

MVP: Norton Rose's Jeffrey Webb

By Tom Lotshaw

Law360 (November 5, 2024, 12:54 PM EST) -- Jeffrey Webb of Norton Rose Fulbright US LLP helped a Marathon Petroleum Corp. unit fend off trespassing claims against its pipeline in western North Dakota and challenge federal government decisions related to it, earning him a spot as one of the 2024 Law360 Energy MVPs.

His biggest accomplishment:

Webb points to a string of successes in ongoing litigation over the Tesoro High Plains Pipeline, which crosses part of the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation.

He helped the company defeat a proposed class action seeking hundreds of millions of dollars brought by reservation residents who claim it operated the pipeline without an easement, securing dismissal in 2020 and again in August 2023 after an Eighth Circuit decision revived their litigation.

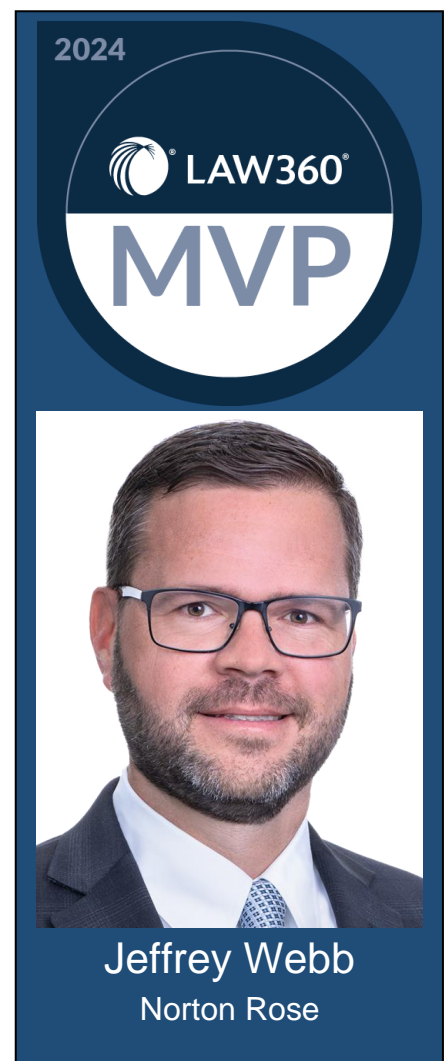
He has also helped the company fight the federal government's attempt to undo a decision that slashed back rent and unauthorized use payments the company was ordered to pay from \$187 million down to about \$2 million plus interest.

A North Dakota federal judge, finding the government's vacatur of its decision likely ran afoul of the Administrative Procedure Act, granted a preliminary injunction this summer and severed and stayed a trespass counterclaim the government filed against the company.

"These were big accomplishments for the team and the client after nearly five years of litigation," Webb said, "and it was a result of great work by our entire team."

His proudest moment:

Webb, a mechanical engineer, said his proudest moment came when he was named a co-head of the law firm's energy and infrastructure disputes team in January.



"Our firm has a rich and decades-long history in the energy industry, and it's one of the core focuses of the firm, with incredibly talented and experienced attorneys and fantastic energy clients we're helping with their most complex challenges," Webb said.

"To be asked to lead this group is definitely one of the proudest moments of my career," he added.

His biggest challenge:

Webb said his biggest challenge has been finding balance, co-heading the energy and infrastructure disputes team while leading his own docket of cases.

"Being able to carry out each of these roles and wear both of those hats is made possible just by the incredible attorneys we have here at the firm," Webb said.

Being a father of three adds to the challenge.

"They're all very active," Webb said. "Each of them are involved in school, sports, church and other activities, and getting them to their games and events and maintaining an active role in their lives is a priority for both me and their mother, and that's definitely a team effort."

Why he is an energy attorney:

Webb grew up in a small Ohio town surrounded by farms, the son of a common pleas judge. A shale boom was gaining momentum around the time he moved to San Antonio after law school.

As a young attorney focused mostly on product liability litigation, Webb made it known he was interested in working more energy cases. With his background as an engineer, he was tapped to handle expert testimony and other technical aspects for a multibillion-dollar case in Zavala County, and helped secure a take-nothing judgment for a client after years of litigation.

"One of the reasons I love my job as an energy lawyer is helping clients tackle their complex challenges," Webb said.

"The energy industry is so critical to our day-to-day lives, and people often take it for granted, so being able to help clients continue to grow their business and provide further security and independence to our country I think is a great honor, and it's a big part of what I enjoy about my job," he added.

What motivates him:

Webb is extremely proud to be a co-head of the law firm's energy and infrastructure disputes team, but said "Dad" is the title he is most proud of.

One major motivator, Webb said, is showing his children that hard work and grit breeds success.

"They're my greatest gift in life," Webb said. "Demonstrating those qualities for them, in addition to creating additional opportunities for them in life, is really what motivates me."

His advice for junior attorneys:

Webb said his first bit of advice for junior attorneys is exactly what he tries to model for his children: that hard work to achieve goals and grow is a hallmark of success.

"The practice of law is hard," Webb said, "and to achieve their full capabilities they need to be willing to put in the work."

Webb also encourages them to find people they enjoy working with and being around. It is the people who drew Webb to then-Fulbright & Jaworski LLP nearly 20 years ago, and the people who have kept him with the firm.

His last bit of advice: Practice in an area you enjoy and are passionate about.

"You want to come to work solving problems for clients in an area doing things you are passionate about every day, because it is hard work," Webb said.

--As told to Tom Lotshaw. Editing by Vaqas Asghar.

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