

Press Release

Akerman Shortlisted for 2023 *Financial Times* Innovative Lawyers Awards for North America

October 15, 2023

Akerman has been shortlisted by the *Financial Times* as part of the publication's forthcoming "Innovative Lawyers North America" 2023 awards, which will be presented at Gotham Hall in New York City on December 4.

The awards are presented in 12 different categories and highlight law firms and in-house teams that "are using innovative approaches to deliver exceptional value to business and society." In 2021 the firm was chosen by *Financial Times* as one of the nation's most innovative law firms after establishing the Akerman Racial Justice Initiative and Akerman has been shortlisted for the award several times in the past.

This year, Akerman is among 10 firms being considered as "Innovative Lawyers in Access to Justice & Civil Rights." In addition, Bankruptcy Partner Michael Goldberg has been nominated as an "Innovative Practitioner." Both honors are linked to the firm's work on behalf of the victims of the Surfside Condo collapse. On June 24, 2021, Champlain Towers South, a 12-floor condominium building in Surfside, Florida, partially collapsed, causing the deaths of 98 people. It was one of the deadliest building collapses in U.S. history and left survivors and the families of those who died facing years of litigation to secure justice and restitution. Soon after, Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Michael

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A. Hanzman took the unusual step of appointing a Receiver to resolve the many claims. Mr. Goldberg was the attorney chosen for this daunting task, with the judge saying, "[He is] the most preeminent, experienced Receiver in this community, if not throughout the country."

With the judge's express instruction to conclude the litigation in a year's time, Mr. Goldberg developed a streamlined approach to resolving the case; to minimize or eliminate the legal maneuvering that can often slow proceedings; and, most importantly, to create a way for victims and their families to give voice to their losses and goals for the future. In his capacity as Receiver, Mr. Goldberg worked hand in hand with class action counsel and he credits this team effort for the success of the case.

Ultimately, all the litigation was resolved in a very timely manner so that all the victims and their families received just compensation, allowing them to turn away from legal matters toward their own healing. As the *New York Times* wrote in September 2022, "Lawyers braced their clients for years of litigation, but instead, the Surfside checks are expected to be cut by the end of September, just 15 months after part of the Champlain Towers South came crashing down."

Mr. Goldberg was featured in the same article, titled "Lawsuits Over Tragedies Can Drag On. Not in the Florida Condo Collapse." It recognized him for his extraordinary work resolving the case. According to the article, the Surfside case, and the team of people who brought it swiftly and sensitively to a close, could serve as a model for how the justice system treats and compensates victims in the future.

Akerman Chairman and CEO Scott Meyers said, "Our entire firm is honored to be considered once again for the *Financial Times* Innovative Lawyers Award. At Akerman, we are deeply committed to serving our clients, supporting our colleagues, and giving back to our communities. In their work on the Surfside

Condo matter, Michael Goldberg, his team, and the class action lawyers embraced all these commitments, setting a new standard for resolving difficult disputes swiftly and fairly. These extraordinary accomplishments are truly worthy of recognition, and we are sincerely grateful to the *Financial Times* for its acknowledgment of these superlative efforts.”

The annual Innovative Lawyers report was developed by the *Financial Times* in partnership with RSG Consulting. Each year the team investigates the challenges that businesses face and how lawyers have innovated to help their clients solve them. Firms are selected following extensive independent research and direct client feedback.

About Akerman

Akerman LLP is a top 100 U.S. law firm that is recognized among the most forward-thinking firms in the industry. Its more than 750 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.

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