

Press Release

Akerman Launches Data Centers and Digital Infrastructure Practice; Firm Bolsters Real Estate Strength with Additional Services to Growing Data Industry

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Newly Arriving Partners James Grice and Michael McKinley to Lead Industry Group

Top 100 U.S. law firm Akerman LLP today announced the launch of its Data Centers and Digital Infrastructure Practice, a multidisciplinary team that builds on the firm's substantial real estate development, infrastructure, high-tech, and public-private-partnership experience to serve investors, developers, operators, and users in the burgeoning data center and digital infrastructure field.

The Data Centers and Digital Infrastructure Practice opens with the arrival of [James Grice](#), who will serve as its chair, and partner [Michael McKinley](#). They join from an *Am Law 100* firm, where Grice was global leader of its award-winning Data Centers and Digital Infrastructure Team, recently named as "Law Firm of the Year" by The Tech Capital. The lawyers will practice remotely from Kansas City while participating as members of Akerman's Dallas team.

The national data centers team, including long-standing Akerman lawyers, is experienced in the

Related People

James W. Grice
Michael D. McKinley
Eric D. Rapkin

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many facets – technological, operational, and legal – of financing, planning, building, and operating data centers; the real estate-related issues, including permitting, environmental, leasing, co-location, and licensing agreements; and the regulatory, tax, and power purchase and power procurement strategies and agreements of this unique asset class.

Eric Rapkin, chair of Akerman's Real Estate Practice Group, said: "The pandemic accelerated the need for digital platforms and cloud services, driving a surge in data center development that is attracting significant capital globally. This unique asset class presents complex technical, regulatory, and operational challenges that require experienced legal counsel with a deep understanding of the intricate and overlapping elements of this industry. Jim and Michael are renowned authorities in the data center ecosystem, with the targeted experience and knowledge necessary to address all of our clients' evolving needs, and to oversee what we expect will be a growing practice."

Grice focuses his practice on general commercial real estate, primarily representing investors, developers, operators, and users in the data center and digital infrastructure realm. He has distinguished himself in the data center and renewable energy sector, where he utilizes his intimate understanding of project finance and experience with tax incentives to help clients structure deals to their best advantage. Grice regularly works with clients on standalone data center asset purchases and divestitures, including campus acquisitions, acquisition of sites to be redeveloped as data centers, and sale and leasebacks of data center assets. His transactional work is focused on mergers and other acquisitions and dispositions of businesses and related assets, joint ventures and other methods of combining business operations. He also has experience with spin-offs, split-offs, carve-outs, and other methods of restructuring the ownership of business operations.

Grice has significant experience in advising companies on the legal complexities associated with all aspects of data center operations, leasing, subleasing, co-location and related services. This includes experience advising on the related service level maintenance agreements and assisting with data privacy policies and various user agreements. He has advised developers, operators and investors on data center development projects, including land purchase and sale agreements, planning and environmental issues, power purchase arrangements and contracting for the design and construction of data centers. Grice is also a go-to-resource for data center tax issues, development incentives for data centers, and legislative issues associated with taxes on data center construction and operation.

In addition, Grice's practice includes telecommunication and energy solutions experience, having handled some of the most important issues associated with network connectivity, whether related to issues involving local exchange carriers (LECs), competitive local exchange carriers (CLECs), wireless providers, and broadband companies or cable companies. He is also active in assisting clients with renewable and alternative energy project development, financing and operations, including most forms of renewable energy. He routinely represents clients in analyzing project feasibility, structuring project ownership, project financing, and project development.

McKinley focuses his practice on project development and real estate, with an emphasis on data centers. He has experience representing landlords and tenants in a variety of short- and long-term build-to-suit leases, co-location leases, master services agreements and service level agreements, and arrangements focused on hyperscale tenants. He has helped numerous clients on data center divestitures including planning and resulting sale/leaseback transactions.

In addition, McKinley has experience with projects related to wind and solar installations and bio-fuel and bio-diesel facilities, in addition to telecommunications projects involving tower, macro cell antenna, and small cell antenna and solar installations. His experience includes negotiation of fiber agreements and wireless facility agreements; utility matters; power purchase and interconnection agreements; state and local business incentives; tax issues and legislative affairs; and renewable energy development.

The new partners join one of the largest legal real estate teams in the United States with nearly 150 lawyers and development professionals serving owners, developers, and investors throughout all 50 states. Its longstanding record of success on behalf of its clients has been acknowledged by *U.S. News – Best Lawyers*, *Chambers USA*, *The Legal 500*, and *Law360*, among others. The group is known for its “business acumen and prompt attention to matters” (*The Legal 500*) and its “deep bench of attorneys experienced in guiding clients through all aspects of real estate law.” (*Chambers USA*).

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.