

Press Release

Akerman Joins Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce Coalition

June 23, 2015

Law Firm Ranked Among Best for Diversity and Workplace Equality

The Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce Coalition today announced that Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, will join the Coalition in support of legislation that will update Florida's discrimination protections as it relates to employment, housing and public accommodations. Akerman is the largest law firm in Florida and one of 34 top employers in the state to support the Competitive Workforce Act, which would modernize state law to include anti-discrimination protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

"At Akerman, we are committed to building a platform where men and women of all backgrounds can do great work, advance the needs of clients and enjoy the people they work with. But our commitment extends beyond our own workplace," said Andrew Smulian, Akerman Chairman and CEO. "We support initiatives that not only create the best possible work environment but also reflect our firm's values and priorities, and that includes workplace equality for the LGBT community. We are proud to join other major employers in support of the Florida Competitive Workforce Act and commend Florida Competes for drawing attention to this important issue."

Related People

Andrew M. Smulian

Akerman's ongoing diversity and inclusion practices recently earned the firm recognition as one of the "Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality," with a 100 percent rating from the Corporate Equality Index. The firm lends its reputation to a statewide campaign, working to promote passage of the Competitive Workforce Act, which will update Florida's anti-discrimination law, create uniformity across the state and help to attract and retain the best employees.

While it is illegal to discriminate in employment, housing and public accommodations based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap or marital status, gay and transgender people are currently left out of statewide non-discrimination protections. For this reason, Florida employers are backing the Competitive Workforce Act, which will give the state a competitive advantage in today's evolving marketplace.

Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce believes that passing these protections statewide is a sound business strategy. The coalition is led by Patrick Geraghty, Chairman of the Board of Directors and CEO of Florida Blue in Jacksonville; John Tonnison, Executive Vice President and Worldwide CIO of Tech Data Corporation in Clearwater; and Philip Dinkins, Senior Vice President of DTZ in Tampa. They serve as president, secretary and treasurer of Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce, respectively.

Coalition members include American Airlines Arena, Bilzin Sumberg, C1Bank, Carlton Fields Jorden Burt, Carnival Corporation, Chamber SOUTH, Coconut Grove Business Improvement District, Coral Gables Chamber of Commerce, CSX, Darden, Florida Blue, Florida Realtors®, Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association, Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association, Haskell, HSN, Marriott, Miami Heat, NextEra Energy, Office Depot, Orlando City, On Top of the World Communities, Pointe Group Advisors,

Raymond James, Rollins College, South Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce, Tech Data, University of North Florida, University of South Florida Office of Diversity, Inclusion and Equal Opportunity, Walt Disney World Resort, Wells Fargo and Winn Dixie.

About Akerman LLP

Akerman LLP is a leading transactions and trial law firm known for its core strengths in middle market M&A, within the financial services and real estate industries, and for a diverse Latin America practice. With more than 600 lawyers and government affairs professionals and a network of 20 offices, it is ranked among the top 100 law firms in the United States by *The American Lawyer* (2015) and *The National Law Journal NLJ* 350 (2015). Akerman also is ranked among the top 50 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer's* Diversity Scorecard (2015).

About Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce

The Florida Businesses for a Competitive Workforce Coalition is a 501c(4) whose mission is to support passing the Competitive Workforce Act, which would modernize state law to include anti-discrimination protection based on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. The coalition believes that the Florida Competitive Workforce Act will make Florida more competitive in the national and global marketplace in much the same way companies have benefitted from adopting anti-discrimination policies. For additional information, please go to www.FLCompetitiveWorkforce.com or visit the coalition on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).