

THE RECORDER

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LEGAL AWARDS
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WOMEN LEADERS IN TECH LAW, LITIGATION HONOREE

Michele Johnson
Latham & Watkins



Courtesy photo

Michele Johnson, global chair of the litigation and trial department at Latham & Watkins

Michele Johnson, partner with Latham & Watkins, is among the recipients of the The Recorder's 2025 Women Leaders in Tech Law, Litigation Award. Read a Q&A with her below.

What's your proudest professional achievement of the past year and why?

My proudest professional moment was our jury trial win for Sarepta Therapeutics in a patent case in Delaware federal court. The trial was the story of Dr. Steve Wilton, a researcher who worked at the University of Western Australia in the same building where Duchene Muscular Dystrophy patients would receive treatment. Being with those kids inspired Dr. Wilton to dedicate his life to finding cures for the genetic mutations that cause muscular dystrophy, and DMD in particular. His work led to several successful DMD therapies, brought to market in partnership with Sarepta. Nippon Shinyaku, a company with a competing DMD drug, sued Sarepta and Dr. Wilton for patent infringement, and Sarepta cross-claimed. Though Nippon sought \$290 million in damages, we flipped the tables, convincing the jury that Nippon's patent was invalid and that Sarepta's patent was valid, resulting in an award of \$116 million to Sarepta.

What's one piece of advice you'd give to a woman starting out in tech law?

Failure is only ever the middle of the story. At this level of our profession, we often do not have space to characterize failure as a

learning experience, as we seek to achieve the highest standards of excellence without exception. But when the setback happens, we can lift our heads and see that the road is long, and the rest of the story unwritten. And in any event, all good trial lawyers describe every verdict as a win, properly understood.

What is a group, tool, or initiative that has helped you grow in your career or contributes to the development of pipelines for women leaders in tech law?

Latham's culture of collaboration, collegiality, and servant leadership has been instrumental in developing the pipeline of younger lawyers in firm management, thereby at the same time developing the pipeline of younger lawyers in the many disciplines of our practice including tech law. I was fortunate to benefit from leadership opportunities early in my career and remain committed to now finding such opportunities for others—an effort that is particularly critical in cross-disciplinary industries like tech where the pace of change is ever accelerating.