

The American Lawyer Recognizes Sheppard Mullin Victory as "Big Suit"

The American Lawyer
03.13.2007

Named one of *The American Lawyer's* "Big Suits" in the March 2007 issue, Sheppard Mullin partners Polly Towill and Steve O'Neil obtained summary judgment for Venoco, Inc. in a mass toxic tort litigation. The decision was a significant setback to Erin Brockovich and plaintiff attorneys from Texas Baron and Budd who claim that various toxic emissions from oil and gas facilities and a heating and cooling plant are causing cancer in students at Beverly Hills High School and those nearby schools. Partners Polly Towill and Steve O'Neil, and of counsel Robert Philibosian represented the current operator of the oil facility neighboring the high school. Associate Olivier Theard assisted on the case from the outset. The trial team was assisted by partner Candace Matson in bringing a motion for summary judgment on the grounds that these plaintiffs had insufficient evidence that the alleged chemicals could or did cause their cancers. The judge essentially agreed that the testimony of the plaintiffs' three medical experts lacked foundation to find a causal link with the cancers.