

Lisa Madigan on Kirkland & Ellis and second acts

Does she plan to return to politics?

BY CLAIRE BUSHEY

Former Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan has joined the country's largest law firm, Chicago-based Kirkland & Ellis. She talks with Crain's about her new firm and if she'll ever return to politics.

Why Kirkland & Ellis?

Kirkland is a top law firm in Chicago, and it handles many of the most complex legal matters in the country. The firm has an outstanding brand for litigation and a very deep bench of talented lawyers. It's also very collaborative place with an enormous amount of energy, so I'm very excited to be part of the team here.

Kirkland's reputation is more as a rich law firm than a political one. Still, it has sent a number of lawyers to the Trump administration, including Attorney General Bill Barr. Did you think about that when deciding where to go, or not so much?

Not so much. The perspective I have on Kirkland is that it is, without a doubt, a top law firm in the country. And if you look at it over the years, what you'll see is that every time there's a change in the federal administration, you have courtroom lawyers that are either going into the administration



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or going on the bench. I don't think that makes it a political firm. I think that demonstrates just how talented and smart the lawyers are at Kirkland.

Will it feel odd to defend clients that you might have brought cases against in the past?

It's going to feel as if I am providing perspective and legal services to a client who needs assistance. And I'm very much looking forward to that, because the hope is that we also work with clients proactively,

to keep them out of trouble in the first place. Reactively when need be.

Will you return to politics, or is this goodbye forever?

It is not my intention.

Never ever?

Look, I'm old enough to know better than to say—'never say never' sort of thing. But again, if I had wanted to continue on in elected office, I would probably still be an elected official. Twenty years is a long time.