Top White-Collar Lawyers 2024

Our annual list honoring the top performing attorneys specializing in white-collar law.

MICHAEL LI-MING WONG

WILLKIE FARR & GALLAGHER

SAN FRANCISCO

As the co-chair of Willkie's white-collar defense group, Michael Li-Ming Wong handles cases involving a wide range of federal and state enforcement agencies, including the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, the U.S. Department of Justice, state Attorneys General, and local district attorneys.

His practice covers various white-collar crimes such as securities fraud, consumer fraud, cryptocurrency fraud, insider trading and U.S. Constitutional issues related to individual liberties in criminal matters.

"I was first drawn to white-collar criminal cases while serving as a federal prosecutor earlier in my career," Wong said. "Back then, and still today, I find white-collar matters to be like solving a fascinating crossword puzzle, but with extremely high stakes."

He has also clerked for Judge Jose A. Cabranes of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, and the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

"From both of them, I learned lessons about approaching the law with integrity and intellectual rigor and pursuing justice with both precision and compassion," Wong said. "In all my legal writing, I still strive to heed Justice Ginsburg's advice to me: 'Get it right and keep it tight!'"

One of Wong's recent matters includes representing a large, publicly-traded banking conglomerate in a multiyear SEC investigation. He said the case involved extensive document review, numerous witness interviews and detailed financial analysis.

The outcome was a complete dismissal of the investigation with no charges or penalties filed against his client, a rare and significant victory for a publicly-listed company concerned with investor confidence and market perception.

Wong also recently completed a decade-long representation of HPE in a cross-border criminal-fraud case related to HP's $11 billion acquisition of Auto-nomy, a UK-based software firm. *United States v. Michael Lynch & Steve Chamberlain*, 3:18-CR-577 (N.D. Cal., filed Nov. 29, 2018).

His role involved advising HPE as the identified victim of alleged accounting fraud and providing counsel during two multiweek criminal jury trials in 2018 and 2024.

"This case was one of the largest corporate-fraud prosecutions in the history of the Northern District of California," Wong said. "It was an honor to represent the interests of the alleged fraud victim in such an important cross-border and high-stakes matter."

He said in the white-collar space, it is always a challenge to navigate a government investigation that follows or shadows an internal investigation.

"There are very tough judgment calls regarding voluntary disclosure, preserving attorney-client privilege and sometimes cooperation with enforcement agencies," he said.

Wong continued: "When arguing a motion on a victim's behalf in a federal criminal trial, it is always a challenge to know where to sit: Do I sit at the prosecutors' table, or at defense counsel's table? In one recent instance, I made a point to try to find a seat exactly between the two counsel tables. I thought this symbolized the unique role of a victim's representative in courtroom proceedings."