



William Kratochvil, Esq.
Managing Attorney

Vernis & Bowling of
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William Kratochvil was born in South Bend, Indiana, but grew up splitting time in Spartanburg, South Carolina and Laconia, New Hampshire. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corps from 1990-1994, serving on the Presidential Guard Detail for President George Herbert Walker Bush, then in the infantry before receiving his Honorable Discharge. In 1997, he completed his undergraduate degree from the University of Florida, with honors, then attended the Levin College of Law at the University of Florida. He received his *Juris Doctor* degree in 2000, with honors.

After graduating from the University of Florida, William moved to Fort Myers, Florida, where he began his career working as an insurance defense lawyer. He eventually became the managing partner at the firm of George, Hartz, and Lundeen in Fort Myers, working on all aspects of insurance defense cases and taking many to successful trial results. William has also specialized in S.I.U/Fraud as well as civil rights defense cases.

William joins Vernis & Bowling of Southwest Florida, P.A. to focus his civil trial practice in all areas of automobile negligence, premises liability, products liability, negligent security, employment law, civil rights litigation, construction litigation, first/third party claims and liability defense.

William is a member of the Florida Bar and is also admitted in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

When not working, William enjoys all aspects of outdoor life with his two children to include camping, hiking, boating, and fishing.

VERDICTS AND DISPOSITIONS

Florida National Insurance Solutions Inc., v. Welcome Home Development Corp.
Kacey Chiddister vs. Florida Department of Children and Families
Florida Department of Children and Families v. Kacey Chiddister, as father and natural guardian of C.H.
Ft. Myers, FL voluntary dismissals
Island Tower v. Citizens Property Insurance

AREAS OF PRACTICE

American with Disability Act Claims (A.D.A)
Automobile Liability (PIP/PD/BI/UM)
Construction and Construction Defect Litigation
Employment Law/Employment Litigation
First and Third Party Property and Casualty Claims
Hurricane Claims
Labor and Employment Law
Liability Defense
Negligent Security
PIP/Personal Injury Protection Litigation
Premises Liability
SIU/Suspicious & Fraudulent Claims
Wrongful Death

BAR & COURT ADMISSION

Florida Bar
United States District Court for the Middle District Of Florida

EDUCATION

Graduate:

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Undergraduate:

University of Florida, 1997 with honors

MEMBERSHIPS

Lee County Bar Association

Previous service on the Board Of Directors for The YMCA Of Lee County

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Mr. Hayden graduated with honors from the University of Tennessee in 1984, and received his law degree from the University of Miami School of Law in 1990. During law school, he worked as a judicial assistant for the Honorable Linnea Johnson, Federal Magistrate, District Court for the Southern District of Florida. He also worked as a law clerk in the legal department of Capital Bank. Before entering law school, he worked for several years as a research technician for the University of Miami School of Medicine, Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology.

He is an AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rated by Martindale-Hubbell. Jerry has more than twenty-five years of experience representing employers, insurance carriers and third party administrators in all aspects of workers' compensation matters including, but not necessarily limited to, issues of coverage, compensability, heart and lung statute, occupational exposure, eligibility and entitlement to benefits, utilization review, contribution and indemnification, subrogation, equitable distribution, Medicare Set-Aside Allocations, Special Disability Trust Fund and appeals.

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Jerry has represented the State of Florida, its various Divisions, Departments and Agencies in workers' compensation matters for more than twenty consecutive years, including the Office of the Attorney General, Department of Corrections, Department of Law Enforcement, Department of Education, Florida International University, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Children and Family Services, Department of Transportation, Department of Agriculture. He has handled all aspects of workers' compensation claims, heart/lung statute, contribution, subrogation, Special Disability Trust Fund, offset calculations and appeals as well as other governmental entities such as Monroe County, City of Key West, and Town of Bay Harbor Islands and Miami Dade County School Board.

Jerry has also defended claims on behalf of various insurance carriers, third party administrators, employers and self-insureds. He has recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Special Disability Trust Fund and successfully secured recoveries of workers' compensation liens.

He has extensive litigation and trial experience and handling all aspects of workers' compensation appeals; 35 FLW D684 (Fla. 1st DCA 2010). He provides educational seminars on Florida workers compensation law.



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Florida Bar Certified in City, County and Local Government Law

Dirk M. Smits was born in Boca Raton, Florida. He attended and graduated from Tulane University with a bachelor's degree in accounting. During his years at Tulane, he was a member of Beta Alpha Psi Accounting Honor Society and on the Dean's List three (3) semesters. Mr. Smits attended law school at the University of Miami and graduated *Cum Laude*. While in law school, he received honors including Dean's List and an honors scholarship.

Mr. Smits' practice is concentrated primarily in City, County and Local Government Law and he has been certified as an expert by the Florida Bar for those areas. He serves as a Monroe County School Board Attorney, City Attorney for the City of Layton, Board Attorney for the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District, and Board Attorney for Key Largo Fire & EMS District. Mr. Smits formerly served as City Attorney for the City of Marathon and as a special counsel for Monroe County.

In service of the numerous government clients, Mr. Smits has handled every aspect of the practice. Matters include a range of routine meeting issues to complicated land use, acquisition and even eminent domain questions. Mr. Smits regularly drafts legal documents, resolutions, ordinances, contracts and legal opinions for his government clients.

Additionally, Mr. Smits has extensive jury trial experience at both the Federal and State level. In addition, Mr. Smits has appellate experience in the Third, Fourth and Fifth State District Courts of Appeal, as well as the Supreme Court of Florida.

Mr. Smits serves on the board of Habitat for Humanity of the Upper Keys as Vice President. Dirk is also a lector, Eucharistic minister and member of his parish's finance counsel. He founded Friends of San Pedro Catholic Church which is an endowment to provide for the capital needs of the church.



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Len Hackett was born in Fall River, Massachusetts. He majored in Criminal Justice at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts where he graduated with a B.A. in 1986. Thereafter, he enlisted in the United States Army where he earned his commission as a Lieutenant. While in the Army, he participated in and was decorated for his performance during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Following his tour in the Army, he attended Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. During law school, he served on the Cleveland State Law Review and Law Review Editorial Board. He graduated cum laude in May of 1996.

Len's practice areas include employment law, labor law, condominium/homeowner association law, and personal injury litigation that involves catastrophic injury and/or wrongful death. He has extensive experience in defending both public and private employers in all aspects of employment litigation that involve claims of discrimination, harassment, retaliation, wrongful discharge, family and medical leave, equal pay violations, wage-hour, and civil rights. Len also provides guidance and legal advice to employers with regard to problem prevention and employment-related issues. He has represented and defended numerous business owners, commercial and residential property management companies, and homeowners in lawsuits involving serious personal injury and wrongful death arising from liability associated with the ownership and/or control of premises. Len also represents and defends condominium and homeowners' associations in such areas as covenant enforcement litigation, fair housing discrimination claims, service and/or emotional support animal issues, director and officer liability, breach of fiduciary duty claims, and ADA matters.

Mr. Hackett is a Florida Bar Board Certified Labor and Employment Attorney and is currently a member of the Florida and Jacksonville Bar Associations.



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Courtney Lucke was born in Atlanta, Georgia and later moved to the Tampa Bay, Florida, area right before high school. Courtney

honors

Undergraduate:

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graduated from the University of Florida with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Business Management. While at UF, Courtney was heavily involved in the Business School, Greek Community, and the March of Dimes organization.

Upon graduating from UF, Courtney attended the University of Florida Levin College of Law where she earned her *Juris Doctorate*. While in law school, she was an active member of the John Marshall Bar Association and the Student Recruitment Team, as well as a Teaching Assistant for Legal Research and Writing and Appellate Advocacy. She also served as a Certified Legal Intern with the Virgil D. Hawkins Civil Clinics where she gained valuable experience representing clients in family law proceedings.

Courtney was admitted to the Florida Bar and joined the firm as an Associate Attorney in 2014. Her outside interests include: running, traveling, reading, and Gator athletic events.