

## Texas Powerhouse: Hicks Johnson

By **Tom Lotshaw**

*Law360 (September 8, 2025, 4:00 PM EDT)* -- Hicks Johnson PLLC is representing the city of Houston in a dispute related to a \$1.8 billion water treatment plant expansion, and is also advising dozens of Texas vineyards in product liability litigation against dicamba herbicide makers Bayer and BASF, earning the firm a spot among Law360's 2025 Regional Powerhouses.

It's the smallest firm on this year's Texas Powerhouses list, but Hicks Johnson is known for successful work on big, complex cases as one of the Lone Star State's premier boutiques, according to managing partner Andy Hicks.

"Notwithstanding our smaller size, certainly relative to some of our global competition, we have remarkable bench strength," Hicks said. "Not just on any particular case, but across industries, and not just at trial, but also on the appellate side."

Hicks and partner Logan Johnson formed the firm in 2007 in Houston after they noticed more big-ticket litigation going to boutiques. Both attorneys are alumni of Vinson & Elkins LLP.

Hicks Johnson has grown steadily since then, Hicks said, including through lateral hires from BigLaw firms. It now has 19 attorneys at an expanding Houston office — with three more set to join this year — and five attorneys at a Chicago location that opened in June. That office is led by partner Daniel Scime.

"We've really invested in getting the best talent," said Johnson. "That has helped lead to tremendous results, and that has, of course, led to an increase in the amount of work and better and bigger clients."

The firm serves clients across a range of industries in Texas.

A win that it highlighted came last September when it secured the dismissal of a suit alleging that Hamilton Sundstrand Space Systems International Inc. — known as Collins Aerospace — breached a teaming agreement related to a major contract NASA awarded for the design and development of a next-generation spacesuit.

In another highlighted case, the city of Houston tapped Hicks Johnson to represent it in ongoing litigation with a contractor hired to complete a massive water treatment plant expansion aimed at



adding several hundred-million gallons of daily capacity to the drinking water system, and at reducing groundwater pumping tied to ground subsidence and flooding problems.

The contractor, Houston Waterworks Team, a joint venture between Jacobs Engineering and CDM Smith, filed claims against the city over payment disputes and the terms of a design-build agreement for the project. Houston later responded with its own counterclaims.

When the contractor threatened to stop work, Hicks Johnson helped the city secure a temporary injunction requiring construction to continue while the litigation plays out, according to Johnson, lead attorney on the case.

In April, a Texas state court judge granted summary judgment motions on several major claims in the case. As one of the biggest active construction cases in the U.S., the litigation stands to impact millions of people living in the country's fourth-largest city, according to Johnson. "We look forward to trying the case, most likely in 2026," he said.

That's not the only trial Hicks Johnson is gearing up for.

The firm is representing Trailstone Energy Marketing LLC in a breach of contract suit against ConocoPhillips Co. set for trial this year. Trailstone brought the suit after the oil and gas giant declared force majeure in Winter Storm Uri, claiming that the powerful February 2021 storm prevented it from fulfilling a natural-gas delivery commitment.

Also anticipated to start this year are the first bellwether trials for litigation brought by dozens of Texas vineyards against Bayer and BASF.

The vineyards, seeking hundreds of millions of dollars in damages, allege the companies' negligent and defective design and promotion of dicamba-resistant cottonseed systems has caused widespread problems with off-site herbicide drift that has decimated their crops.

The vineyards sued the companies in 2021 in a Texas state court. The litigation was removed to a Missouri federal court, but sent back to Texas, with the Texas Multi-District Litigation Panel later ordering the cases to be handled as an MDL.

Among the attorneys working on the case with Hicks is partner Adam Dinnell, a former U.S. Department of Justice trial attorney who served as senior trial counsel for the DOJ's Environmental Tort Litigation Section.

Hicks said the litigation shows the firm's breadth in a state that's well known for its energy, construction, and aerospace and defense industries, but that is also the country's fifth-biggest grape producer.

"It really illustrates the skill set and capacity to attack any kind of dispute across any industry," Hicks said. "The only real common thread is the significance and the level of complexity."

According to Hicks and Johnson, the level of talent the firm has been able to attract and retain is a good proxy for its success. "Over the past year to two years, we've added circuit clerks for the Fifth Circuit, Ninth Circuit and Tenth Circuit courts of appeals," Hicks said of some recent hires.

Among the attorneys who have joined Hicks Johnson this year is Andrew Gould, the founder and former

head of the appellate practice at Arnold & Itkin LLP who also previously worked for the U.S. attorney's office for the Southern District of Texas.

According to Hicks, the firm's growing, dynamic practice has helped it to attract top talent — as has its eagerness to give attorneys opportunities, whether that comes in the form of courtroom experience or the chance to shape their own careers or the trajectory of Hicks Johnson.

"Those things have caused a number of very talented people to self-select in and choose to join us," Hicks said.

Johnson agreed. "The talent we're attracting is second to none," he said. "I think our best years are certainly in front of us."

--Editing by Melissa Treolo.