

TEXAS LAWYER

Class Action Litigator Tapped to Lead Shook, Hardy & Bacon's Houston Office

By Brenda Sapino Jeffreys

January 28, 2025

What You Need to Know

- Shook, Hardy & Bacon selects class action litigation partner Stephanie McGraw as office managing partner in Houston.
- McGraw previously held several leadership roles at the firm.
- Her goals for her stint as managing partner in Houston including growing the office and associate training.

Shook, Hardy & Bacon has elevated class action litigation partner Stephanie McGraw to serve as managing partner of the Houston office, which is marking 30 years in the Texas market.

McGraw, who joined the firm in 2013 as a lateral associate, has held other leadership roles, serving on the firm's search and associate committees, and was active in mentoring and leadership in the firm's class action appellate group.

She succeeds litigator John Lewis Jr. as office managing partner. He served three years in the role.



Courtesy photo

Stephanie S. McGraw, managing partner with Shook, Hardy & Bacon.

Shook chair Madeleine McDonough wrote in a press release that McGraw brings a “dynamic presence” to the role as office managing partner.

“She’s a natural motivator who will carry out the firm’s priorities of growth and obtaining successful results for our clients in Houston and nationally,” McDonough wrote.

The Houston office, which opened in 1995, is the second-oldest among Shook offices

and has one of the largest lawyer head counts, with 40 lawyers. The firm was founded in Kansas City, Missouri.

When Lewis led the office, McGraw said, she was the office's marketing partner, and considering her other leadership experience at the firm, it seemed like a "natural progression" to take on the responsibility of leading the office.

"I was very excited to be offered the role. I do recognize it is a very big job. I've had the best mentors," she said.

The office is known for products liability and intellectual property litigation, but McGraw said her goals include continuing to grow the commercial litigation practice in Houston, and also corporate services. In 2023, the firm hired Culhane Meadows partner James Mayor in Houston to launch the corporate practice in the office. Mayor had been corporate and M&A practice chair at his former firm, now Culhane Haughian & Walsh and known as CM Law.

She also wants to focus on associate development and professional development.

"We have fantastic and really bright associates, but just like [with] any associate, there's a lot of learning to do," she said.

Shook is always looking to recruit, and the office's docket of business litigation has grown over the last three years just by having

a few more attorneys in the office to do that type of work, she said.

McGraw also supports the office's pro bono efforts, which were boosted in 2023 when the firm hired Michael Harrison, a former civil rights division prosecutor in the Harris County District Attorney's Office to lead an expansion of the firm's civil rights and racial justice pro bono efforts, funded with fees from an \$8.5 million prisoner's rights lawsuit the firm won in St. Louis in 2022.

Lawyers in the office—and across the firm—are busy, McGraw said.

"Class action is very busy, the same with traditional product liability litigation, and mass tort work is very busy. The plaintiffs bar keep us hopping," she said.

Many of the lawyers in the office have national practices, which helps to provide a steady workload, she said.

McGraw, who took over the management role on Jan. 1, expects to serve as office managing partner for three or four years. That amount of time allows the managing partner time to meet some goals and to have a "positive impact" on the office, she said.

"Sometimes what gets lost is that this is truly a service position. I'm here to help the office, help my partners, make sure the associates are succeeding, the office staffers are succeeding," she said.