



Rising Star: Crowell & Moring's Amy Laderberg O'Sullivan

By **Derek Hawkins**

Law360, New York (April 18, 2012, 5:41 PM ET) -- Crowell & Moring LLP's Amy Laderberg O'Sullivan fought in federal court and two agencies to help a small career-training business secure a \$40 million contract to manage a U.S. Department of Labor jobs center, earning her a spot among Law360's top five government contracts attorneys under 40.

O'Sullivan, 38, is a partner in Crowell & Moring's Washington office, where she handles a mix of litigation and counseling work for a range of government contractor clients, with particular expertise in small-business matters.

A self-described Crowell & Moring "lifer," O'Sullivan did her first stint at the firm between her second and third years at William & Mary Law School. She returned as an associate in 2000, after clerking in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, and was assigned to the government contracts group, where she has thrived.

O'Sullivan, who made partner in 2009, said she was drawn to the fast pace of bid protest cases. Being a young attorney in her field gives her stamina for aggressive and often complex litigation work, she says.

"Some of it's technical; some of it's the fact that I'm not so far from having been an associate that I'm not afraid to roll my sleeves up and dig in," she said. "I tend to be more hands-on. It was bred into me at an early age."

O'Sullivan's energy was on full display in her representation of Education & Training Resources Inc. in a dispute over a small-business contract to run the Labor Department's Turner Job Corps Center in Albany, Ga., that played out in three different forums.

ETR, which provides education and training for disadvantaged youth and adults, lost a bid for a roughly \$40 million contract to Alutiiq Education & Training LLC, a subsidiary of the large business contractor ResCare Inc. ETR challenged the award before the U.S. Government Accountability Office, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims and the U.S. Small Business Administration.

O'Sullivan said the "sweep to the knee" was the decision to go after Alutiiq's small business eligibility. Ultimately, she helped convince the SBA's Office of Hearings and Appeals that Alutiiq's affiliation with ResCare ran too deep.

The matter concluded in February 2011, with the OHA ruling Alutiiq was unqualified. ETR is currently performing the contract.

“I took particular pride in the reversal of fortune for the client,” O’Sullivan said. “For the company to go from finding out that it lost a competition and to turn around and not only get a second shot, but to get the contract — that is not going to happen very frequently.”

The win for ETR is one of several important victories O’Sullivan has tallied since becoming partner. In January, she helped convince the Court of Federal Claims to shoot down challenges CRAssociates Inc. brought against a \$230 million contract the U.S. Army awarded to Spectrum Healthcare Resources Inc. to operate a pair of health centers in northern Virginia.

CRAssociates, the incumbent contractor, is appealing the decision, but O’Sullivan recently defeated the company’s request to stay Spectrum’s performance of the contract during the appeal.

O’Sullivan has also served as co-lead counsel for small disadvantaged business contractors ASRC Research & Technology Solutions LLC and ASRC Primus, helping the companies protest and defend four contracts valued between \$120 million and \$230 million.

O’Sullivan said the economic recession had caused companies to turn increasingly to the government for business, creating new opportunities for her practice. For small contractors, she said, the stakes can run high.

“With a lot of these companies, you’re not working with in-house counsel; you’re working directly with the head or the president of the company,” she said.

“It’s not just lawyer-to-lawyer — it’s someone who has an awful lot of responsibilities for a full range of issues,” O’Sullivan said. “Winning or losing for these companies can make or break you. It’s one of the most rewarding experiences to feel like I honestly helped save a business.”

--Editing by Elizabeth Bowen.

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