



**Michael M. Becker, II,  
Esq.**  
*Junior Managing Attorney*

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## VERDICTS AND DISPOSITIONS

*GEICO v. Barnor-Cooper*  
*Brooke Donahue v. Nancy Vidal*  
*Brittney Slade v. Eric Branam and Lori Branam*  
*Timothy and Jackie Palmer v. Lanier Residential, Inc., JFM*  
*Plumbing, NGA, LLC, and LR Plumbing, LLC.*  
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*and Taurus Protection Agency, LLC*  
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*Siegel v. Segal*  
*Bucher v. Pace*  
*Dycus v. Member Select Insurance Company*  
*Martin v. Garcia*  
*DIRECTV, LLC, v. White (Appeal)*

## AREAS OF PRACTICE

Appellate Practice  
Automobile Liability (PIP/PD/BI/UM)  
Civil Litigation  
Commercial Ground Transportation Litigation  
Construction and Construction Defect Litigation  
Coverage & Declaratory Judgment Actions  
First and Third Party Property and Casualty Claims  
Liability Defense  
Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution

Originally from Macon, Georgia, Michael Becker moved to Atlanta in 2007 where he attended Georgia State University for college and law school, earning his *Juris Doctorate* in 2017. Michael immediately joined the defense bar after obtaining his law license and has defended individuals and businesses in civil litigation ever since. Michael has handled jury and bench trials, argued countless motions, won numerous dispositive motions, and written and won several appeals. He seeks and achieves favorable results for his clients through aggressive tactics, procedural acumen, hard work, and attention to detail.

Michael's practice includes appellate advocacy, automobile liability, trucking, premises liability, coverage and declaratory judgment actions, products liability, uninsured/underinsured motorist defense, and wrongful death, among other areas. He is admitted to practice before every court in the State of Georgia including all federal and state trial and appellate courts.

Outside the courtroom, Michael spends his time in the great outdoors with his wife and children.

Premises Liability  
Product Liability  
Trucking  
Uninsured/Underinsured Motorist Liability  
Wrongful Death

## BAR & COURT ADMISSION

Georgia Bar  
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United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia  
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Georgia Court of Appeals  
Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals

## EDUCATION

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Kimberly B. Sheridan was born in Frankfurt, Germany where her father was serving in the Army. She grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, but left South Carolina to attend college in Georgia. She fell in love with the State of Georgia and stayed to pursue her life long goal of being an attorney. While attending law school at the University of Georgia, Kimberly worked in the Prosecution Clinic, a program that allowed her to try cases before graduating. Kimberly also participated in the Public Interest Practicum representing women and children who were abused and neglected. Both experiences created a passion for litigation and for being in the courtroom advocating vigorously for her clients.

Kimberly believes in the legal system and works hard to defend her clients' rights with integrity, diligence and hard work. Kimberly has been a trial lawyer in Atlanta since receiving her

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## EDUCATION

*Juris Doctorate* degree in 1996. She began her legal career as criminal defense attorney and Plaintiff's lawyer before becoming a prosecutor with the District Attorney's Offices in Fulton and Gwinnett counties providing her with tremendous experience litigating and trying cases. In 2001, Ms. Sheridan shifted from criminal law and applied her substantial experience in the courtroom to civil defense litigation. Kimberly has handled many jury and bench trials. She has defended and deposed numerous parties, witnesses, and experts and drafted and argued countless motions. Kimberly has also written and won many appellate arguments.

Kimberly Sheridan is the Managing Attorney for Vernis and Bowling of Atlanta, LLC. With two (2) decades of trial experience, she has developed a diverse litigation practice that includes automobile liability, premises liability (including slip & fall and negligent security), trucking litigation, products liability, employment defense and wrongful death. With an extensive knowledge of both the law and its practical application, Kimberly works with clients to resolve complex disputes per mediation, negotiated settlement, or trial resolution. She is admitted to practice in Georgia and the U.S. District Courts in Georgia, the Georgia Court of Appeals and Supreme Court of Georgia.

Outside of work, Kimberly enjoys spending time with her husband and five children. Kimberly is an avid painter and has sold her paintings throughout Georgia.

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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.

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Wrongful Death

Lauren Stone was born in New York and grew up in Coral Springs, Florida. In 2006, she graduated from the University of Central Florida in Orlando with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and a minor in Psychology. She later attended Nova Southeastern University Shepard Broad Law Center in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and earned her *Juris Doctorate* in 2010. During law school, Lauren

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was an Articles Editor for the Nova Law Review and was recognized by the *Pro Bono* Honor Society for exemplary service within the legal community. Lauren also interned at Nova Southeastern University's Children & Families Clinic as a Certified Legal Intern.

Since being admitted to the Florida Bar in 2010, Lauren has dedicated her practice to representing insurance companies, corporations, and governmental entities in civil litigation matters. Since joining Vernis & Bowling in 2011, Lauren has focused on defending clients in the area of insurance defense litigation, including automobile liability, negligent security, premises liability, products liability, wrongful death and governmental tort liability. Lauren practices before all Florida State Courts as well as the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida.

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### Florida Bar Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer

**AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rated** by Martindale-Hubbell  
**Martindale-Hubbell's Bar Registry of Preeminent Lawyers  
in America**

**Florida's Legal Elite**, by Florida Trend Magazine

**Florida's Super Lawyers** by Super Lawyers Magazine published  
by Law & Politics

**Florida's Leading Lawyers** by South Florida Business Journal

**Florida's Power Leaders in Law** by South Florida Business  
Journal

**Florida's Top Lawyers** by South Florida Legal Guide

G. Jeffrey Vernis was born in Coral Gables, Florida. In 1984, he graduated from the University of South Florida with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice and a minor in International Political Science. While at U.S.F., Jeff was a founding member of a social fraternity requiring higher academic standards which later became a national fraternity. He then attended St. Thomas University School of Law, in Miami, Florida. St. Thomas University

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conferred a Juris Doctorate upon him in 1987. Some of his academic memberships and honors include Dean's list, 1986, 1987; Moot Court Board, 1984, 1985; member of Delta Theta Phi law fraternity.

Since graduating from St. Thomas University in 1987, Jeff began working for Vernis & Bowling, in the Fort Lauderdale, Florida office, handling general insurance defense matters. In 1988, he began working in the Palm Beach County office, located in North Palm Beach, Florida, and became managing attorney in 1990.

Jeff specializes in civil trial and appellate practice and is Board Certified in Civil Trial Law by the Florida Bar Board of Specialization. Certification is the highest level of recognition by the Florida Bar of the competency and experience of attorneys. Jeff is AV® Preeminent™ Peer Review Rated by Martindale-Hubbell, which identifies attorneys with preeminent legal ability and is a reflection of expertise, experience, integrity and overall professional excellence. He is recognized in Martindale-Hubbell's Bar Registry of Preeminent Lawyers in America. Jeff has also been selected as one of Florida's Legal Elite by Florida Trend Magazine and one of Florida's Super Lawyers by Super Lawyer Magazine. He has also been named one of Florida's Leading Lawyers by the South Florida Business Journal. Jeff has been listed as one of Florida's Top Lawyers by the South Florida Legal Guide and named one of Florida's Power Leaders in Law by South Florida Business Journal.

Jeff's areas of practice are insurance defense, commercial litigation and employment related practices (including trial and appellate practice). His experience includes the handling of lawsuits involving assault and battery, automobile liability, negligent hiring, supervision and retention, premises liability, negligent security, sexual assault, garage liability, construction and construction defect litigation, automobile dealership liability, consumer law, public law, including State, County and municipality, malicious prosecution/false arrest, product liability, coverage disputes, wrongful death, environmental law, employment related practices including sexual harassment, wrongful discharge and Americans with Disabilities Act, homeowner's association law, professional malpractice liability, constitutional law, and subrogation.

Jeff's experience in handling matters in these areas of practice includes the handling of catastrophic injury cases, complex litigation matters, multiple party actions and high profile cases. He has handled extremely high profile matters including *Morelock v. William Lane* (wrongful death), *Kraus v. Smith & Co.* (wrongful death), *Saccone v. State of Florida Department of Children and Families*, (wrongful death of a child), *Garcia-Bengochea v. State*

of Florida Department of Children and Families (wrongful adoption), John Daly v. PGA (personal injury/negligent security) and national class action litigation and multi-federal district class action litigation before the Multi-District Litigation Panel in Washington D.C. Further, this experience has led to Jeff being a speaker at numerous seminars and insurance industry conventions throughout the country including the National Risk and Insurance Management Society annual convention, National Restaurant Association Conference, the Florida Retail Federation annual conference, the Council on Litigation Management's Annual Conference, the Florida RIMS convention, the National Society of Professional Insurance Investigators' (NSPII) annual conference and many other national conferences. Jeff has also been a speaker at numerous in-house seminars for insurance companies and self-insureds throughout the United States. He is a regular speaker for the Florida Bar, the CEU Institute and the Council for Litigation Management.

Jeff is admitted to practice before the United States Supreme Court, the Florida Supreme Court (includes all Florida State courts) and the U.S. District Courts for the Southern and Middle Districts of Florida (trial bar). In addition, Jeff is a member of the Defense Research Institute (DRI), the National Restaurant Association, and the Council for Litigation Management (CLM). Jeff also is a charter/founding member of the National Retail and Restaurant Defense Association (NRRDA) and currently serves as its General Counsel.

Jeff has an outstanding trial and appellate record and will provide details upon request. He has successfully handled numerous appeals in Florida. Among others, Jeff was lead counsel of record for the appellate matters of Kimmins Recycling, Inc. v. Rogers, 704 So2d 600 (4th DCA 1997) (tort threshold requirements); Stuart Lincoln Mercury v. Wisk, 25 F.L.W. D 578 (Fla. 4th DCA 2000)(attorney's fees); Janashpa, Inc. v. Seitter, (Fla. 4th DCA 1999) (new trial); Brownell v. Florida Department of Corrections, (Fla. 1st DCA 1998)(compensable injury); Armstrong v. Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., (Fla. 4th DCA)(new trial, UM), Richards v. Luxury Imports, Inc., (Fla. 4th DCA 2005) (Fraud/Deceptive Trade Practices), Samuels v. Luxury Imports, Inc., (Fla. 4th DCA 2005) (Deceptive Trade Practices/new trial) and Verdino v. Pete's Café, (Fla. 4th DCA 2005) (Liquor Liability), Green v. Luxury Imports, Inc., (Fla. 4th DCA 2006) (Deceptive Trade Practices/fraud/class-action), Rosenfeld v. Seltzer, (Fla. 4th DCA 2008) (trial evidence and jury instructions), Petit-Dos v. School Board of Broward County, (Fla. 4th DCA 2009) (Fabre defense/intentional tort/comparative negligence) and Cardany v. Lowes, Fla. (4th DCA 2009) (trial evidence/new trial).

Jeff is also actively involved in community organizations. He

serves as President of the Board of Directors of Jeff Industries, Inc., which offers unique and innovative programs, education and training for troubled children and the mentally ill in Palm Beach County.

Jeff's outside interests include tennis, boating, scuba diving, traveling and martial arts (aikido and iaido). Mr. Vernis holds the rank of sixth degree black belt and a teaching certification (Shidoin) in the Japanese martial art of Aikido, awarded by the Aikido Foundation (Aikido World Headquarters in Japan) and the United States Aikido Federation.