Schiff Hardin Makes Way for First Female Managing Partner

Marci Eisenstein has been elected managing partner of Schiff Hardin, making her the first female to serve in that role in the Chicago-based firm’s 150-year history.

“I am really honored to have that position,” Eisenstein tells The Am Law Daily.

Her new role is effective immediately, and she succeeds Ronald Safer, who served as the firm’s managing partner for a decade, according to Eisenstein. Safer will continue on as a member of Schiff Hardin’s executive committee while also co-leading the firm’s white-collar crime and corporate compliance group.

Eisenstein, who joined Schiff Hardin in 1979, has also served as a member of the executive committee for over 10 years. She says she expects to remain the co-leader of the firm’s insurance and class action groups, while acknowledging that she “will be spending considerably more time on day-to-day management.”

Eisenstein, 60, has spent years representing clients—many of which are insurers—in class actions nationwide. She was a lead trial lawyer for State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co. in its defense against a 48-state class action seeking damages following changes the insurer made to auto claims. A long-awaited victory for Eisenstein arrived in August 2005, when the Illinois Supreme Court reversed a 1999 award to policyholders topping $1 billion and dismissed the case with prejudice. The reversal was a big blow to San Francisco-based plaintiffs firm Lieff, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein at the time, The Am Law Daily reported.

As the new managing partner, Eisenstein says she will continue emphasizing Schiff Hardin’s core values, including diversity, transparency and collegiality, along with firm growth.

Schiff Hardin has been on an expansion path recently, completing mergers with Washington, D.C.-based Bruder, Gentile & Marcoux in January 2013 and New York-based Mazur Carp & Rubin in July of the same year. The Bruder Gentile merger marked a move by Schiff Hardin to double the depth of its energy practice, as The Am Law Daily previously reported.

Though Eisenstein is Schiff Hardin’s first female managing partner, the firm has been active in promoting women. In December 2014, The American Lawyer noted that at least two-thirds of Schiff Hardin’s new partner class was composed of women for the third year running. That compared to the average among Am Law 200 firms of 32.7 percent.