



Clients:	Hoover, bObsweep and Shenzhen Silver Star Intelligent Technology Co.
Industry:	Consumer electronics
Area of Law:	Intellectual property (patent infringement)
Venue:	International Trade Commission
Result:	All potentially damaging infringement claims defeated

Robotic Vacuums Clear ITC Section 337 Challenge

When a market-leading maker of robotic vacuum cleaners attempted to sweep aside competition by accusing its rivals of patent infringement, Pillsbury's IP Litigation team helped three companies defuse the threat to their product lines in the U.S. market.

Roomba maker iRobot Corp., an early entrant and central player in the robotic vacuum market, sought to tilt the competitive landscape further in its favor by accusing Hoover, bObsweep and Shenzhen Silver Star Intelligent Technology Co., along with six other companies, of infringing six patents. By the time the matter reached trial, only Pillsbury's clients and one other company remained (the others having settled).

The administrative law judge determined that two of iRobot's fundamental patents were invalid and that iRobot had failed to prove infringement on a third. (A fourth patent claim had been dismissed on summary determination months earlier.)

When iRobot petitioned for the International Trade Commission (ITC) to review the administrative law judge's nearly 400-page opinion in July 2018, the other remaining company settled, leaving just Pillsbury's clients. The ITC decided that Pillsbury had proven

that iRobot's fundamental patents were invalid. But, it concluded, one other patent had been infringed. By this time, Hoover, bObsweep and Silver Star had discontinued the prohibited products, and newer models, which were found not to infringe, had taken their places.

Estimated as a \$3.36 billion industry in 2016, the robotic vacuum market is projected to almost double by 2022, and the stakes are high for those competing in the manufacture and sale of these products. Thanks to the ITC ruling, our clients can continue to advance their positions in the industry in the United States.