

Press Release

Akerman's Jose "Pepe" Villalobos to Receive the 2025 Medal of Honor Award From Funding Florida Legal Aid

April 16, 2025

Akerman is pleased to announce that Jose "Pepe" Villalobos has been selected to receive the Medal of Honor from Funding Florida Legal Aid (formerly The Florida Bar Foundation), the organization's highest recognition for contributions to justice in the state. Villalobos joins a distinguished group of Akerman lawyers who have previously received the award, including Richard Milstein and William Van Nortwick, Jr. The annual award recognizes a member of the Florida Bar for outstanding achievement in improving the administration of justice and advancing the science of jurisprudence in Florida.

A Legacy of Public Service

With a legal career spanning nearly 50 years, Pepe is recognized for his deep experience in state and local government affairs, municipal law, and regulatory matters, as well as for his longstanding commitment to enhancing the lives and well-being of Floridians. His work includes:

- Serving on the Marketable Records Title Act Commission to protect millions of acres of state lands and public funds
- Securing federal funding for transformative projects such as Florida International University

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In addition, former Florida Governor Bob Graham appointed Pepe to the Judicial Nominating Committee, where he served as both member and chair. Former Governor Lawton Chiles appointed Pepe to the Selection Committee for the U.S. Military Academy, where he served as member and chair, overseeing the selection process for West Point, the Naval Academy, and the Air Force Academy.

Civic and Community Leadership

Pepe served as City Attorney and Chief Legal Counsel for West Miami and was a member of the City of Miami Building and Zoning Board. In the community, he served as chair of Kendall Regional Hospital, where he was instrumental in establishing a state-of-the-art trauma center, and he served as chair of Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in Miami.

Dedication to the Profession

Pepe proudly served on the Florida Bar's Grievance Committee for two separate three-year terms, including as chair, where he spent countless hours ensuring that the integrity of the profession and the trust of the community were safeguarded. His commitment to upholding the highest standards of the legal profession earned him the University of Florida Levin College of Law's "For the Love of Law Award" and the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Historical Society's "Legal Legends Award."

Leadership Perspective

"Pepe Villalobos exemplifies the values of service, integrity, and leadership that define our profession at its best," said Akerman Chairman and CEO Scott Meyers. "His dedication to improving civic life has made a profound and lasting impact. We are incredibly proud to see him honored with this award."

The Medal of Honor will be formally presented to Pepe at Funding Florida Legal Aid's Annual Award

Ceremony on June 26.

About Akerman

Founded in 1920, Akerman is recognized as one of the country's premier law firms, with more than 700 lawyers in 25 offices throughout the United States.