

Texas Powerhouse: Yetter Coleman

By Emma Cueto

Law360 (September 3, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT) -- A native Texas firm, litigation boutique Yetter Coleman LLP racked up a series of wins last year for clients in the Lone Star State and beyond, including achieving a reversal on appeal of a \$1.6 billion judgment against IBM, securing a dismissal in a billion-dollar oil and gas lease dispute, and defeating an antitrust suit brought by the Federal Trade Commission.

Its success in both trial and appellate matters has earned Yetter Coleman a spot on Law360's Texas Powerhouses list.

With 52 attorneys and one office in Houston, Yetter Coleman punches above its weight as a litigation firm taking on high-stakes, complex commercial litigation. The firm was founded by former BigLaw attorneys R. Paul Yetter and David E. Warden in 1997 as Yetter Warden, with name partner and former Texas Solicitor General Greg Coleman joining in 2007.

From the beginning, the firm has been focused on litigation.

"I think the thing that sets our firm apart is we are focused on being in trial, in front of juries and arbitrators; that's all we do," said James Zucker, a member of Yetter Coleman's managing committee.

It does a lot of energy-related litigation, attorneys said, and also focuses on areas such as antitrust, intellectual property and an increasing amount of litigation challenging Texas state law.

Yetter Coleman has expanded its headcount in recent years in order to ensure it can adequately staff matters, but by and large appreciates the flexibility and lack of bureaucracy that its current size affords it, firm leaders said.

"Clients large and small, in Texas and outside it, know us as a firm that can come in and aggressively and creatively represent them in big, high-dollar disputes," said Timothy S. McConn, head of the firm's oil and gas practice. "I definitely think being the size we are is an advantage. ... We're going to continue growing and will do so in a deliberate way, but we don't want to be a big firm."

Recent major wins by the firm include successfully convincing the Fifth Circuit to completely reverse a district court decision against IBM. Yetter Coleman was hired early on in the litigation as local counsel alongside Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP to represent IBM in a dispute with Houston software company BMC. As the case neared trial, however, Yetter Coleman stepped into the role of lead counsel.



At that point, the trial court judge had already issued some "unfortunate" rulings, McConn said, and once again ruled against IBM at trial, finding that the company had breached an operating agreement between the two companies and owed BMC \$1.6 billion.

"We were charged with instantly springing into action," recalled Connie Pfeiffer, a member of Yetter Coleman's management committee and head of the firm's appellate practice.

Yetter Coleman worked with several other firms, including Clement & Murphy PLLC, and eventually saw the judgment overturned.

It is the sort of case that demonstrates the firm's strengths in both trial and appellate work and the way attorneys on both teams are able to work together seamlessly, attorneys at the firm said.

"We offer clients a solution through the life of the case," Zucker said, noting that was important given that a case might see multiple components appealed throughout the litigation process. "I don't know of many other firms — and certainly not of our size — that provide the quality on both that we do."

In another example that involved extensive appellate work, Yetter Coleman handled a long-running case on behalf of oil and gas company Apache Corp.

The dispute, which started in 2014, concerned oil leases in the Texas panhandle, with one central question being whether the leases Apache obtained from Apollo Exploration LLC and other entities expired on Dec. 31, 2015, or Jan. 1, 2016. Thanks to a difference in oil prices, that single day meant a difference of \$180 million.

The trial court granted summary judgment to Apache in 2018, with Apollo then overturning that ruling on appeal and the case making its way up to the Texas Supreme Court, which considered the question of what it meant for an agreement to expire on the "anniversary" of signing, which was new territory.

"Surprisingly, there was not a ton of case law in Texas on the anniversary issue," McConn recalled.

At oral arguments, one justice, after hearing the argument that the leases expired Dec. 31, asked an attorney for Apollo, "So I was married on Nov. 15. My anniversary is on Nov. 14?"

The Texas Supreme Court eventually concluded that Apache was correct to argue that the anniversary language meant the leases expired Jan 1.

The case wrapped up in March, more than a decade after it began, when the trial court finalized the award of attorney fees. The conclusion was, McConn said, "a long time coming."

The firm also obtained key dismissals on behalf of a private equity client, Welsh Carson, after it was hit with a suit by the FTC and related consumer litigation. The government argued in a 2023 enforcement action that the company's acquisition of anesthesia services had created a monopoly.

It was a closely watched case at the time, recalled Bryce Callahan, a partner in Yetter Coleman's antitrust practice. The suit was part of a more aggressive regulatory approach pursued by the Biden administration, he said, and was seen as a bit of a test case in challenging "roll-up" strategies by private equity firms.

The case against Welsh Carson was dismissed in May 2024, though the judge allowed claims against the anesthesia group it created to stand. Cases brought by consumers were also dismissed.

As it looks to the future, Yetter Coleman said it is interested in continuing to grow. Though the firm only has one office in Houston, it has been evaluating a possible outpost in Austin, Texas. Overall, however, Yetter Coleman plans to keep following the playbook that has seen it succeed in the Lone Star State.

"We will continue to be known as a nimble firm that can take on trials anywhere," McConn said.

--Additional reporting by Hailey Konnath, Lauren Castle, Catherine Marfin and Bryan Koenig. Editing by Melissa Treolo.