

Press Release

# President Biden Signs Legislation to Rename Florida Federal Courthouse for Hon. Joseph Woodrow Hatchett

July 5, 2022

*Akerman LLP Instrumental in Drive for Judge's Honor*

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Tallahassee

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. on Saturday, June 25, 2022, signed legislation to rename the federal courthouse in Tallahassee, Florida after the late Honorable Joseph Woodrow Hatchett, a former partner at Akerman LLP. The U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate approved the move, which was part of the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act.

“We are gratified that the federal government is honoring Judge Hatchett’s lifelong commitment to justice and public service by naming the courthouse in Tallahassee for him, an honor that could not be more well-deserved,” said Akerman Chairman & CEO Scott Meyers. “Akerman has advocated for the bill’s passage since its inception, and we are overjoyed to see our dear friend and colleague recognized for his outstanding legacy.”

Judge Hatchett attended Florida A& M University and Howard University School of Law, and was admitted to the Florida Bar in November 1959. In 1966, he was appointed assistant United States attorney for the Middle District of Florida, then first assistant United States attorney in 1967. He was appointed a United States magistrate for the Middle

District of Florida in 1971. With this role, Judge Hatchett became the first Black federal judicial officer in the South.

In 1975, Judge Hatchett was appointed to the Florida Supreme Court by Governor Reubin Askew, who called the appointment the most satisfying act he performed as governor. Judge Hatchett became the first Black Justice to serve on Florida's highest court. In 1976, Judge Hatchett became the first Black person to win a Florida statewide contested election in the twentieth century. In 1979, he was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, becoming the first Black person to serve in a federal court in the Deep South. Judge Hatchett served as a federal circuit court judge for 20 years, including a role as Chief Judge of the 11th Circuit from 1996-99.

Judge Hatchett retired from the bench in 1999 and became a partner at Akerman, where he chaired the firm's Appellate Practice and served as a member of the firm's in-house moot court panel, Akerman Bench. His contributions to the firm were extraordinary. Judge Hatchett helped further enhance the firm's strong national reputation, and substantially enriched Akerman's ongoing commitment to equality, inclusion, and diversity.

He was a counselor and confidant to many firm lawyers and served in the highest levels of leadership, as he helped guide the firm to its national prominence.

Over the course of his career, Judge Hatchett received many honors and awards recognizing his outstanding work and commitment. He was inducted into the National Bar Association's Hall of Fame for his dedication to the cause of justice and equality before the Courts of the United States of America, and on behalf of the Black community. The American Bar Association Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession also awarded him with the Spirit of Excellence Award, which is

presented to exceptional lawyers who have made significant education contributions to the promotion of racial and ethnic diversity within the legal profession.

In February 2021, Judge Hatchett was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Florida Supreme Court Historical Society. The society honored Judge Hatchett, “in recognition of his highly distinguished career as a lawyer, his many years of extraordinary contributions to Florida’s Legal System as a highly respected member of the Judiciary, and his lifelong devotion to the improvement of the lives of others.”

### **About Akerman**

Akerman LLP is a top 100 U.S. law firm recognized among the most forward-thinking firms in the industry by *Financial Times*. Its more than 700 lawyers and business professionals collaborate with the world’s most successful enterprises and entrepreneurs to navigate change, seize opportunities, and help drive innovation and growth.