaughlin

By Jack Newsham

Law360, New York (May 2, 2016, 8:03 PM ET) -- For helping companies that do business with the government protect themselves from and prosecute claims exceeding \$330 million in decadelong fights before administrative boards, trial courts and appellate panels, Brian Tully McLaughlin of Crowell & Moring LLP has won a spot on Law360's list of top government contracts attorneys under 40.

McLaughlin's steady advocacy of MWI Corp. in its total defeat of the government's \$220 million whistleblower suit and Sufi Network Services \$113 million win on its claim that the Air Force cheated its way out of phone call costs earned him a spot on Law360's Rising Stars list.

Now a 36-year-old partner in the firm's Washington, D.C., he has worked those cases since joining the firm right out of law school in 2005 and said it has given him high-stakes opportunities to show what he's got.

"Crowell has been a place where I've had the experience of partners who were willing to stick their neck out with big-name clients and say, 'You can trust Tully doing this argument,'" said McLaughlin.

McLaughlin's work for Sufi started shortly after he joined. The company accused the U.S. Air Force of helping personnel at bases in Germany avoid charges on long-distances calls that it was supposed to profit from in exchange for operating the networks, and McLaughlin helped the company grow its \$7.4 million award from the Armed Services Board of Contract Appeals into a \$113 million win that withstood a second challenge before the Federal Circuit in March.

As a first-year associate on the Sufi case, McLaughlin said, he was tasked with deposing 20 witnesses and later examining them at hearings. Since then, he's been tapped for high-pressure cases, including his representation of MWI — which had lost several issues on summary judgment before Crowell was brought in — and two False Claims Act suits against the security contractor once known as Blackwater that unfolded under the Eastern District of Virginia's fast-paced rules.

While having senior attorneys looking out for him has helped his career, McLaughlin said seeking and seizing opportunities has also been important. Between tight timelines and the extensive discovery often associated with government contract disputes, 12- and 14-hour days aren't unheard of, he said.

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Brian Tully McLaughlin
Crowell & Moring

“I take the case home with me in every sense,” McLaughlin said. “I share the concerns that the client has and that the employees have, too.”

A graduate of the University of Virginia School of Law, McLaughlin said he enrolled in law school after having spent a year helping tenants in housing disputes with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps. He first connected with Crowell through his law school’s public service office, and one of his first trials at the firm was a pro bono case on behalf of an elderly immigrant fighting a real estate dispute in Virginia state court.

--Editing by Patricia K. Cole.

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