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METRO ATLANTA

'Proud Atlantan' to lead one of the city's top law firms

Wab Kadaba becomes chair of Kilpatrick Townsend on July 1

By ROSIE MANINS

He helped Adidas successfully defend patent infringement claims from Nike and led one of the largest intellectual property practices in the country for more than a decade. Now Atlanta native Wab Kadaba has been chosen to head one of the city's oldest and largest law firms.

Kadaba, 53, will take over as chair of Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton on July 1. He replaces longtime chair Henry Walker, who is returning to full-time litigation.

The firm announced Kadaba's new role in March, when Walker described his successor as "incredibly smart, strategic, and good with people." Walker said Kadaba, who has been with the firm since 2000, exemplifies its core values.

Kadaba said his ascension to the top of Kilpatrick, established in Atlanta 150 years ago, is exciting. That he's stayed in his home city while assisting clients around the country and overseas is a point of personal pride.

"I'm really proud to be an Atlantan," he told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. "I certainly am excited about all the challenges, whether they are to continue to really capture the momentum we have in Atlanta, but also across the country."

Kilpatrick has more than 20 offices globally, of which Atlanta is the largest. The firm has more than 600 attorneys, including over 300 in its intellectual property department that Kadaba



Atlanta native Wab Kadaba has been chosen to lead Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, one of the largest and oldest law firms in the city. He becomes chair of the global firm on July 1.

PHOTO BY BEN GRAY / BEN@BENGRAY.COM

has chaired for about 11 years. He also served as the managing partner of the firm's Atlanta office.

Kadaba credits much of his success to his parents' passion for education. His father, Dr. Prasanna Kadaba, came to Atlanta to join the faculty at Georgia Tech, where he was a mechanical engineering professor for more than 30 years. His mother, Usha Kadaba, was an elementary school teacher.

After attending the Walker and West-

minster private schools, Kadaba followed his father's advice and completed a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering at Georgia Tech then a master's degree in the same field. It was with some trepidation that he decided to pursue a law degree.

"We don't have anybody on either side of our family that had even considered going into the field of law, so it was a big change," he said. "I like to think it was a moment where my advocacy skills



Wab Kadaba says his vision for Kilpatrick Townsend involves staying at the forefront of fast-developing technology. PHOTO BY BEN GRAY / BEN@BENGRAY.COM

shined through with my father, who was a tough audience at the moment, but he was extremely supportive. My mother was super encouraging about this pivot into law.”

After graduating from the University of North Carolina School of Law in 1997, Kadaba started working for the Atlanta law firm Jones & Askew, which specialized in intellectual property. The firm was acquired by Kilpatrick in 2000.

Kadaba said his engineering expertise made intellectual property a natural choice for his legal career. He said the opportunity to combine his love of technology with law was “very appealing.”

Most of Kadaba’s work involves litigation, both on the plaintiff and defense side. It spans electronics, data transmission, chemical compounds and mechanical technologies. His work for Adidas has run the gamut from shoe technology to fitness apps.

“It’s pretty broad, and that’s what keeps it extremely interesting for me,” he said of his practice. “I really enjoy strategy, and I’ve had some really good fortune of working on corporate strategic initiatives that have at its core some IP issue.”

As firm chair, Kadaba’s initial goal is to get a deeper understanding of the firm’s offices and practices in order to

seize opportunities and refine the firm’s strategy. He said staying at the forefront of fast-developing technology is part of his vision for the firm.

“I think we have always been known to represent the leading brands and technology companies, not only regionally, but in the world,” he said. “We’re going to continue to push forward in that regard and be a leader in those areas.”

Kadaba said he will continue to guide some clients, though the new role will take up most of his time. He said he didn’t seek to be the firm’s chair, but was honored to be nominated and is energized by the ability to help more of his colleagues succeed.

Leadership “is a service, and if you don’t look at it that way then it’s going to be tough to be successful,” he said.

Outside the firm, Kadaba has developed a keen interest in the arts as part of his drive to see Atlanta become “as vibrant as it can be.” He serves on the governing boards for the Woodruff Arts Center and the Fernbank Museum of Natural History.

Kadaba and his wife, a first-grade teacher, have two sons. The youngest is in the 11th grade and the eldest is studying industrial and systems engineering at Georgia Tech.

“It’s a really nice family legacy for us to have three generations with a really strong connection to Georgia Tech,” he said.

Kadaba said his success comes down to “a confluence of a lot of good fortune and some great events and some things aligning for me,” in addition to a peer network of “really high achievers” and “just kind of staying on the path.”