

THE 2016 ELITE TRIAL LAWYERS: Class Action



Aaron S. Podhurst of Podhurst Orseck.

The firms in this category so successfully served their clients that they made it hard to choose among them. One winning firm obtained a \$331 million settlement with an investment bank for purchasers of mortgage-backed securities; the other negotiated this year's stunning and speedily achieved settlement with Volkswagen after allegations surfaced about its "defeat device" used to cheat on emissions tests. Finalists use class action tools to challenge, among other problems, alleged violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in the District of Columbia's public schools, and exorbitant, unnecessary wind, hazard and flood insurance on mortgaged properties.

Podhurst Orseck

FINALIST

LARGEST OFFICE: Miami

ATTORNEYS: 14

Podhurst Orseck lawyers were class counsel in nationwide class actions against some of the country's biggest banks and their related insurance companies. Settlements totalling \$300 million resolved allegations that the financial institutions forced homeowners into overpriced property insurance and entered into kickback arrangements that inflated the prices of the insurance policies.

The National Law Journal: Describe the national importance of your case and why your firm prevailed.

Aaron Podhurst, partner: This case carried national importance because millions of home owners were defrauded into buying more expensive home mortgages than necessary. ... We ultimately prevailed because the facts of the case were on our side.

NLJ: What traits do you respect most in opposing firms and lawyers?

AP: The opposing firms and lawyers I respect the most are those with a high degree of professionalism. ... When we operate in a professional and ethical manner it provides confidence that the system works.

NLJ: What is your biggest worry about practicing law?

AP: I worry sometimes citizens don't recognize the importance of an independent judiciary. Maintaining judicial independence allows judges to make the right decisions, therefore we cannot allow it to be attacked politically.