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TOP FORTY UNDER 2022



MICHAEL B. ADAMSON

AGE: 35
SUSMAN GODFREY LLP
LOS ANGELES
LITIGATION

Michael B. Adamson is a litigation associate at Susman Godfrey LLP and focuses on commercial disputes, including class actions and individual suits involving patents, trade secrets, unfair competition, environmental torts and breach of contract.

“From high school, I knew I wanted to be a litigator,” he said. “I idolized courtroom drama scenes like in ‘My Cousin Vinny’ and ‘Law and Order.’ I really liked debate and politics. It seemed like they went together.”

Before law school, Adamson worked in Washington, D.C., as a legislative aide for Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch of Utah, then the ranking member of the Finance Committee. Hatch died this year.

After he got his JD from Duke University School of Law, where he was executive editor of the Duke Law Journal, Adamson clerked for Judge Gerald B. Tjoflat of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. “He took an eclectic view of the law—he looked at legal problems in unconventional ways,” Adamson said. “He might apply tort law principles in a contract case, for example. He liked to dig deeply into the record of a case. He was not very patient with litigants unfamiliar with the facts of a case. From him, I learned creativity.”

Adamson also learned from Tjoflat’s wall of photos of former clerks that prominent Susman litigator Geoffrey L. Harrison was among them. “Judge Tjoflat told me about the incredible Susman firm and helped me reach

out to Harrison, who helped me get a job. Now I love the firm, the office and living in L.A.”

At Susman Godfrey, Adamson handles a wide variety of plaintiff-side and defense-side matters. He recently filed for class certification on behalf of a potential class of thousands of insurance policyholders who assert breach of contract claims against major insurance companies that failed to reduce their cost of insurance rates to reflect improvements in mortality rates, despite contract requirements. *Iwanski v. First Penn-Pacific Life Insurance Co.*, 2:18-cv-01573 (E.D. Penn.); *TVPX ARS Inc. et al. v. Lincoln Nat’l Life Insurance Co.*, 2:18-cv-02989 (E.D. Penn.)s

“I was brought on in 2019 to handle this one,” Adamson said. “The companies were supposed to reduce rates, but they never did.”

In his class certification motion, Adamson wrote, “Common evidence will prove that Defendants improperly profited by keeping [cost of insurance] rates inflated, despite drastic improvements in future mortality expectations.

Adamson said he enjoys his work. “I like the variability. Susman Godfrey started as a plaintiff-side firm. Even on defense, we like to run cases efficiently like a good plaintiff would—with very lean staffing and an effort to quickly get to the heart of the matter.”

— JOHN ROEMER