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Catching Up with Hope Shimabuku

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After a decade of serving her country as the first regional director of the Southwest Office for the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, Hope Shimabuku jumped at the opportunity to again create something new.

This time she is tasked with building out the Dallas office of the global intellectual property powerhouse Finnegan, Henderson, Farabow, Garrett & Dunner, which she joined at the beginning of this month along with former McKool Smith partner Christian Hurt.

Nearly one-third of Finnegan's active litigation matters are in Texas, Shimabuku said, and establishing a physical presence in Dallas allows the firm to be closer to the clients and courts that are central to their practice. And the firm would've been hard-pressed to find someone better to be boots on the ground – at the USPTO, Shimabuku managed thousands of events annually for more than 100,000 stakeholders, including inventors, entrepreneurs, researchers, rocket scientists and business owners.

"I think that working at the USPTO is something most people do not immediately associate with service to their country, but at the end of the day, it is," Shimabuku told The Texas Lawbook in an expanded Q&A on her time at the USPTO and her move to Finnegan. "I was proud to work alongside dedicated USPTO employees and support the public in advancing the innovation ecosystem."

The Texas Lawbook: What did you find



Photo of Hope Shimabuku

compelling about the opportunity to join Finnegan? What prior experiences with the firm have you had?

Hope Shimabuku: Finnegan's reputation as a global leader in intellectual property law was a major draw for me. After more than a decade at the regional office of the USPTO in Dallas, I've had a front-row seat to the growth of the state's innovation economy and the evolving IP challenges companies face. Joining Finnegan allows me to return to private practice with unmatched depth and breadth in IP, while helping build the Dallas office and serving clients at the highest level. I'm excited to contribute to the firm's tradition of excellence and to help clients navigate their most important and complex intellectual property matters.

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The Lawbook: How would you describe your experience at the USPTO?

Shimabuku: My experience at the USPTO was extraordinary. The people, both within the agency and among the stakeholders we served, the technology, and the regional innovation ecosystem were remarkable. The USPTO provided a forum for me to serve my country while working with some of the most talented, creative, and inventive people in the world. As the first Regional Director for the Southwest Office, formerly known as the Texas Regional Office, located in Dallas, my team and I were able to create something brand new and build a network supporting inventors, entrepreneurs, researchers, teachers, and businesses so that their own ideas and creations could come to bear. Each day, I watched the USPTO's patent examiners, trademark examining attorneys, patent and trademark judges, IP Attaches, policy experts, legal and outreach teams lend their expertise, provide resources, and resolve intellectual property issues so that the broader innovation ecosystem could grow stronger one step at a time. From K-12 students and teachers to university professors to AI technologists to rocket scientists to the legal practitioners that represented them, each engagement was meaningful, especially knowing that the USPTO was part of their journey.

The Lawbook: What are one or two things you are most proud of from your time there?

Shimabuku: I think that working at the USPTO is something most people do not immediately associate with service to their country, but at the end of the day, it is. I was proud to work alongside dedicated USPTO employees and support the public in advancing the innovation ecosystem.

The Lawbook: How has the experience changed you as a lawyer?



Shimabuku at her swearing in as USPTO Regional Director

Shimabuku: Working at the USPTO has broadened my perspective on how innovation affects each of us every day. The depth and breadth of what the agency does to support innovators on a worldwide scale is impressive. Technology touches everyone, from the moment we wake up to the alarms on our smartphones, to the sound of a car engine, to the concrete roads supporting our transportation infrastructure, to the elevators we use to get to the office. Each moment started with a spark of ingenuity from someone and allowed us to live bigger and better lives. There are teams of people within and outside of the USPTO who support that ingenuity. During my time there, understanding who those players are and how they interact to move progress forward gave me a better perspective on how I, as a lawyer, can better serve them and their needs.

The Lawbook: From your unique vantage point, how has the Texas business environment evolved over the last 10 years?

Shimabuku: The Texas business landscape has expanded at an extraordinary, and frankly much faster, pace than I could have imagined possible over the last decade. That period has brought growth in traditional Texas technology sectors, including energy,

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Shimabuku at Finnegan office

semiconductors, telecommunications, information technology, cybersecurity, financial services, and space and aerospace technologies. Texas also has seen major companies in the automotive, healthcare, enterprise software, and advanced technology sectors relocate or expand their headquarters here. With the launch and advancement of new organizations, such as a national securities exchange and the military technology community, along with increased investment in university research, the state's business environment appears poised for continued expansion. I am very excited to be at Finnegan to help support that momentum.

The Lawbook: Finnegan hasn't opened a U.S. office in more than two decades, right? Why Dallas and why now?

Shimabuku: Dallas is a natural extension of a practice that has long served clients across Texas. Finnegan has represented clients here for years. As more of our clients' IP matters are taking place in the state, and with Texas now leading the nation in patent litigation activity, establishing a physical presence in Dallas allows us to be closer to the clients and courts that are central to our practice. With nearly one-third of our active litigations already in Texas, it reinforces our commitment to supporting clients

in a market that continues to grow in importance.

The Lawbook: What is the vision for the office? More focus on serving the firm's current work here/further strengthen those relationships? Or is there an aggressive growth/expansion vision?

Shimabuku: My priorities as the office managing partner are to build a founding team with complementary litigation, prosecution, and counseling strengths as well as develop a homegrown Texas talent pipeline. I want to integrate Dallas fully into Finnegan's one-firm model and deliver measurable growth for Texas-based clients.

The Lawbook: More litigation bent or mix of patent prosecution/other?

Shimabuku: Finnegan is a full-service intellectual property legal services provider, and the Texas office will be no different. The one-firm model allows attorneys across domestic and international offices to provide the full spectrum of IP services, including counseling, litigation, transactional work, prosecution, and adjacent commercial matters.

I will be building a practice that supports the full range of IP services Finnegan provides, drawing on my 20-plus years of experience and training in private practice, business, and government. My practice will focus primarily on counseling, enterprise risk, litigation strategy, technology transactions, mergers and acquisitions, and IP portfolio management.

The Lawbook: What do you hope the office will look like in the next five years? What does success look like?

Shimabuku: Over the next five years, I hope the office becomes a destination for clients, top legal talent, and professionals looking to work on the most sophisticated IP matters in the country. Success means continuing to build on Finnegan's global reputation for excellence while growing

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the Dallas office into a thriving hub that is deeply connected to the Texas market and fully integrated with the firm's broader platform. Most importantly, it means helping clients navigate their most complex and critical IP challenges and ensuring they continue to see Finnegan as a trusted partner in achieving their business objectives.

The Lawbook: What are the most significant IP-related challenges facing companies today?

Shimabuku: As technology companies continue to expand their presence in Texas, particularly in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, the demand for sophisticated intellectual property counsel remains strong. Many are driving significant advances and facing increasingly complex IP challenges, creating a continued need for experienced advisors who can help protect and enforce their rights. Finnegan's presence in Dallas reflects our commitment to serving clients where their business and legal needs are growing most rapidly.