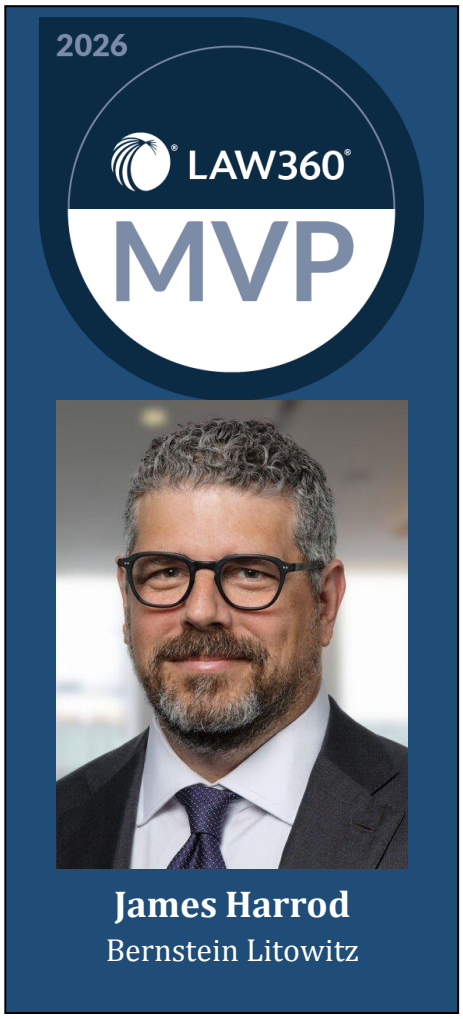
Portfolio Media. Inc. | 230 Park Avenue, 7th Floor | New York, NY 10169 | www.law360.com
Phone: +1 646 783 7100 | Fax: +1 646 783 7161 | customerservice@law360.com

MVP: Bernstein Litowitz's James Harrod

By **Ben Zigterman**

Law360 (November 13, 2026, 4:00 PM EST) -- James A. Harrod of Bernstein Litowitz Berger & Grossmann LLP's securities practice helped retirement systems in Mississippi and Arkansas reach a $175 million preliminary settlement in a class action against hard-drive maker Seagate Technology Holdings and its executives, earning him a spot as one of the 2026 Law360 Securities MVPs.



His biggest accomplishment:

As co-lead counsel for the Public Employees' Retirement System of Mississippi and the Arkansas Public Employees Retirement System in their securities fraud class action against Seagate and its CEO and chief financial officer, Harrod helped the retirement systems reach a preliminary settlement in late May after his team succeeded at getting Seagate to produce a key document.

The retirement systems accuse Seagate of telling investors it was complying with U.S. export controls against Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. while concealing more than $1 billion in sales to the company. It eventually was hit with a $300 million penalty from the U.S. Department of Commerce.

The class action was different from the government's case, Harrod said, as it required the plaintiffs to prove that the executives lied to investors.

"We did really have a hard-fought negotiation and litigation in that case, and I think the recovery is really excellent," he said.

A final approval hearing is scheduled for Nov. 17.

A key turning point in the case was when Seagate handed over internal legal advice related to its Huawei sales, which Harrod said was the result of nine months of wrangling over the document.

"We had to develop a record around the fact that these executives received this advice, and then we had to convince the defendants that they were going to have to give it," Harrod said. "Ultimately, they agreed to provide us with that information."

His proudest moment:

The Cleveland Bakers and Teamsters Pension Fund's complaint against potato manufacturer Lamb Weston Inc. in Idaho federal court largely survived a motion to dismiss in May, which Harrod said was one of his proudest accomplishments from the past year.

The simple fact of going up against a potato manufacturer in Idaho could have been a challenge.

"There's a hometown disadvantage," he said. "They're one of the biggest employers in Boise, and we were worried about that."

However, he said U.S. District Judge David C. Nye has been fair and thoughtful.

The case also involved a potentially bland issue: a software update gone wrong. When Lamb Weston transitioned to a new enterprise resource planning system, it initially downplayed issues with the move but later disclosed it cost the company $135 million in quarterly sales.

The pension fund sued, accusing the company of misleading investors.

"The challenge in Lamb Weston was both to get over the fact that the nature of the case is somewhat anodyne and show that there was a really meaningful impact between what the company was disclosing and what the reality was about the system," Harrod said.

Harrod and his team of investigators were able to work with former employees who testified that the company was warned that it wasn't ready for the software transition, he said.

"They did the transition anyway, and basically what happened was Lamb Weston was blinded to its inventory for a matter of months," he said.

The case required Harrod and his team to "basically run down a lot of dark alleys" to find the former employees, he said.

"We had to make … certainly a hundred calls to people to develop the context around this, to find the right people who could give us the information, and then actually elicit that information from the people and tell the story in a compelling way," he said.

After most of the claims survived the motion to dismiss, the pension fund is working on amending its complaint.

Why he's a securities attorney:

Harrod credited his philosophy major at Skidmore College with putting him on the path toward litigating securities fraud. He also attended George Washington University Law School around the time the Long-Term Capital Management LP hedge fund collapsed due to its exposure to the Russian ruble.

"I was trying to figure out when investors lose money, when these really smart people do these things that are kind of like incongruous to their ability or to their responsibilities, is there a way that I can make a career out of that?" Harrod said. "I was always interested in the way that these big ideas interact with reality and became really interested in the financial markets, even though I had no real exposure to them."

To him, pursuing securities fraud litigation was a way to be "a check on people who have a lot of power."

Harrod also said the variety of the cases keeps him from getting bored.

"I like the intellectual challenge of it," he said. "All of our cases are different."

His advice for junior attorneys:

Harrod encouraged junior attorneys, above all, to stay curious.

"The biggest thing is to be curious, especially in what we do because you don't know what are the facts or arguments that are going to likely make you have a winning case," he said.

He encouraged younger attorneys to focus as much on a case's weaknesses as its strengths.

"The thing that's most important is to look critically at your case and look critically at your arguments and have some humility that both your adversary is going to be smart and figure out what the weak points are," Harrod said.

While it can be hard and feel vulnerable to always be asking questions early in your career, Harrod said it's worth the risk to take a chance on yourself.

"The only way to get to the other side of that is to ask questions and to be curious about what the answers are," he said.

--As told to Ben Zigterman. Editing by Kristen Becker.

Law360's MVPs are attorneys who have distinguished themselves from their peers over the past year through high-stakes litigation, record-breaking deals and complex global matters. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2026 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 1,000 submissions.

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