

Locke Liddell sets up Austin appellate group

BY COLIN POPE

AUSTIN BUSINESS JOURNAL STAFF

Houston-based law firm Locke Liddell & Sapp LLP has recruited three prominent lawyers to anchor a new appellate practice in Austin.

Joining the firm this month are wedded duo Mike and Molly Hatchell from the Hatchell PC law firm in Tyler. Also joining is Charles "Skip" Watson. Watson is leaving Amarillo law firm Mullin Hoard & Brown LLP, where his practice focuses on litigation and appellate work.

Mike Hatchell, whose practice focuses on civil appeals from state and federal courts in Texas, will head Locke Liddell's new appellate section.

An appellate group in Locke Liddell's Austin office was long overdue, says Brad Hawley, local managing partner.

"It was sort of unusual, with Austin being a center for appellate work, that we never fully developed a formal section here," Hawley says. "We needed to have a center for our appellate work."

The three lawyers join former Texas Supreme Court Justice Raul Gonzalez, who is of counsel at Locke Liddell. Hawley says a handful of the firm's litigation partners in Austin have dabbled in appellate work.

In Austin, Locke Liddell has 38 lawyers and employs 72 people, making it the 14th largest firm in the city. Firmwide, Locke Liddell has 372 lawyers in offices in Austin, Dallas, Houston and New Orleans.

In the most recent issue of *Texas Lawyer's Go-To Guide*, Mike Hatchell, a University of Texas graduate, was named one of the top five appellate lawyers in Texas. In 2003, he was named by *Texas Monthly* as one of 100 "Texas Super Lawyers." He has been the lead counsel in more than 125 appeals.

"Mike is a great lawyer with a lot of respect," says former Texas Supreme Court Justice Craig Enoch, chairman of Winstead Secrest & Minick PC's appellate practice group. "In fact, I called Mike when I heard he was interested in moving to Austin to invite him over to Winstead, but he had already done his deal" with Locke Liddell.

Molly Hatchell, whose East Texas firm last year carried an active docket of more than 30 appeals throughout Texas, is the creator of *The Hatchell Report*, a public access database service for members of the bar that identifies all pending cases in front of the Texas Supreme Court.

Watson, former chairman of the State Bar of Texas' appellate section, has focused his civil appellate and civil trial practice on West Texas.



Mike Hatchell

Email COLIN POPE at
(cpepe@bizjournals.com).