Rising Star: Goodwin's Meghan Spillane

Law360 (August 27, 2018, 3:11 PM EDT) -- Goodwin partner Meghan Spillane's key involvement in several high-profile government probes, including an investigation into New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo's economic development efforts, earns her a spot as one of five white collar attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

WHY SHE'S A WHITE COLLAR ATTORNEY:

Spillane said she became interested in criminal law generally during her stint with Teach for America, where she saw how families were affected by incarceration, and continued to be involved in activities "aimed at indigent criminal defense" in law school.

In the past year, she has represented Fort Schuyler Management Corp. and Fuller Road Management Corp. in a criminal probe conducted by the Manhattan U.S. Attorney into alleged corruption around the contracting process for Cuomo's "Buffalo Billion" revitalization effort.

At the same time, Spillane has also represented an individual on death row in Alabama, a case she has been working on since she started as a summer associate at Goodwin, and said she felt "very fortunate" to be able to do white collar work while continuing to staying active in her pro bono practice.

"I do a lot of white collar work and I have a very extensive pro bono practice as well, which I have been able to sustain over the course of my career," Spillane said. "[It] is really the tie that binds my experience with what I'm able to do currently."

HER BIGGEST CASE:

In February 2014, former SAC Capital Advisors portfolio manager Mathew Martoma, represented by Goodwin, was convicted for his role in a multimillion-dollar insider trading scheme. Spillane, who was in the process of transitioning to

RISING STAR

Meghan Spillane
Goodwin

Age: 37
Home base: New York City
Position: Partner
Law school: Fordham University School of Law
First job after law school: Associate at Goodwin

partner at the time of the trial, called her participation in the high-profile case a "formative part of her career."

"It was really where I transitioned from being just one of the people who worked on the case team to being someone who was running a case team in coordination with the other partners," she said.

Spillane added that she was proud of the "robust" defense they put on in the case, despite Martoma's conviction, noting that her team was able to bring in a lot of defense witnesses, a rare occurrence in criminal prosecution, she said.

OTHER NOTABLE CASES:

In addition to her pro bono practice, Spillane has also recently been more involved in Goodwin's digital currency and blockchain technology practice. Working with her colleagues across securities, corporate and other practice groups, Spillane said she often acts as the "translator" between her technology clients and regulators, using her government regulatory perspective.

"We've been attacking it from all sides as a team, advising them on how to structure their token offerings in such a way that is compliant with securities law," she said. "On the flip side, I'm also involved in representing individuals before the Securities and Exchange Commission as well as the state securities regulators in government investigations."

WHAT MOTIVATES HER:

Through years of experience interacting with regulatory agencies, and forming relationships with members of the U.S. Attorney's Office, Spillane said that she's been able to develop a reputation for both integrity and reasonableness in her work.

This comes in handy during government investigations, where clients are often "at a crossroads," needing both legal advice and guidance about what to do and expect next. The counseling role in white collar defense, which Spillane said she "really valued," has been something that motivates her and makes her feel fulfilled, she noted.

"That's not only providing the best kind of legal avenues forward, but also giving them a perspective of what's going to happen tomorrow, what's going to happen next week, what's the best path forward," Spillane said.

— As told to Tiffany Hu

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2018 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,200 submissions. This interview has been edited and condensed.