

California Powerhouse: Wilson Sonsini

By **Rae Ann Varona**

Law360 (September 16, 2024, 2:09 PM EDT) --Over the past year, Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati PC stayed true to its roots of representing innovative companies in myriad matters, like helping Google score a win in an Anti-Terrorism Act suit at the U.S. Supreme Court and advising software company HashiCorp Inc. in its \$6.4 billion acquisition by IBM, earning the firm a place for the third consecutive year as one of Law360's Regional Powerhouses.

Wilson Sonsini performed a wide range of work for Google in the past year, including its work alongside co-counsel from Keker Van Nest & Peters LLP defending Google and its subsidiary YouTube from a Grammy-winning composer's copyright infringement suit accusing the companies of encouraging a "hotbed" of piracy. A California federal judge in late May 2023 denied class certification in the suit, and the composer later agreed to dismiss her suit on the eve of a June 2023 trial.

The Palo Alto, California-based law firm also helped Google secure a Ninth Circuit victory in January against a proposed class action that accused it of making more than \$2 billion in advertising revenue by "trespassing" on website owners' property.

Wilson Sonsini and co-counsel from Williams & Connolly LLP also helped Google overcome a closely-watched appeal before the Supreme Court, with the justices finding in late May 2023 that technology companies couldn't be held liable under the Anti-Terrorism Act merely for creating platforms that could be used by terrorist groups that later commit terrorist acts.

Beyond Google, Wilson Sonsini in December 2023 secured a complete victory at the Ninth Circuit for online game platform Roblox in a class action that claimed the California Family Code barred the online game platform from accepting money from minors for its virtual Robux currency.

The firm also secured a Ninth Circuit win last September for social media company Pinterest in a copyright case involving the Digital Millennium Copyright Act's safe harbor provision.

Wilson Sonsini's roster of technology-leading clients stems from roots the firm laid down in Silicon Valley more than 60 years ago — before the region was even called Silicon Valley. As the entrepreneurs, venture capital firms and startups it collaborated with grew, so did the firm.



Google, for instance, is a long-term client of Wilson Sonsini, which incorporated the company back in 1998 and took it public in 2004.

"Our [Silicon Valley] roots helped us form valuable relationships with founders and investors, which gave us an important foundation on which we built," said Allison Spinner, head of the firm's corporate department.

Caz Hashemi, head of its litigation department, similarly lauded the firm's reputation for representing innovative clients and the novel legal issues they face as they grow.

"We're very comfortable and successful at taking on interesting, complicated matters — whether you're talking about litigation, disputes or deals," Hashemi said.

He told Law360 it was that reputation of working with trailblazers in the technology and life science areas that attracted him to the firm 24 years ago.

"We have a great understanding of our clients, business, their technology [and] their goals, and that familiarity helps us develop creative and innovative ways to litigate the case," Hashemi said.

As of April 1, Wilson Sonsini had 491 attorneys in the Golden State, spread out across several offices in both Northern and Southern California. In addition to its Palo Alto office, the firm set up two offices in San Francisco, another in San Diego and two in Los Angeles, including its newest one on the Century City neighborhood's Avenue of the Stars, which opened in 2022.

Wilson Sonsini continues to lead in challenging cases, many in intellectual property litigation — one of the firm's strongest areas — along with securities litigation, white collar investigations and all types of complex commercial litigation.

In November 2023, the firm secured a \$46.7 million jury verdict and a "running royalty" for VB Assets, which had accused Amazon.com Inc. of infringing its voice software technology patents.

The firm has also continued to shine in its robust nonlitigation practice, particularly in high client demand areas of capital markets, corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, and venture capital.

Wilson Sonsini advised Walmart Inc.-backed digital marketing company Ibotta on its \$577 million initial public offering in April.

Spinner said the firm's M&A practice has also stayed busy over the past year. For example, the firm advised multicloud infrastructure automation company HashiCorp Inc. in its \$6.4 billion acquisition by IBM, which also took place in April.

The HashiCorp deal was just another example of Wilson Sonsini's long-term relationships with clients and its representation of them through their life cycle, Spinner said, adding that Wilson Sonsini took HashiCorp public in December 2021.

"Whether we start at incorporating a client and then exit through an IPO, or we help them from seed to later-stage venture financings then exit through M&A, we're working closely with the client through all stages," Spinner said.

Like Hashemi, Spinner said she joined Wilson Sonsini more than 25 years ago because she was drawn to the firm's client base of disruptive and innovative companies.

"I knew that technology and life sciences companies face novel issues and challenges, which means exciting and engaging work and the chance to work hand in hand with entrepreneurs and board members," Spinner said. "I also knew Wilson Sonsini had a powerful brand driven by its ability to handle key strategic matters that drive business, like IPOs and other complex financial transactions."

Because California continues to have an active legal market, including being the most active state when it comes to venture financing, Spinner said, Wilson Sonsini remains opportunistic, especially when it comes to growth.

Spinner said the primary driver of the firm's expansion has always been client demand.

And what clients get are attorneys who are creative in how they represent clients and are also collaborative, using the expertise and talent from different attorneys and practices, she added.

--Additional reporting by Bonnie Eslinger, Lauren Berg, Jess Krochtengel, Craig Clough, Andrew Karpan and Tom Zanki. Editing by Kristen Becker.