

Daily Journal

FEBRUARY 5, 2025

LEADING COMMERCIAL LITIGATORS 2025



SHAWN WILLIAMS

ROBBINS GELLER RUDMAN

& DOWD

SAN FRANCISCO

LITIGATION

Shawn Williams is a founding partner of Robbins Geller Rudman & Dowd and serves as managing partner of the firm's San Francisco office. He is also a member of the firm's management committee. Specializing in complex commercial litigation with a focus on securities litigation, Williams has served as lead counsel in numerous precedent-setting actions, recovering billions of dollars for investors and consumers.

One of his landmark cases was against Facebook, which was among the first under the Illinois Biometric Information Privacy Act to be litigated through summary judgment on the eve of trial. In re Facebook Biometric Information Privacy Litigation, 3:15-cv-03747 (N.D. Cal., Aug. 17, 2015).

Williams said the Facebook case was an introduction into the details of machine learning algorithms that underpin artificial intelligence.

He added that the matter also presented some significant law and technology questions that were central to whether the claim could proceed and proceed as a class action. The first was whether the alleged violation of BIPA, the collection of biometric data without consent, was a concrete privacy interest that, if violated, would equate to an "injury in fact" and confer standing under Article III.

"The second [issue] was whether Illinois statute was intended to have extra-territorial effect which raised factual questions of where the violation occurred, when plaintiffs use Facebook in Illinois or when the facial recognition technology created face templates potentially on servers outside of Illinois," Williams said. "These issues were ultimately resolved in favor of our clients

in Ninth Circuit and key to the outcome that we achieved."

This case resulted in a then-record recovery of \$650 million for consumers.

Since the spring of 2019, Williams, along with his firm, represented Apple investors in a securities fraud class action case under the Exchange Act of 1934. In re Apple Inc. Securities Litigation, 4:19-cv-02033 (N.D. Cal., filed April 16, 2019).

After five years of litigation, they achieved a \$490 million settlement, marking the third-largest securities class action recovery ever in the Northern District of California and the fifth-largest in the Ninth Circuit.

Despite the settled nature of much of the law, litigating against Apple was far from routine, Williams said, requiring meticulous preparation for trial against one of the world's most beloved companies and its transformational product, the iPhone.

"While Apple was a more traditional securities case, where much of the law was settled, litigating against Apple is far from routine," he said, adding: "I learned a lot preparing this case for trial and from our mock juries about effective trial presentations involving popular companies."