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Press Release

Akerman Assembles One of the Largest Moot Court Panels of Former Appellate Judges Among the Am Law 100

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Akerman Bench Provides Direct Access to Former Appellate Judges for Mock Oral Arguments and Appellate & Trial Support

Akerman LLP, a top 100 U.S. law firm serving clients across the Americas, today announced the launch of Akerman Bench. This new service offering combines the experience of one of the largest teams of former appellate judges assembled in-house by an Am Law 100 firm, providing lawyers and their clients with a complete judicial panel for mock oral arguments as well as appellate and trial support within a single platform.

Moot court panels composed of former appellate judges are designed to effectively anticipate and navigate the continuous flood of questions from the bench. But very few lawyers who have previously served as a federal or state appellate judge are now available to serve as moot court judges. As a result, assembling a panel of former appellate judges to rehearse oral arguments is traditionally a fragmented process and a logistical challenge that can impact costs and, ultimately, the outcome of an appeal or critical trial court proceeding.

Akerman's platform provides clients with access to a panel of four former appellate judges with experience in federal and state appeals courts.

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Akerman Bench builds upon the experience of the firm's former appellate and trial court judges, former appellate law clerks and seasoned appellate lawyers to provide guidance and feedback for optimal oral argument preparation, with an objective third-party perspective. The service is tailored to meet the needs of each client and each case, and utilizes an alternative fee arrangement to ensure budget predictability and maximum value.

"Akerman Bench replicates the appellate court experience through our in-house panel of former appellate judges, who provide a viewpoint from the side of the bench where decisions are made," said Gerald B. Cope, co-chair of Akerman's Appellate Practice and a former chief judge of Florida's Third District Court of Appeal. "By leveraging technology and utilizing an alternative fee structure, Akerman Bench makes moot courts accessible while delivering the predictability desired in high-stakes matters."

The backbone of an appeal is the brief itself, which is equally as important as oral arguments. Akerman Bench harnesses the experience of former judges who have read thousands of briefs, and who will vet a brief as a judge would read it. The appellate team can also be deployed to review trial motions to spot and avoid potential problems that might arise later upon appeal.

"Presenting a complex case before a panel of appellate judges can be arduous, even for the most experienced counsel," said Katherine Giddings, a lawyer board-certified by The Florida Bar in Appellate Law and a partner in Akerman's Appellate Practice. "Akerman Bench taps into the strengths of the firm's appellate lawyers and former judges with nuanced knowledge of the appellate system so those arguing cases are prepared early on, even before the appeals process begins."

Akerman Bench includes Cope, a former chief judge of Florida's Third District Court of Appeal; Joseph W.

Hatchett, co-chair of Akerman's Appellate Practice, a former Florida Supreme Court Justice and a former chief judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit; and James E. Joanos, a former chief judge of Florida's First District Court of Appeal. Other members from the Appellate Practice include Michael B. Chavies, a former Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge, and many former appellate law clerks who are now experienced appellate lawyers.

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). Akerman also is ranked among the top 50 law firms for diversity in *The American Lawyer*'s Diversity Scorecard (2015).

Akerman's Litigation Practice Group is recognized nationally by *U.S. News - Best Lawyers* in the Commercial Litigation and Appellate categories, among others. The firm's team has vast experience in a wide range of civil and criminal litigation and appeals, including actions involving banking, securities, healthcare, insurance, real estate and construction.