Lightfoot

NEWS & INSIGHTS

ELEVENTH CIRCUIT AFFIRMS MAJOR PRODUCT LIABILITY WIN IN FAVOR OF LIGHTFOOT FORTUNE 500 AUTOMOTIVE CLIENT

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Lightfoot, Franklin & White LLC managing partner **Melody H. Eagan** and partner **Jeffrey P. Doss** secured a major victory for a Fortune 500 automaker at the Eleventh Circuit. The circuit court affirmed a favorable judgment in favor of Lightfoot's client in a product liability wrongful death case and related evidentiary rulings, in a case where the plaintiff claimed millions in punitive damages from the jury.

The plaintiff-decedent's estate sued the manufacturer in 2018, alleging that the faulty seat belt design in the decedent's vehicle was defective and caused his death in a 2016 car crash. At trial, the jury returned a verdict in favor of the automobile manufacturer. The estate then appealed, arguing "that the district court erroneously ruled on several evidentiary issues," and moved for judgment as a matter of law and a new trial.

The Eleventh Circuit affirmed the district court's 2021 ruling, holding the court was justified in rejecting the estate's request to introduce evidence of more than 50,000 seat-belt-related warranty claims. The circuit panel agreed with the lower court's finding that the warranty claims were not "sustainably similar" to those presented at trial. In a further testament to this victory, the court announced on August 29 that it has refused to rehear the case, solidifying the jury's original verdict in favor of the automaker.

Eagan became Lightfoot's first female managing partner in 2018. She has decades of experience defending high-stakes product liability and catastrophic injury cases and has successfully tried numerous cases to verdict throughout the Southeast. She also represents medical providers in malpractice cases and serves as appellate counsel for clients. Benchmark Litigation selected Eagan as one of the "Top 250 Women in Litigation" in the country for the past two years. She is also listed in The Best Lawyers in America© and Mid-South Super Lawyers, and the National Law Journal has recognized her as an Elite Boutique Trailblazer.

Doss focuses his practice on appellate work and trial advocacy in the areas of white-collar criminal defense and complex civil litigation. In addition to conducting internal investigations for private and public entities, he has defended businesses and individuals in connection with grand jury investigations, administrative enforcement proceedings and criminal prosecutions at the trial and appellate levels. Doss has been listed in The Best Lawyers in America© for his appellate practice, and the *Birmingham Business Journal* named Doss a "Rising Star in Law" in 2018. He has also been listed in Mid-South Super Lawyers.