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News

Shook Hardy Hires Former Coca-Cola Litigation Chief in Houston

BY BRENDA SAPINO JEFFREYS

A former chief litigation counsel for Coca-Cola Co., who left the company for an Atlanta litigation boutique in 2016, has returned to his hometown of Houston, where he is joining Shook, Hardy & Bacon as a business litigation partner.

John Lewis Jr., who also served as Coca-Cola's global chief diversity officer during his time in-house, made the move to Shook Hardy on Monday. He came from Atlanta's Lawrence & Bundy, where he was a partner. He joined that firm in 2016 when he left Coca-Cola.

Lewis said he was drawn to Shook Hardy by its litigation practice. "They are great trial lawyers," he said. The firm has 30 lawyers in Houston.

Lewis worked at Coca-Cola from 2002 to 2016 and had various roles, including chief litigation counsel, senior managing compliance and global anti-bribery counsel, and global chief diversity officer.

He first got to know his new firm early in his career, he said, while doing bankruptcy and creditors' rights work in Kansas City,

Missouri, where Shook Hardy is headquartered.

During his time at Coca-Cola, he used Shook Hardy as outside counsel and got to know the firm better. So in 2018, when Lewis decided he wanted to join a larger firm with a strong litigation practice, he began talking with Shook Hardy, he said.

At Lawrence & Bundy, Lewis worked on bankruptcy litigation, labor and employment work for executives, internal investigations and compliance work, class actions and whistleblower litigation. He declined to identify his clients. He said his background has provided him with both trial experience and familiarity with the C-suite.

Lewis said his move to Shook Hardy gives him the opportunity to return to his hometown of Houston, where he has family. Still, he said, he intends to remain active in Atlanta, where he is an advisory board member of the National Commerce Corp., the Anti-Defamation League (Southeast region), and a trustee for the Atlanta Botanical Garden.

Mike Cargnel, a partner in Kansas City who co-chairs Shook Hardy's



business litigation practice, wrote in a statement that Lewis' background fits well with the firm's team of commercial litigators handling contentious lawsuits.

"John is a great lawyer and long-time friend," Allegra Lawrence-Hardy of Lawrence & Bundy said in an email. "We wish him the very best in his new endeavors as he returns home to Houston, and we look forward to opportunities to continue to work together in the future."

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