

MVP: Morgan Lewis' Jeremy Blumenfeld

By Benjamin Morse

Law360 (October 4, 2023, 1:02 PM EDT) -- Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP's Jeremy Blumenfeld secured a win before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit in a ruling that outlined the standards for how workers need to plead violations of the Employee Retirement Income Security Act if they're challenging investment offerings or fees in a defined contribution plan in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Hughes v. Northwestern*, landing him a spot as one of Law360's MVPs in benefits law.

His proudest accomplishment of the past year:

Blumenfeld said his most significant victory was his successful argument before the Seventh Circuit to uphold the dismissal of an ERISA lawsuit challenging the fees and investments of an Oshkosh Corp. subsidiary.

"I handled that argument in front of the Seventh Circuit, and I'll say it was one of the most difficult appellate arguments I have participated in," Blumenfeld said.

He went on to say that "the fact that we were able to sort of turn around what seemed at the time to be some hostile positions from at least one of the judges to our position was really gratifying."

Why he's a benefits lawyer:

Blumenfeld said his entry into the field of benefits law started by "happenstance." When Blumenfeld began as a first-year associate, the firm he worked for at the time needed people in its employment and labor division, so he signed up.

Blumenfeld soon moved to Morgan Lewis to practice in the same area and found himself before an ERISA class action case. "I raised my hand and took on that case," Blumenfeld said.

"To me, at least, it felt like I had found my place," Blumenfeld said. "I really enjoyed digging in and understanding not just the law, but the way the math works in these plans and the way it impacted how companies — our clients — were able to pay their employees and secure their retirements."



Blumenfeld said the math aspect was a particular draw given his undergraduate training in chemical engineering.

How benefits law has evolved:

Blumenfeld said when he started, there weren't a lot of ERISA class actions, and the cases were considered to be on the "wonky, nerdy side." He said now there is a greater understanding of the costs benefits accrue for employers, so "it's really become a much more important aspect of the legal environment and, as a consequence, the litigation environment."

His advice to young attorneys:

Blumenfeld encouraged young lawyers to "really get your hands into things and understand how your clients' businesses operate, how their employee benefit plans work, why they have the incentives from an economic perspective that they do, why they have the costs that they do."

He said they should appreciate the opportunity to "roll up their sleeves and really try to understand the kind of economic, business and human aspects of the benefits plans that we deal with."

--As told to Benjamin Morse

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