

## Rising Star: Cleary's Blair Matthews

By Bryan Koenig

*Law360 (August 4, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT)* -- Blair West Matthews of Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP helped Tempur Sealy International Inc. beat a high-profile government merger challenge, earning her a spot among the antitrust law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### Her biggest case:

Matthews was on the Cleary team that represented Tempur Sealy as the company successfully fought a Federal Trade Commission lawsuit challenging its \$5 billion acquisition of retailer Mattress Firm Inc. Matthews worked on the case from the start of the FTC probe that ultimately led to claims Tempur Sealy might disadvantage its competitors' mattresses on Mattress Firm sales floors. The judge eventually rejected those claims.

"Being able to go along with them on that entire journey, all the way through a litigated merger challenge, and to win on the back end, was really phenomenal," Matthews said.

Defending the deal meant handling a kind of vertical merger case, involving companies on different points on the supply chain, with very little legal precedent for guidance.

"In a lot of ways, we were kind of feeling our way through what the law should look like in that area. And so, it was exciting in that way. And also challenging to craft our arguments kind of on the fly," Matthews said.

Ultimately, attorneys for Tempur Sealy and Mattress Firm convinced U.S. District Judge Charles Eskridge of the Southern District of Texas that Mattress Firm's "kingmaker" status among mattress companies was "overrated" when producers have many thousands of other retailers where they can reach consumers, as well as through direct sales.

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**RISING  
STAR**



**Blair Matthews**

Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton

**Age:** 34

**Home base:** Washington, D.C.

**Position:** Partner

**Law school:** Georgetown University  
Law Center

**First job after law school:** Associate  
at Dechert LLP

**Her proudest moment:**

Matthews said she is especially proud of a direct examination she did in the Tempur Sealy trial, questioning an employee with the company with whom she'd worked for a number of years. The direct examination came after extensive witness preparation.

"Being able to work with the client and bring them through an experience that was obviously so important to them from an organizational standpoint, but also personally, was quite an enjoyable experience," Matthews said. "And having them walk away really proud of the way that they represented the company in court was [a] particularly meaningful moment for me."

**What motivates her:**

Matthews said she is driven by the deal-focused part of antitrust law "because you're helping clients create value."

"You're helping a client achieve something that they've put a lot of time and effort into deciding is a really good decision to make for their investors and for their customers," she said. "Being able to stand behind them in that setting and partner with them to bring about an outcome that they're working towards, and then ultimately achieving that, is the most fulfilling part of what we do."

**Why antitrust law:**

The relationship with business and industry is also what drew Matthews to practicing competition law, having found a preference for working with business people "creating things" and "adding value to the economy," rather than spending all day arguing with other attorneys.

"Doing antitrust law gives you a unique opportunity to be really close to the facts around so many different product lines and business lines. And you really learn about the way things work in a way that I think there aren't a lot of professions that afford you the opportunity to do so broadly," she said.

"Getting exposure to totally different areas of the economy and different industries is totally fascinating. And being able to learn how those industries work from people who are the leaders in their field is just a really exciting opportunity."

*--As told to Bryan Koenig. Editing by Kristen Becker.*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2025 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,100 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2025, to be eligible for this year's award.*