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Austin attorney to head major Texas law firm

Austin Business Journal - October 13, 2006 by [Jonathan Selden](#) ABJ Staff

[Locke Liddell & Sapp LLP](#) will christen longtime Austin litigation partner Jerry Clements as its newest firmwide managing partner in January.

It will be the second time the firm's top boss is a woman -- the first was when ill-fated U.S. Supreme Court nominee Harriet Miers became co-managing partner of the firm in 1999.

But that's not what Clements is trumping.

"I'll be glad when it's no longer newsworthy when the managing partner of a major law firm is a woman," she says.

More noteworthy, she says, is the fact that it will be the first time the firm's managing partner is based in Austin.

Usually, a big firm's managing partner works out of its principal office -- where it was founded. For big Texas firms, that means Dallas or Houston, Clements says. Satellite offices each have their own managing partners who report back to the firmwide one.

But Clements says technology clients and Southwest Airlines allow her to run the nearly 400-lawyer firm remotely.

"I spend a lot of time on both," she says.

While it's unusual for a satellite office like Austin to house the firm's head, its not unusual for a lawyer with Clements' stature to be in the top spot.

Clements has led the firm's litigation section since 2002 and served as its primary contact point when the phones started ringing off the hook with reporters trying to study Harriet Miers' legal history last October. She's also sat on Locke Liddell's management committee since 1998.

She says her duties as managing partner will entail challenges like attracting top legal work and talent in a competitive market.

"That's the kind of work that makes law firms profitable," she says.

Locke Liddell is one of Texas' largest firms with almost 400 lawyers. Its principal offices are in Houston and Dallas. It ranked as Austin's 12th largest firm -- with 41 lawyers -- in a list published by the Austin Business Journal in February.

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