

# South Florida BUSINESS JOURNAL

## LITIGATION TRENDS

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### *International disputes driven to mediation*

BY PAUL REINKMANN

Increasing court congestion, costs and complexity of international business disputes continue to drive more legal conflicts to mediation and arbitration. And Miami's increasing role as an international business center means more international business disputes are resolved here.

In 1997, the American Arbitration Association received 708 requests for arbitration. Ten years later, that number grew to 89. Today, Miami ranks 107 among U.S. cities in the number of international arbitrations held.

"Globalization has really prompted more international arbitration," said Jose Astigarraga, of Miami-based Astigarraga Navis.

Astigarraga was a presenter at a recent Miami conference held by the international division of the American Arbitration Association, where he discussed efforts to resolve differences between nations over arbitrator disclosure rules. He also chaired a task force last year for the International Bar Association on arbitration conflict of interest.

The increasing focus for Miami can be good for the local bar association, because big arbitration cases often spin off other litigation.

According to Chambers Global Guide, the 70-attorney Astigarraga Navis is attributed with putting Miami on the map for international arbitration work, and Astigarraga

himself is "at the forefront of the bicultural fourth American and South American practice spheres."

Astigarraga Navis currently represents several foreign governments in multimillion-dollar fraud and asset cases, and its blue-chip global clients include General Electric, Citibank and Goldman Sachs.

#### PROPOSED CHANGES

In domestic arbitration, a committee in the Business Law Section of the Florida Bar is scrutinizing proposed changes to state arbitration laws. The committee decides whether to support, oppose or take no position regarding bills presented in the Legislature.

A local attorney on the committee, Jonathan Looper, speaking on behalf of himself, said he doesn't support the revisions to arbitration statutes because they could undercut the pur-

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