

People



## Grasford W. Smith

Partner, Litigation

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vCard

” Grasford has the rare gift of being attuned and responsive to my needs.

- Chief Legal Officer, Publicly Traded Direct to Consumer Company

A Board of Governors member of the Florida Bar and the National Bar Association and past President of the Palm Beach County Bar Association, Grasford focuses his national practice on complex commercial litigation matters and is certified by the Supreme Court of Florida as a Circuit Civil Mediator. Consistently recognized by *Best Lawyers* and *Lawdragon* as one of the leading lawyers in America, Grasford has a deep understanding of his clients’ business needs and develops comprehensive yet practical legal solutions. A leader within Akerman, Grasford serves on the firm’s Board of Directors, providing guidance on firm management and initiatives.

An accomplished litigator and trusted advisor, Grasford Smith has significant experience representing Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, athletic leagues, technology companies, and government officials in addition to a variety of small and medium-sized companies on commercial disputes and providing strategic guidance on business issues.

Grasford gained extensive dispute resolution experience at prestigious international law firms in New York and Washington, D.C. He handles local and national disputed matters concerning corporate governance, government enforcement actions, non-compete and confidentiality agreements, trade secrets, real estate matters, construction defects, franchises, products liability, intellectual property, eminent domain, and disciplinary/admission matters before the Florida Bar.

### Areas of Experience

Litigation  
 Commercial Disputes  
 Intellectual Property Litigation  
 Distressed Property  
 Energy and Infrastructure  
 Equine Law  
 Sports and Entertainment Law

### Education

J.D., New York University School of Law, 2005, Vanderbilt Medal Recipient, *Journal of Law & Business*, Founding Executive Editor, *Journal of Legislation & Public Policy*, Staff Editor  
 B.S., Florida State University, 2002, Phi Kappa Phi, summa cum laude

### Admissions

#### Bars

Florida  
 New York  
 District of Columbia

#### Courts

U.S. Supreme Court  
 U.S. District Court, Eastern District of New York  
 U.S. District Court, Southern District of New York  
 U.S. District Court, Middle District of Florida  
 U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida

### Related Content

*Lawdragon* Once Again Names Michael Marsh and Grasford Smith Among the Country’s Leading Lawyers  
 January 16, 2025

Akerman Partner Grasford Smith Named Among Global 100 by ICABA World Network  
 November 07, 2024

## Notable Work

Neisen Kasdin, Grasford Smith Listed Among *Florida Trend's* Florida 500  
November 01, 2024

**Eminent Domain Dispute:** Representation of a New York state development corporation in connection with the exercise of its eminent domain power to help clear the way for a \$4 billion redevelopment project in Brooklyn, New York.

**Congressman Election Challenge:** Representation of a congressman in an election challenge which resulted in the congressman's election to the U.S. House of Representatives.

**Online Travel Agency Breach of Contract Dispute:** Representation of a major online travel agency in a breach of contract dispute with a gift card vendor resulting in a favorable settlement.

**Marine Lighting Company Trial Court Injunction and Appeal:** Representation of a marine lighting company in obtaining an injunction at trial court for violation of a non-compete agreement which was then successfully defended on appeal.

**Construction Defect Cases of Equestrian Facility:** Representation of an equestrian facility's owner in settling a construction defect case of a horse rink at mediation.

**Multimillion Dollar Buyout for Defense Contractor Shareholder:** Representation of a defense contractor shareholder in a dispute with another shareholder regarding the purchase of shares, resulting in a multimillion dollar buyout for the client.

**Marine Industry Retailer Trademark Dispute:** Representation of a marine industry retailer and manufacturer in settling a trademark dispute.

**Major University 501(c)(3):** Representation of a major university in establishing a 501(c)(3) for a foundation.

**501(c)(3) Purchase of For Profit Assets:** Representation of a 501(c)(3) in the purchase of all the assets of a for profit corporation.

**City Manager Employment Contract Dispute:** Representation of a city manager in an employment contract dispute with a city resulting in a favorable settlement.

**Multiple Third-Party Contract Disputes:** Representation of South Florida hotels in numerous third-party contract disputes resulting in favorable settlements.

**Dismissal of Americans with Disabilities Act Claim:** Representation of South Florida hotel in defense of an Americans with Disabilities Act claim resulting in a dismissal.

**Eviction of Commercial Tenants:** Representation of commercial building owners in eviction of commercial tenants.

**Charter School Dispute Against Donor:** Representation of a charter school in a dispute against a donor resulting in favorable settlement.

**Multiple Bar Grievance Matters:** Representation of attorneys in multiple bar grievance matters resulting in no probable cause findings.

**Law Firm Dispute with National Bank:** Representation of law firm in dispute with national bank regarding payment of attorney fees resulting in a favorable settlement.

## Published Work and Lectures

- National Bar Association Convention, Moderator, “Counseling Clients Through a Crisis,” July 15, 2024
- Florida State University College of Business, Speaker, “Defining Leadership,” March 28, 2024
- Florida State University College of Business, Speaker, “2023 Dean’s Distinguished Speaker Series,” October 19, 2023
- Investiture of Florida Supreme Court Justice Renatha Francis, Featured Speaker, October 18, 2023
- Boyd Anderson High School, Speaker, Keynote Commencement Address, June 4, 2023
- 2023 National Bar Association Corporate Law Section Gateway Conference, Moderator, “No! Your Company Needs a Strong ESG Plan,” April 28, 2023
- Black Employees Leading in Inclusion, Excellence, Vision & Empowerment (BELIEVE), Speaker, One-on-One Series, “A Conversation with Florida’s ‘Super Lawyer,’ Grasford Smith,” April 28, 2022
- 2021 National Conference of Bar Presidents, Speaker, “Diversity Plenary: DEI – Does Your Seat At the Table Change the View?” August 3, 2021
- National Bar Association, 96th Annual Convention and Exhibits, Moderator, “Changing the Diversity Narrative – Making Diversity a Movement in the Legal Profession and Not a Moment,” July 23, 2021
- Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County, Inc., Speaker, “Small Business Liability Issues During COVID-19,” June 2020
- *NYU Law News*, Quoted, “[Litigator Grasford Smith '05 Emerges as a Leader in Florida’s Legal Community.](#)” September 2019
- Comerica Bank, Business Readiness Certification Training Program, Speaker, “Business Organizations and Contract Law,” July 2019
- Palm Beach County Office of Small Business Assistance, 2017 Business Readiness Certification Program, Speaker, “Legal Issues Relevant to Small Business Owners and Start-ups,” October 5, 2017
- Palm Beach County Office of Small Business Assistance, 2017 Business Readiness Certification Program, Speaker, “Legal Issues Relevant to Small Business Owners and Start-ups,” September 26, 2017
- *New York University Journal of Law & Business*, Author, “So You Want to be a Business Lawyer: A Few Practical Suggestions for Making the Transition from Student to Practitioner,” February 1, 2017
- National Pan-Hellenic Council, Candidate Forum, Moderator, August 12, 2016
- Women of Color Empower Institute, Inc., Electoral Candidate Forum, Moderator, July 25, 2016
- National Bar Association Mid-Year Meeting, Moderator, “Tips for Preparing for and Responding to a Cybersecurity Incident,” April 22, 2016
- City of West Palm Beach 2016 Electoral Candidate Forum, Moderator, February 25, 2016
- Palm Beach County Bench Bar Conference, Moderator, “Commercial Litigation Session on Electronically Stored Information/Discovery,” February 19, 2016

- City of Riviera Beach 2016 Electoral Candidate Forum, Moderator, February 16, 2016
- *Legal Leaflets of Legacy*, Author, “Mental Health in the Legal Profession,” Winter 2015
- National Bar Association Convention, Moderator, “Developing Business in the Corporate Arena,” July 20, 2015
- The Florida Bar Seminar, Panelist, “Practicing with Professionalism,” May 14, 2015
- National Bar Association Mid-Year Meeting, Moderator, “Data Security: What We Know and How We Protect It,” March 26, 2015
- Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association Newsletter, Author, “Legacy of Eric Holder: America’s First Black Attorney General,” Fall 2014
- Rehabilitation Center for Children and Adults, Professional Endowment Committee, Speaker, “Update on the Revised LLC Act,” August 21, 2014
- The Florida Bar Seminar, Panelist, “Practicing with Professionalism,” April 23, 2014
- Palm Beach County Bar Association Judicial Luncheon Series, Moderator, “Evidentiary Foundations and Objections/Preserving Objections for Appeal,” May 29, 2013
- Black Chamber of Commerce of Palm Beach County, Ask An Attorney Forum, Speaker, March 25, 2013
- Palm Beach County Bar Association Judicial Luncheon Series, Moderator, “Lawyer’s Do’s and Don’ts,” March 20, 2013
- *Daily Business Review*, Author, “Businesses May Face More Lawsuits After Ruling.” March 15, 2013
- Palm Beach County Bar Association Judicial Luncheon Series, Moderator, “Civil Motion Practice and Discovery Violations,” January 23, 2013
- *Daily Business Review*, Author, “Tort of Malicious Prosecution Questioned in Cases.” September 11, 2012
- 2012 South Florida State of the Black Business Forum, Panelist, “Job Creation, Contracts, and Innovation for Black Business Owners,” August 31, 2012
- Urban League of Palm Beach County Graduation Recognition Reception, Keynote Speaker, June 1, 2012
- Urban League Young Professionals of Palm Beach County, Electoral Hall Forum, Moderator, October 18, 2010
- Palm Beach County Bar Association Diversity Summit, Panelist, “Perspectives on Diversity in the Legal Profession in Palm Beach County,” September 24, 2009

## Related Professional Experience

- Judicial Intern to the Honorable Judge Troy K. Webber, Bronx Supreme Court, The Bronx, New York, 2003
- Goldman Sachs, Summer Associate, 2003

## Affiliations

- Florida State University College of Business Board of Governors, 2023-Present
- The Florida Bar
  - Board of Governors, 2024-2026
    - Board Review Committee on Professional Ethics
    - Board Legislation Committee
  - Special Committee on Mentoring New Lawyers, 2022-2023

- Special Committee on Opportunity in the Practice of Law in Florida, 2021-2022
- 15th Circuit Grievance Committee 15E, Chair, 2019-2020
- 15th Circuit Grievance Committee 15E, Vice Chair, 2019
- 15th Circuit Grievance Committee 15E, Member, 2017-2020
- Civil Procedure Rules Committee, Member, 2014-2017
- Leadership Academy, Inaugural Graduate, 2013-2014
- Commission on Review of the Discipline System, 2011-2012
- National Bar Association
  - Chair (Region XI), 2021-2022
  - Deputy Regional Director (Region XI), 2020-2021
  - Minority Partners in Majority Law Firms Division; Vice-Chair, 2014-2020; Chair, 2020-Present
  - Parliamentarian, 2014-2015
- Virgil Hawkins Florida Chapter National Bar Association
  - President, 2019-2020
  - President-Elect, 2018-2019
  - Vice President, 2017-2018
- American Heart Association
  - Immediate Past Chair, 2024-Present
  - Chair, 2022-2024
  - Chair Elect, 2021-2022
  - Board of Directors and Leadership Development Committee Chair, 2019-2021
- Business Development Board of Palm Beach County, Board Member, 2023-Present
- St. Thomas University Law School Board of Advisors, Board Member, 2021-Present
- Legal Aid Society of Palm Beach County
  - Board of Trustees 2023-Present
  - Board of Directors, 2011-2023
- Chamber of Commerce of The Palm Beaches
  - Board of Directors, 2024-Present
  - Trustee, 2024-Present
- Palm Beach County Bar Association
  - Immediate Past President, 2024-Present
  - President, 2023-2024
  - Board of Directors, 2016-Present
  - Diversity Committee, Co-Chair, 2016-2017
  - Transaction Law Committee, Chair, 2013-2014
- Black Chamber of Commerce of Palm Beach County
  - Immediate Past President, 2023-Present
  - President, 2021-2023
  - President-Elect, 2019-2021
  - Board of Directors, 2014-Present
- Leadership Florida Cornerstone, Class 40, 2022-2023
- Bank of America Palm Beach County Local Market Selection Committee, Member, 2022

- Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Panel, U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, West Palm Beach, Florida, 2021
- The City of West Palm Beach, Mayor's Transition Team Committee, Economic Development & Jobs Policy Subcommittee, 2019
- United Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, Grand Inspector General, 2022-Present
  - Thurgood Marshall Lodge #121, President, 2023-Present
- Anquan Boldin Foundation, Board Member & Counsel, 2015-Present
- Urban League of Palm Beach County
  - General Counsel, 2013-Present
  - Board of Directors, 2013-Present
- Florida Supreme Court, Member, Chief Justice's Advisory Committee for the Pro Bono Service Awards, 2019
- Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, President, Epsilon Lambda Boule, 2019-2021
- Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity
  - National Associate General Counsel, 2018-Present
  - Commission on Race, Chair, 2021-Present
- Palm Beach County School District, Sales Tax Oversight Committee Member, 2017-2019
- NYU Law Alumni of Color Association
  - Advisory Board, 2017-Present
  - Board of Directors, 2006-2016
- Economic Council of Palm Beach County Emerging Leaders, Member, 2016-2022
- F. Malcolm Cunningham Sr. Bar Association, President, 2010-2011

## Honors and Distinctions

- *Lawdragon*, 2021-2024, Listed in "Lawdragon 500 Leading Lawyers in America"
- F. Malcolm Cunningham Sr. Bar Association Trailblazer Award Recipient, 2024
- ICABA, Black Professionals Month (BPM), 2024, Global 100 Honoree
- *Daily Business Review*, Professional Excellence Awards, "Diversity and Inclusion," 2023
- *Chambers USA*, Finalist for the "Diversity & Inclusion: Outstanding Contribution" Award, 2023-2024
- *Super Lawyers Magazine*, 2021-2024, Listed in Florida for Business Litigation
- National Bar Association, Power 50, 2022
- The Florida Bar
  - President's Award For Service on Special Committee on Mentoring New Lawyers, 2023
  - President's Award For Service on Special Committee on Opportunity in the Practice of Law in Florida, 2022
- National Bar Association, Clyde Bailey Award, 2021
- *Best Lawyers*, 2019-2025, Listed in Florida for Commercial Litigation



- *Palm Beach Illustrated Magazine*, 2022, 2024, Listed in Palm Beach County as a “Top Lawyer” for Business Litigation, Commercial Litigation
- *South Florida Business Journal*, 2021, Recognized as “40 Under 40”
- *Daily Business Review*, 2021, Professional Excellence Awards, “Distinguished Leader”
- Delta Sigma Theta West Palm Beach Alumni Chapter, 2021, Men of Excellence “Trailblazer” Honoree
- *Florida Trend*, 2020, 2024, Listed in Florida Amongst the 500 Most Influential Executives
- *Legacy South Florida Magazine*, 2019, Corporate Executive of the Year
- Martindale-Hubbell, AV Rated, 2013-Present
- *South Florida Legal Guide*, 2018, 2020, Top Up and Comer (Under 40)
- NYU Law Alumni of Color Association, 2018, 40 Under 40 Rising Stars
- Anquan Boldin Foundation, 2018, Service Award
- *Super Lawyers Magazine*, 2011-2016, Listed in Florida as a “Rising Star”
- *Daily Business Review*, 2015, Recognized as a “Rising Star”
- National Black Lawyers, 2015, Top 100 Lawyers
- *Legacy Palm Beach Magazine*, 2013, South Florida’s Most Powerful Black Professionals in Business
- National Bar Association, Nation’s Best Advocates, 2011, 40 Under 40
- F. Malcolm Cunningham Sr. Bar Association, 2011, Member of the Year
- *Legacy Magazine*, 2011, South Florida’s 40 under 40 Leaders of Today and Tomorrow
- ICABA, 2009, Rising Star in Law

## Additional Education

- Executive Education, Harvard University, Kennedy School of Government
- Cybersecurity Certificate, Harvard University, Harvard’s Office of the Vice Provost for Advances in Learning
- Business Strategy Certificate, Cornell University