

New Jersey Law Journal

Winners & Losers of 2020: Lawyers, Judge Got Caught on the Wrong Side of Line

Amid all the adversity of 2020, some New Jersey attorneys experienced great personal and professional achievements, while others faced their own unique low points. What follows is a look at some of the biggest winners and losers of the New Jersey legal community in the past year.

By **Charles Toutant** | December 14, 2020 at 12:53 AM



Photo: Pixelvario/Shutterstock.com

The internet is full of memes declaring 2020 the worst year ever. For the legal profession, the coronavirus brought dramatic change—in-person court proceedings largely came to a halt, judges conducted hearings via Zoom, and lawyers learned to work from home, where noisy children and pets sometimes made themselves known to colleagues during conference calls. For some lawyers, the shutdown of courts translated into a loss of income, while others were not hurt as much.

Yet the year's tumultuous events impacted some people more than others, and some in the legal profession sunk to new depths while others experienced career breakthroughs.

Amid all the adversity of 2020, some New Jersey attorneys achieved great personal and professional milestones, while others faced their own unique low points. What follows is a look at some of the biggest winners and losers of the New Jersey legal community in the past year.

WINNERS

David Mazie



The Roseland attorney, who has made a career of getting outsize awards for injured plaintiffs, obtained a \$125 million settlement from Verizon in May, on behalf of an attorney who was left brain damaged and paralyzed when a utility pole fell on her.

David Mazie said the award, which came after litigation in Essex County Superior Court, was the largest settlement ever in New Jersey.

Mazie is no stranger to outsize awards in personal injury cases. He won a \$166 million verdict from the state Division of Youth and Family Services in a suit claiming the agency failed to protect a child who was left blind and brain damaged from beatings by his abusive father. An appeals court later threw out that verdict.

And in 2005 Mazie won a \$105 million verdict against Aramark Inc. for serving beer to an intoxicated patron at Giants Stadium, who later caused a car crash that left a young child paralyzed. That award was later reduced to \$25 million.

In Mazie's latest mega-victory, Maria Moser Meister suffered paralysis and brain damage when the utility pole came crashing down on her as she was waiting for a bus. The 45-year-old pole allegedly was listed for replacement multiple times, but that never happened.

At the time of the accident Meister was general counsel for finance firm Milberg Factors in New York, and previously had been an associate at Simpson Thacher & Bartlett. The settlement was accompanied by a heated legal battle between Mazie and the original attorney on the case, Gregg Alan Stone of Kirsch, Gelband & Stone in Newark. Stone's suit is still pending.