

## Rising Star: WilmerHale's Zachary Goldman

By Sam Reisman

*Law360 (June 30, 2022, 2:02 PM EDT)* -- WilmerHale partner Zachary Goldman has helped cryptocurrency companies secure regulatory approval to issue new types of assets and guided clients on how to navigate the shifting world of financial technology, earning him a spot as one of the fintech attorneys under 40 honored by Law360 as Rising Stars.

### **WHY HE'S A FINTECH ATTORNEY:**

Goldman credits his first job out of law school at the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Terrorist Financing and Financial Crime with piquing his interest in illicit finance issues and "setting the tone" for the rest of his career.

"I really came to understand the power of following the money and developed some real expertise in the regulatory framework around anti-money laundering and sanctions issues," he said.

After leaving the public sector, Goldman spent nearly six years teaching at his alma mater New York University School of Law before joining WilmerHale about 4½ years ago.

"It was really when I was at NYU that I became interested as an academic in the intersection of illicit finance and technology," he said. "When I transitioned to private practice, I was unsure of how I would incorporate that intellectual interest of mine ... into a private legal career."

Goldman move into private practice coincided with an explosion of legal matters at the intersection of emerging technologies and finance — in particular the rise of crypto.

"That whole constellation of issues has really been sort of an intellectual passion of mine for the last 13 years, and has been really the guiding light of my practice at Wilmer," he said.



**Zachary Goldman**  
WilmerHale

**Age:** 39  
**Home base:** New York  
**Position:** Partner  
**Law school:** New York University School of Law  
**First job after law school:** Adviser at the U.S. Department of the Treasury

#### ***THE WORK HE'S PROUDEST OF:***

Goldman points to his work helping obtain a limited purpose trust company charter from New York state regulators for client GMO Internet Inc., allowing it to issue a new stablecoin — or a cryptocurrency token pegged to another asset — as something he is "very proud of."

"I'm working with dozens of clients at any given time," he said, "and they're working on incredibly interesting cutting-edge applications of technology in the financial services space. And so working with them all is like a real pleasure and honor."

But Goldman said "a matter doesn't need to be 'big' ... to pose novel, challenging, interesting, impactful questions. I think that's one of the things I find most interesting about the practice."

Small startup companies with bold ideas have brought in some of the thorniest legal issues, he said.

"A lot of the questions we get are really important issues of first impression, likely to have broader systemic impacts," Goldman said. "And so you really feel like you have an opportunity to sort of help shape and define an approach."

#### ***WHERE HE SEES FINTECH GOING:***

The evolution of cryptoassets has pushed regulators and other policymakers to rapidly develop new ways of thinking about and governing them, which Goldman says keeps him and his clients on their toes.

"In the crypto space, there's a huge debate and very active discussions about the appropriate regulatory framework for various types of crypto-related activities and digital assets generally," he said. "And that is active in the White House, it's active in the agencies, it's active in Congress. It's something that every company focused on digital assets grapples with day in and day out."

Goldman says the greater financial technology world outside of crypto keeps him busy too, with multiple companies — usually in the tech sector — increasingly offering customers some sort of financial product or service.

"Helping those companies navigate the transition, either from a technology company into a regulated financial services provider or helping them navigate a partnership with a regulated financial services provider — that is a big component of my practice," he said.

"And then for existing financial services companies, we see them looking to do novel things and to form novel partnerships, and to offer their traditional products and services in new ways, which is deeply interesting to have those different types of challenges," Goldman added.

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

"We have clients that have interesting challenges, for which I think they can really use our assistance," Goldman said. "I get to feel like every day I'm adding value, and really helping them solve some of their most difficult regulatory challenges."

But he also is quick to note that fintech has a way of luring in younger practitioners, and is mindful of his role as a mentor in steering the next generation of professionals.

"I happen to be in a field that is interesting and attractive to young lawyers," Goldman said. "And so it's a lot of fun for me to get to see the spark in their eyes as we work through problems together, and for

them to discover a passion for this set of issues, and to help mentor and develop them in their careers as they grow and mature and develop as lawyers."

He continues teaching at NYU as an adjunct professor in addition to practicing law, and he says the work in both worlds complement and inform each other.

"I think the things that I see in my legal practice — the types of innovative companies, the types of regulatory problems and challenges — inform how I teach about these issues," Goldman said.

— *As told to Sam Reisman*

*Law360's Rising Stars are attorneys under 40 whose legal accomplishments belie their age. A team of Law360 editors selected the 2022 Rising Stars winners after reviewing more than 1,350 submissions. Attorneys had to be under 40 as of April 30, 2022, to be eligible for this year's award. This interview has been edited and condensed.*