

Rising Star: BakerHostetler's Sean Killeen

By **Allison Grande**

Law360 (August 19, 2026, 4:00 PM EDT) -- BakerHostetler partner Sean Killeen helped retailer Janie & Jack avoid more than 2,400 individual arbitration demands over its alleged website tracking activity and aided another law firm in beating a proposed class action over a criminal cyberattack, earning him a place among the cybersecurity and privacy attorneys under age 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

His biggest cases:

As part of the digital assets and data management group at BakerHostetler, Killeen has handled a wide range of complex data privacy and cybersecurity claims, including a significant number of mass arbitration disputes.

One of the biggest and most interesting of these matters arose from individual arbitration claims lodged by 2,408 consumers who accused national children's clothing retailer Janie & Jack LLC of violating laws such as the California Invasion of Privacy Act and the federal Wiretap Act by using tracking software to intercept information about how consumers interacted with its website.

"The case brought together several issues that are increasingly important for companies with consumer-facing websites: emerging privacy theories, online tracking technologies, arbitration agreements, and the use of mass arbitration to create settlement leverage," Killeen told Law360.

Rather than allowing the demands to "proceed in a way that would create pressure disconnected from the merits," Killeen and his team "confronted the campaign directly" by filing an affirmative federal court action in February 2025 seeking a declaratory judgment that the consumers pressing the individual arbitration claims hadn't assented to Janie & Jack's online terms and therefore

2026



Sean Killeen
BakerHostetler

Age: 37

Home base: San Francisco

Position: Partner

Law school: University of Michigan Law School

First job after law school: Associate at Clark Hill

hadn't formed enforceable arbitration agreements with the retailer.

The move resulted in counsel for the consumers informing the California federal court in May 2025 that the parties had "reached an agreement" that the individual claimants "will not pursue arbitration but will instead litigate their claims through a class complaint," a resolution that Killeen noted helped the retailer "avoid being forced into thousands of individual proceedings and moved the dispute into a more orderly posture."

"For me, the matter was compelling because it required not just defending against a privacy claim, but using litigation strategy to change the forum, leverage, and economics of the dispute," said Killeen, who served as co-lead counsel for the retailer in the matter.

Also in 2025, Killeen and his colleagues secured a favorable outcome in another notable action accusing the law firm Hill Farrer & Burrill LLP of failing to stop a cyberattack carried out by hackers.

The plaintiff leading the proposed class action, who had previously been adverse to Hill Farrer's client in a separate wrongful termination suit, had argued that the law firm owed her a duty to prevent the intrusion because it possessed her personal information in connection with the prior employment dispute.

But in tossing the proposed class action in early 2025, a Los Angeles judge concluded that there was no "special relationship" that would support the law firm having a duty of care to protect her personal information from a criminal hack.

"The ruling was important because it rejected an effort to impose broad data-security liability on law firms based on information held in connection with representing a client, and it provided a useful duty analysis for firms facing data-breach claims tied to adversary information," said Killeen, who was lead counsel for Hill Farrer in that dispute.

What motivates him:

Killeen says he derives inspiration from several sources, most notably his family, colleagues and the challenging nature of his work.

When it comes to his family, "my mother's hard work and perseverance shaped the way I approach my career, and my wife and children give me the perspective, support, and purpose to keep improving," Killeen said.

He also credits the "energizing" nature of his work and how his colleagues and clients continue to trust him "with their hardest problems" for keeping him motivated.

"Those moments may not always be public or headline-grabbing, but they matter because they reflect the confidence people place in your judgment when the stakes are high," Killeen said. "I take pride in being the person clients call when the issue is complicated, urgent, and requires both legal analysis and practical advice."

Why he's a cybersecurity and privacy attorney:

Killeen, who's been working on complex litigation matters since graduating from law school in 2015, said that he was drawn to the practice of helping clients navigate unsettled privacy law and major

cybersecurity incidents because of the challenges presented by the intersection of emerging technologies and laws that were drafted long before these advancements were made.

"Companies are constantly adopting new tools and technologies while courts and regulators are applying older statutes and doctrines to facts those laws may not have contemplated," said Killeen, who joined BakerHostetler in 2024 and was elevated to partner in January. "That tension makes the work intellectually interesting and practically important."

Handling these disputes also "requires understanding the technology, the legal risk, and the business reality, then helping clients make sound decisions in areas where the rules are still developing," Killeen added.

On the future of the industry:

As companies continue to face more complex regulatory obligations, increasingly sophisticated cyber threats and continued litigation over how consumers' personal data is collected, shared, secured and monetized, cybersecurity and data privacy will end up becoming "even more central" to their business strategy in the coming years, Killeen predicted.

"At the same time, artificial intelligence, biometric data, connected devices, and cross-border data transfers will create new legal and operational challenges," he added. "The lawyers who succeed in this space will be those who can combine legal judgment with technical fluency and practical business advice."

--As told to Allison Grande. Editing by Alyssa Miller.

Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2026 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,100 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2026, to be eligible for this year's award.