



Austin Henning, Esq.
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AREAS OF PRACTICE

Construction and Construction Defect Litigation

BAR & COURT ADMISSION

Florida Bar

EDUCATION

Graduate:

University of Miami, J.D.

Undergraduate:

University of Central Florida, BS in Psychology

Austin grew up in Niceville, Florida, an area of Okaloosa County known for its beaches and Southern hospitality.

After graduating from the University of Miami School of Law, Austin worked in support staff roles at law firms gaining practical experience while studying for the bar exam. He started his career as a public defender. Since joining Vernis & Bowling, Austin handles primarily construction and construction defect litigation.

He also has great interest in serving the community and enjoys taking on charitable work. In the past, Austin has served as a Guardian ad Litem Volunteer and currently volunteers at food distribution banks.

Austin enjoys getting out and enjoying nature, learning chess, watching college football - especially the Miami Hurricanes, and spending time with friends.



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TJ is a fifth-generation Hillsborough County native and has never lived more than two hours from the Tampa Bay area. After graduating from the University of Florida, he worked at a firm in Tampa before beginning law school at Stetson University College of Law in Gulfport. While there, TJ gained early experience in case management, client communication, and the practical day-to-day

work of a small litigation practice. After completing his first year at Stetson, he returned to the Tampa firm and continued working there throughout law school as the practice expanded into additional offices.

TJ practices in the areas of first-party property and general liability defense. His experience includes litigation and arbitration involving sinkhole claims, hurricane and storm damage, negligent security, premises liability, and product liability matters. From early on in his career, he has handled corporate representative and expert depositions, dispositive motion practice, mediations/arbitrations, the sinkhole neutral evaluation process, and site inspections.

TJ particularly enjoys working with clients who are navigating the litigation process for the first time. He focuses on explaining the process clearly, keeping clients informed, and advocating for their interests as cases move through discovery, mediation, and trial.

Outside of the office, TJ lives with his wife and their dog, Tito. They enjoy hosting friends and family, working on their bungalow home, and cooking together.

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Chip Rieger was born in Indianapolis but spent his formative years in Connecticut before moving to Tennessee in 1983. Chip earned a Bachelor of Science from the University of Tennessee and graduated from the Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law at the University of Memphis. While a law student, he was a member of Phi Alpha Delta (Chief Justice) in addition to serving as a Bankruptcy Court Extern and as Vice President of the Student Bar Association.

Chip is the Department Managing Attorney for the Nashville, TN office of Vernis & Bowling. Prior to joining the firm, he was a partner at a national law firm. Chip was also the founding Member of The Rieger Law Firm and was a founding Member and Managing Partner of Oakley Rieger PLLC. He founded Oakley Rieger after spending the majority of his career as a partner in a large regional litigation defense firm, where he also served as a Managing Partner.

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Prior to receiving his *Juris Doctorate*, Mr. Rieger was a Manager of a National Bank, responsible for operations and personnel at the retail level. After Law School, Chip started with a boutique employment law firm in Memphis before moving to Nashville and joining a regional firm. Mr. Rieger subsequently became a partner with his previous firm, where he served as a Managing Member of the Nashville office, overseeing operations and personnel. After 15 years, Chip decided to take his entrepreneurial spirit to another firm with a goal toward developing closer, more personal relationships with his clients by learning their business operations and goals, and partnering with them to achieve those goals.

Chip has a broad range of experience in litigation, including cases involving employment discrimination, FLSA, FMLA, ADA, retaliation, harassment, products liability, premises liability, transportation, personal injury, workers' compensation, insurance law and general civil defense. Chip has extensive experience supervising litigation teams in complex civil lawsuits. A part of his practice is also spent in the representation of management in employment law and related matters, pre-litigation corporate counseling, preventive strategies to avoid discrimination, management training and the creation of human resource tools.

Chip is proud to serve as a founding Board Member of Old School Farm, where he has served since its founding in 2013. Old School Farm is a non-profit dedicated to producing quality farm-to-table food while providing vocational training and employment for individuals with disabilities. Old School Farm was founded on the belief that creating a sustainable farm can also produce sustainable jobs while giving back to the community at large.

When Chip is not defending lawsuits or counseling clients, he is a frequent seminar speaker on a variety of industry topics. He is also a regular presenter for The Society of Human Resource Managers, Lorman Education Services and Sterling Education Services. Chip also offers more personal in-house training and counseling for his business clients.

Mr. Rieger is a Member of The Society of Human Resource Managers. He has served on the Employment Law and Civil Rights Committee of the Nashville Bar Association and as the Legal Counsel and Director of the Nashville Area Junior Chamber of Commerce. He has also served on the Board of Directors of the Young Lawyers Division of the Nashville Bar Association and was a Professor of Employment Law and Tort Law at the Southeastern Career Institute. He is a member of the Memphis, Nashville, and Tennessee Bar Associations.

Chip is admitted to practice in all Federal Courts in the State of

Tennessee and the U.S. Court of Appeals, Sixth Circuit.

Chip was motivated to go to law school by a friend who convinced him he could take his law degree and apply it in any industry that interested him. That concept holds true today, as Chip gets the most enjoyment out his practice by meeting people in a wide variety of industries, learning what is important to them and helping them to achieve their goals.

Chip is an avid hockey player, snow skier and water skier. He loves to travel the world but lately spends most of his travel visiting his kids at Clemson, Tampa and Tennessee Universities.

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Michael is originally from New York, where he initially practiced law and is still admitted to the New York Bar. He moved to Miami after his admission to the Florida Bar in 1974 and where he has practiced law since then, being recognized as a Fifty Year Member of the Florida Bar in 2024.

His practice encompasses all areas of Business Law, both transactional and litigation. He actively practices commercial and corporate litigation, including asset protection and debtor-creditor law as well as construction law, real estate litigation, business torts including interference with economic relations, trade secrets, breach of fiduciary duty, deceptive and unfair trade practices, intellectual property and unfair competition and professional negligence to include attorney, architect, engineer and accountant malpractice.

In his fifty years of practice, Michael has tried numerous cases to conclusion before juries, judges, and appellate and arbitration panels.

Prior to joining Vernis & Bowling Michael was the managing partner of the Miami office of a statewide firm and prior to then he managed his own firm for 27 years.

After law school Michael served on active duty with the United States Army as a First Lieutenant where he was detailed to the

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Judge Advocate General's Corps to assist an overworked office.

Michael has served as President of the Miami Beach Bar Association as well as being a Director of that Association. Previously he has served on committees of the Miami Dade County Bar Association presently serving on its corporate law committee.

After a long career in the law Michael still finds the practice to be exciting and rewarding and he has no plans of slowing down. He still enjoys learning about each client's business and how he can help his client keep their businesses successful.

Michael resides in the Brickell area of Miami with his wife Susan. His son Josh is a mortgage banker and his daughter Jessica is a lawyer in Atlanta. He has four grandchildren and hopes one of them will become a lawyer.

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Geoffrey Marcus graduated from Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia with a Bachelor of Science in Neuroscience and Behavior Biology and a minor in Anthropology. Surprisingly, a single elective course shifted Geoffrey's path from the medical field to the legal field. Thus, Geoffrey continued his education at the University of Miami School of Law, graduating *Cum Laude* in 2019.

Upon graduating from law school, Geoffrey and his wife (who he met in law school) relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina. Geoffrey initially began his legal career at a Plaintiff firm that specializes in employment law and litigation. Thereafter, Geoffrey worked at a civil defense firm in Charlotte, North Carolina, where he handled civil litigation matters, involving the following: third party litigation, including employment law, OSHA investigations and citations, premises liability, vehicle accident defense, trucking defense, wrongful death, construction defects, and the defense of government and municipalities; and insurance coverage/first party litigation.

Geoffrey has represented, among others, a trillion dollar e-commerce company, a multi-billion dollar food and beverage supply company, a multi-million dollar hospitality business, and a

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multi-million dollar real estate development firm, as well as local health care providers and restaurants. He is experienced at managing all stages of litigation – pre-litigation through appellate work.

Notably, Geoffrey recently prevailed on summary judgment, which was later affirmed by the Fourth Circuit, after oral argument, pertaining to the issue of employer drug testing policy for new and current employees and an employer’s related obligations under the ADA and N.C.G.S. § 95-28.2 (lawful use of lawful products statute) when an employee tested positive for THC use. *Anderson v. Diamondback Inv. Grp., LLC*, 117 F. 4th 165 (4th Cir. 2024).

In his personal life, Geoffrey enjoys spending time with his wife, Natasha, and embracing being a “girl dad” to his daughter, Olivia.