

THE NATIONAL LAW JOURNAL

An ALM Publication

NLJ.COM | November/December 2021

2021 NLJ Awards: Professional Excellence

APPELLATE HOT LIST

Stris & Maher

■ **Tell us about your top U.S. Supreme Court or federal appeals court victory over the past year and how you and your team achieved the win.** *Hillsborough v. Volkswagen.* Our clients, two large Counties, sued Volkswagen for installing “cheat devices” on vehicles in their jurisdictions. Volkswagen, who already paid \$20+ billion in penalties, obtained dismissal, arguing that non-federal claims were preempted by the Clean Air Act. We knew Volkswagen was wrong. But we had to convince a conservative panel to embrace a result that would subject Volkswagen to billions in additional liability. We did.

■ **What was your firm's key to appellate success over the past year?** Our business model. We're a progressive, entrepreneurial boutique designed to handle select, high-stakes projects. Our managing partner—Elizabeth Brannen—is deeply committed to inclusion and collaboration. We're a certified Women's Business Enterprise. And more than half of our lawyers identify as women, people of color, and/or LGBTQ.

■ **What is the most satisfying element of appellate practice, in your opinion?** The ability



PETER STRIS, FOUNDING PARTNER

of a small team to handle any case, no matter the size or venue. This year, for example, our close-knit team is representing H&M in a copyright case before the U.S. Supreme Court (*Unicolors v. H&M*). It will be my tenth Supreme Court oral argument.

■ **What's the most valuable lesson you learned as a young lawyer?** Make sure your colleagues know how much you appreciate them! ■