

MVP: Jenner & Block's Rebekah P. Goodheart

By Christopher Cole

Law360 (September 29, 2021, 4:45 PM EDT) -- Rebekah P. Goodheart of Jenner & Block LLP represented civil rights groups pro bono in a successful push for federal rate caps on prison and jail phone calls and helped advance a national broadband plan, making her one of Law360's 2021 Telecommunications MVPs.

HER PROUDEST MOMENT THIS YEAR:

Goodheart represented the Wright Petitioners, named after the late Martha Wright, who had struggled to pay for phone calls from her incarcerated grandson and pushed for rate rule changes. The Wright Petitioners were among several groups urging the Federal Communications Commission to lower rates to make them more affordable.

Goodheart had been pushing for the reforms for nearly a decade, and in May, the FCC adopted an order lowering the interim rate caps on interstate inmate calls to 12 cents per minute for all prisons and 14 cents for jails with average daily populations of 1,000 or more. The order also established caps on international calling services rates for the first time at prisons and jails.

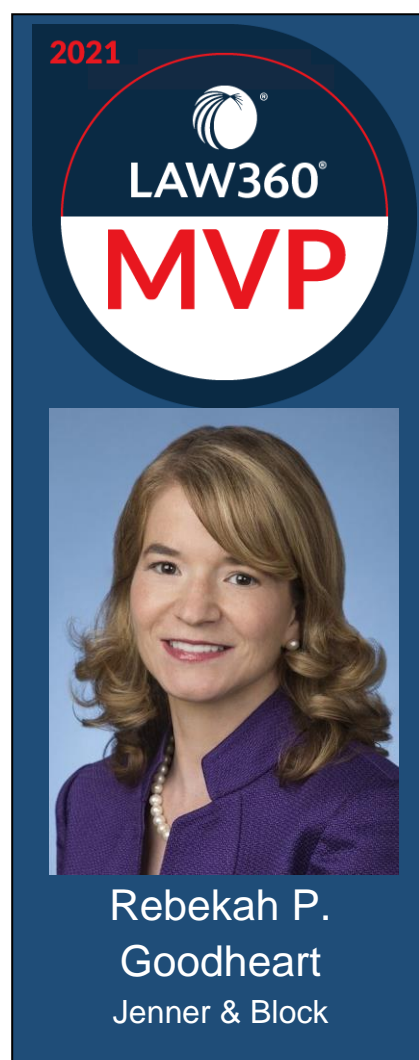
Goodheart, who has served in senior positions at the FCC — including as legal adviser to former Commissioner Mignon Clyburn on broadband and disability issues — also played a role in developing the commission's National Broadband Plan, which lawmakers created to fill high-speed service gaps.

"There's also been related funding from Congress for broadband adoption for remote learning, for infrastructure, and I've been working on those efforts," she said.

She also worked with industry members and the FCC for years on passage and rollout of the Broadband DATA Act, which aims to identify gaps in high-speed service around the country but remains a vast undertaking.

HER BIGGEST CHALLENGE THIS YEAR:

Goodheart is leading a team advising Charter in the FCC's Rural Digital Opportunity Fund, a reverse auction to distribute up to \$16 billion in subsidies to connect unserved, rural areas with broadband. The first phase took place last fall. Charter was the winning bidder of over \$1 billion for sites across two



dozen states, but it was a heavy lift to get there, she said.

"With the largest reverse auction the FCC has ever conducted, it was a tremendous effort in general, and of course with Charter where they were the winning bidder to connect approximately one million locations across 24 states," she said.

"Getting that massive effort through is an enormous challenge, but also incredibly rewarding," she added, because Charter is going to be bringing 1 gigabit service to connect areas that are unserved today, "and that will be incredibly transforming to these areas."

WHY SHE'S A TELECOM ATTORNEY:

Goodheart's knowledge of the intricacies of telecom started with visiting her grandfather, who was a telegraph worker for Western Union in Colorado and worked his way up to president of a telephone company.

All the new technologies he described at the time sounded "very cool, and it was very fun," leading to her fascination with the telecom world, she said. In fact, she said she still has a photograph in her office picturing him working at a telegraph machine.

Later, she would work at the U.S. Department of Justice's Antitrust Division, an experience that also drove her career interest in telecom policy.

"The limits of technology are constantly changing," she said. "And I love being part of all of that and seeing how it's changing and helping clients figure out how to introduce new technologies."

HER ADVICE FOR JUNIOR ATTORNEYS:

Goodheart — who was recently promoted to co-chair of Jenner & Block's communications group and noted that "one thing that I've been really trying to promote is more diversity and promoting women in this space" — urges those who are new to telecom law to "follow your passion."

She recommended staying patient, even if handed a project that's slightly on the dull side here and there.

"If you are passionate about what to do, it makes the mundane not so boring," and high-quality work makes others remember a rising attorney, she said.

"Be proactive in your career," she added, "and do the best job you can on every single project you have."

— *As told to Christopher Cole. Editing by Ellen Johnson.*

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 2021 MVP winners after reviewing nearly 900 submissions.