

Press Release

Akerman's William Van Nortwick to Receive The Florida Bar Foundation's 2015 Medal of Honor Award

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Firm's Pro Bono Partner-in-Charge Selected to Receive the Foundation's Highest Award for Public Justice

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, today announced William A. Van Nortwick Jr., partner-in-charge of Akerman's national pro bono program and a member of the firm's Appellate Practice, has been selected as the 2015 recipient of The Florida Bar Foundation's Medal of Honor Award, the Foundation's highest honor.

The Medal of Honor Award is presented annually to an individual who has made outstanding achievements in improving the administration of justice in Florida through principles of duty and public service. Van Nortwick, a former Florida First District Court of Appeal Judge and a renowned champion for equal justice, was selected for his decades of work contributing to the infrastructure of pro bono and legal services organizations in Florida. He will be honored with the award during The Florida Bar Foundation's 39th Annual Reception and Dinner on June 25 at the Boca Raton Resort & Club.

"Bill Van Nortwick typifies the highest ideals of the legal profession through his lifelong commitment of selfless service to the less fortunate," said Akerman Chairman and CEO [Andrew Smulian](#). "Bill has been

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instrumental in the formation of Florida's pro bono infrastructure and a beacon for equal justice. He is a brilliant lawyer, a formidable advocate, and an inspiration to everyone at our firm. We are extremely fortunate to have Bill leading our pro bono program at Akerman, as we continue to advance our philanthropic commitment to our many communities, particularly in the areas of education and youth development."

Van Nortwick began his pro bono work during his first year of private practice. In one of his early cases, he helped three African American students who were expelled from school following a racially charged incident on a school bus. He later devoted more than 200 hours toward a neighborhood group in Jacksonville, which led to the establishment of the Northwest Quadrant Community Health Center, an indigent medical clinic in Jacksonville. He went on to assist Jacksonville Area Legal Aid in securing \$2 million in federal grants for the center.

Van Nortwick is the immediate past chair of the Florida Supreme Court's Standing Committee on Pro Bono Legal Service and is a member of the Florida Commission on Access to Civil Justice, designed to solve the equal justice crisis and create innovative ways to provide the poor and middle class access to legal services. He previously chaired The Florida Bar/Florida Bar Foundation Joint Commission that led to the creation of Florida's current pro bono rules. He also chaired The Florida Bar's symposium on equal access to justice, whose recommendations led to the first state funding for civil legal aid. He is a former president and board member for The Florida Bar Foundation and he also served as a director and two-term president of both Jacksonville Area Legal Aid and Florida Legal Services.

Van Nortwick has received significant recognition for his commitment to promote equal access to justice. He is the recipient of the American Bar Association Pro Bono Publico Award and he is the first recipient of the Florida Supreme Court

Distinguished Judicial Service Award. Van Nortwick also has been honored with The Florida Bar Pro Bono Award for Florida's Fourth Judicial Circuit, the Thurgood Marshall Award for Florida's Second Judicial Circuit, the Robert Beckham Equal Justice Award from Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, and twice has received The Florida Bar President's Award of Merit.

As Akerman's pro bono partner-in-charge, Van Nortwick concentrates on expanding the firm's national pro bono efforts, with emphasis on initiatives that address the fundamental needs of at-risk youth in underserved communities. He also plays an important part in Akerman's continuing partnership with the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association in support of abused and neglected children in foster care.

Van Nortwick focuses his legal practice on complex civil and administrative appellate matters. Prior to joining Akerman, he served as a First District Court of Appeal Judge for more than 20 years where he participated in a number of high-profile cases. Van Nortwick serves as chair of The Florida Bar's Business Law Section and past chair of the Florida District Court of Appeal Performance and Accountability Commission.

Akerman lawyers have a longstanding tradition of providing pro bono legal services to disadvantaged members of the community, particularly at-risk youth. Akerman was selected as the recipient of the 2015 Chief Justice's Law Firm Commendation Award by the Florida Supreme Court and The Florida Bar, the highest recognition of pro bono legal service awarded in the state to a law firm, for its extraordinary efforts benefitting foster youth. Most recently, the firm was honored by the Florida Guardian ad Litem Program with the "Community Advocate of the Year" award in the 13th Judicial Circuit, which recognizes an organization that has made significant contributions to promote volunteer advocacy for abused and neglected children in the

foster care system.

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 National Law Journal NLJ* 350 (2014). Akerman also is ranked among the top 50 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer's* Diversity Scorecard (2014).