

## Rising Star: Latham's Chirag Dedania

By **Dave Simpson**

*Law360 (September 19, 2019, 3:16 PM EDT)* -- Chirag Dedania of Latham & Watkins LLP worked on the Calcasieu Pass LNG facility, which involved a \$1.3 billion equity investment and \$5.8 billion in construction financing, for his client Venture Global, earning him a spot as one of five project finance law practitioners under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### **WHY HE CHOSE PROJECT FINANCE:**

During law school, Dedania realized he wanted to do transactional work, but he wasn't set on a particular field. He considered mergers and acquisitions, but the economy was in the gutter when he graduated in 2009.

"That was about the time that the first Obama administration was talking about the stimulus package, which was going to be, and was, a massive investment in renewable energy and infrastructure in this country," he said. "It all sounded very interesting, and it sounded like there was going to be a ton of work there. And that all bore out to be true."

In the end, project finance was the right fit, he said, given his skill set and interests.

### **THE BIGGEST DEAL OF HIS CAREER:**

In August, Dedania's client, Venture Global LNG Inc., announced the closing of the project finance for its Calcasieu Pass liquefied natural gas facility in Louisiana and the associated TransCameron pipeline. Construction of the project is expected to be completed by 2022.

Typically, projects are built with a single point of contact through a single contractor, Dedania said. That type of project has less complexity in the financing documents and the structure, he said. But this project was trickier, because it had a different model, he said.

"It's a challenge for financing sources to have multiple points of contact, multiple contractors who are

**RISING**  
 ★★★★★  
**STAR**



**Chirag Dedania**  
**Latham & Watkins**

**Age:** 35

**Home base:** New York

**Position:** Partner

**Law school:** Columbia Law School

**First job after law school:** Associate at Skadden Arps Slate Meagher & Flom LLP in Washington, D.C.

building the asset, because anything could devolve into finger-pointing," Dedania said. "So it's really all about structuring the deal, and structuring the financing to match the underlying contract base in such a way that makes the most sense for the sponsor and for lenders."

#### **WHAT MOTIVATES HIM:**

Dedania said he likes that his work results in the construction of tangible projects, as there's an asset being built or financed.

"A lot of other work involves businesses or concepts," he said. "But there's something very tangible about building a pipeline or an offshore wind farm. There's something very tangible about an LNG facility that's a little bit different than buying or financing a business."

#### **HIS PROUDEST MOMENT AS AN ATTORNEY:**

Dedania was promoted to partner in January, which was itself a proud moment, he said.

"But I'd say my proudest moment was a couple months after that, when a client I'd worked with in the past called me with not just one, but several new transactions they were working on," he said. "Being the point of contact for the client, being the first call, is always an honor."

Another of his proudest moments came last year, when Lawyers Alliance honored Dedania with the 2018 Cornerstone Award for his pro bono service.

"A lot of clients just don't have access to transactional attorneys," he said. "When you think of pro bono attorneys, a lot of people think of litigation work: You're in court or you're doing a court filing. I think there's just as much of a need on the transactional side. 501C3s might have internal attorneys but they may not know how to negotiate a services agreement or a marketing contract."

Many of the attorneys honored that year had done a lot of work for one or two organizations, but Dedania had done some pro bono work for about a dozen groups, he said.

One such group was the Natural Areas Conservancy, for which he created commercial and funding contracts that have improved green spaces and public recreation areas in New York.

They were looking for a contractor to do light work for a renovation of Marine Park. Dedania was able to create a service agreement for that particular project that could also be used as a form for future projects undertaken by the group.

"There was a negotiation, there was time spent preparing the form, and working with them to see how their needs differ from some \$5.8 billion project," he said. "It can be very different. That was interesting, and it was definitely a good use of my skill set."

— *As told to Dave Simpson*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2019 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,300 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 years old as of April 30, 2019, in order to be considered for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*