

Employment Group Of The Year: Morgan Lewis

By Benjamin Morse

Law360 (February 11, 2026, 4:03 PM EST) -- Morgan Lewis & Bockius LLP scored wins for several major companies over the last year, including a Second Circuit ruling for X Corp. that courts cannot compel payment of arbitration fees mid-proceeding and one for AstraZeneca in a nearly \$50 million equal pay dispute, earning the firm a spot among the 2025 Law360 Employment Groups of the Year.

David A. McManus, who leads the global practice group, told Law360 the firm's September victory before the Second Circuit on behalf of X Corp. was a "seminal win" based on a "true team effort by multiple partners."

The court ruled that district courts do not have the authority under the Federal Arbitration Act to force a party to pay fees in an ongoing matter. McManus said the win was in part due to the firm's "substantial practice" in dealing with mass arbitrations.

"The team devised a strategy based on both existing case law, interpretation of existing case law, the Federal Arbitration Act, as well as new creative arguments," McManus said, adding that the decision, which strips lower courts of certain powers in arbitration matters, "stands out nationally" and is both a "critical and strategic win."

Michael J. Puma, deputy leader of the practice, echoed that sentiment, telling Law360 the victory before the appeals court provides both leverage and precedent for the firm and the employers it generally represents.

Puma said the decision is especially important given that mass arbitrations "seem to be the wave of the future and of right now." He added that the strategy to limit the cost pressure on companies related to elements such as filing and arbitrator fees is "really a big part of our practice now."

Puma told Law360 that the practice group had three different portfolios that included hundreds or even thousands of arbitrations over the past year or two.

The practice group also secured dismissal in December on a motion for summary judgment for Equal Pay Act allegations and six other related counts against AstraZeneca, sparing the drugmaker \$40 million to \$50 million in claimed damages and fees.

In that case, the firm called expert witnesses on AstraZeneca's behalf and successfully established that



the employees advanced as comparators by the woman who lodged the lawsuit had duties that were fundamentally different from hers.

McManus said that in equal pay disputes, such as the one against AstraZeneca, one of the critical issues is whether female employees are being paid equivalent compensation for the same or effectively similar responsibilities.

"We were able to bring two highly qualified expert witnesses to the fore that were not only able to support the legal position that we were asserting with respect to the equal pay allegations, but also able to come in and assess and debunk [the plaintiff's] expert," McManus said.

McManus pointed to a larger trend in the group's success over the past year, saying the firm is continually engaged in "the most challenging, complex and high-stakes" employment litigation matters as well as labor-management relations. He said there are "300 plus" attorneys working between the benefits and employment groups.

One of the firm's major labor-management litigation wins included a key reversal by the Second Circuit in April finding that the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp.'s Special Financial Assistance program must reconsider a union's application for a bailout of its pension fund and expand eligibility to more than 100 other pension plans.

The firm also defeated an effort by the Teamsters to block UPS from implementing a voluntary separation program for drivers.

McManus said other firms' employment practice groups do not have "the depth" that Morgan Lewis has in the labor-management relations space.

McManus also credited the group's success in 2025 to the fact that Morgan Lewis is a full-service firm that often pairs up practice groups on issues that intersect, such as employment and contract law. For example, the firm's employment and litigation groups are currently representing McLaren Racing in a \$30 million breach of contract case against driver Alex Palou.

Stephanie L. Sweitzer, a deputy leader of the practice, said that looking ahead at 2026, the practice group is keeping an eye on "a newly energized and empowered" U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which she added now has a quorum and is focused on fulfilling Trump administration priorities.

Puma told Law360 that the midterm election year will see "nontraditional" alliances with policymakers and union leaders. He also pointed to the fact that, like the EEOC, the National Labor Relations Board is now fully constituted.

--Additional reporting by Grace Elletson and Irene Spezzamonte. Editing by Linda Voorhis.