



Scott C. Black, Esq.
Department Managing Attorney

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VERDICTS AND DISPOSITIONS

Juarez, Erick a/a/o Sanchez, Mylene v. Citizens Property Insurance Corporation
Jane Doe No. 53 et. al. v. The School Board of Monroe County, Florida
Rierson v. David Deveau, Latrice Pla and Abraham Baker
Jean Charles and Marie M. Charles, v. School Board of Monroe County, Florida

AREAS OF PRACTICE

Admiralty/Maritime Law
Automobile Liability (PIP/PD/BI/UM)
Business and Real Estate Law
Condominium and Homeowners' Association Litigation
Construction and Construction Defect Litigation
Cyber Security
Director & Officer Liability (D&O)
Errors & Omissions Liability (E&O)
First and Third Party Property and Casualty Claims
General Liability Defense Litigation
Land Use and Code Enforcement Prosecution and Defense
Municipal/Government Liability Defense
PIP/Personal Injury Protection Litigation
SIU/Suspicious & Fraudulent Claims

BAR & COURT ADMISSION

Scott C. Black was born in Nuremberg, Germany in 1973. For the past 35 years he has lived in the Florida Keys. He majored in Criminology/Criminal Justice and minored in Business at Florida State University, where he graduated in 1995. Prior to attending Florida State, Mr. Black earned a scholarship to attend his local Florida Keys Community College. Mr. Black graduated from FKCC in 1993 after making the Deans List and being named to Who's Who Among American Junior Colleges. While attending Florida State University, Mr. Black was on the Deans List and was elected to the Golden Key National Honor Society.

Mr. Black graduated from Stetson University College of Law in December of 1998. During law school he participated in Stetson's legal argument competitions and made the Honor roll. While at Stetson, Mr. Black received his Florida Bar certification and worked as a State Prosecutor for St. Petersburg State Attorney's Office. After admission to the Florida Bar, Mr. Black began practicing with Vernis & Bowling of the Florida Keys. While practicing in the Florida Keys, Mr. Black has litigated in Federal, State and County Court. He has tried multiple cases both civil and criminal before the local County and Circuit courts. Mr. Black has also argued before the Third District Court of Appeals on multiple occasions and has argued before the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Mr. Black is on the Monroe County School Board legal staff, as well as providing representation for the City of Layton and the Florida Keys Mosquito Control District. Mr. Black is currently a member of the Florida Bar, and the American Bar Association.

Florida, 1999
U.S. Court of Appeals 11th Circuit
U.S. District Court Middle District of Florida
U.S. District Court Southern District of Florida

EDUCATION

Graduate:

Stetson University College of Law, 1998, J.D., 1998

Undergraduate:

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Timothy S. Kazee was born in Galion, Ohio. He graduated cum laude from the University of Toledo in 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science. Before graduating college, Timothy completed course work in business and communications through the Walt Disney World College Program, and he went on to serve as his University's College Program Ambassador. He then completed a Pre-Law Program at Oxford University, England and earned the Program's highest achievement level.

In 2002, Timothy graduated from the University of Toledo College of Law. During law school, he clerked at a local, litigation law firm and served as an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Legal Intern with Cedar Point Amusement Park, in Sandusky, Ohio.

Timothy is licensed in Florida and Ohio, and he has legal experience in state appellate and federal courts. While at VERNIS & BOWLING of Central Florida, P.A., Timothy has focused his practice on the areas of personal injury litigation and first party property claims, including auto liability defense, fraud / misrepresentation, premises liability, wind storm and water damage claims, and Personal Injury Protection litigation. In addition to defense litigation, his practice includes representing insurance companies in conducting good faith examinations under oath and preparing coverage opinions. He has defended community associations in claims arising from management and resident disputes and understands the value of working with

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residents, communities, and their insurers to explore prompt and meaningful dispute solutions.

Timothy has served his community as a municipal court mediator, as an Arbitrator for the Better Business Bureau, and as a University guest lecturer. He has also presented a wide- variety of Continuing Education seminars for insurance companies throughout the state of Florida.

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Nationally Board Certified Trial Advocate
Florida Bar Board Certified Civil Trial Lawyer
Florida Supreme Court Certified Circuit Court Mediator

Christopher Blain is the managing attorney of the Tampa, Florida office. He has worked all aspects of the insurance industry. He is an expert in Civil Trial and is Board Certified by the Florida Bar and Nationally Board Certified by the National Board of Trial Advocacy. He was born in Addison, Illinois which is a suburb outside of Chicago. He attended college at Lake Forest College

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where he graduated in 1996. He continued his education at Barry University, School of Law where he received his *Juris Doctor* in 2002. While in law school, Chris worked under the Honorable Judge Walter Komanski at the Ninth Judicial Circuit, where he researched complex civil litigation issues.

Chris has tried numerous matters to jury verdicts in both State and Federal Courts. He has litigated general liability defense work ranging from handling lawsuits involving claims of wrongful death, premises liability, insurance coverage, auto negligence, negligent security and property claims. Chris has also represented Homeowner/Condominium Associations and their Board Members before HUD, State and Federal Courts regarding disputes arising over deed restrictions, enforcement of those restrictions and alleged discrimination. In addition, Chris has also lectured extensively in these fields where he has been a featured speaker at continuing education seminars around the United States on a variety of insurance defense and litigation topics.

Chris is admitted to practice law in all State Courts in Florida as well as all Federal Courts which include the Northern, Southern and Middle Districts of Florida. He is admitted to practice in the Eleventh Circuit of the United States Court of Appeals. Further, he is admitted to practice in all courts in the State of Illinois.

In his free time, Chris enjoys being active in the Tampa area. He is an assistant soccer coach for his son's team and can also be found cheering on his daughter at her drama class performances.



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William F. (Bill) Smith, II was born in Winfield, Alabama in 1962. Raised in the Birmingham area, he was valedictorian at Shades Valley High School in 1980, where he played basketball and baseball. He received a B.S. in Mineral Engineering, Petroleum specialization, from the University of Alabama in 1984. During college, Bill worked as an engineering intern for Alabama Power Company at the E. C. Gaston Steam Plant. In 1987, he earned a J.D. from the University of Alabama School of Law. Bill has been married to Suzann Sherer Smith since 1984. They have two adult children, Kathleen, an ICU nurse, and Parker, an insurance agent.

Bill is admitted to practice in Alabama (1987), U.S. District Court, Northern (1988), Middle (1997) and Southern (2004) Districts of Alabama, and the U.S. Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit (1999). Bill is a member of the Birmingham Bar Association and the National Retail & Restaurant Defense Association.

Bill has practiced exclusively in insurance defense litigation for more than 30 years, having successfully tried, as first chair, a diverse range of cases in state and federal courts, including automobile & commercial trucking, insurance & bad faith claims, wrongful death, premises liability, product liability, employment cases (race and pregnancy discrimination, sexual harassment, and workers compensation), and disputes between business entities.

From 2014 - 2020, Bill tried more than 30 cases to verdict.

He has previously served in-house as senior litigation counsel for a major property & casualty insurer.

Bill is a frequent speaker at seminars on a variety of civil litigation topics. He is active in his church and outside interests include gardening, hiking, backpacking basketball and all youth sports.

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Ian Neil Matthes was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Georgia State University with a Bachelor of Arts degree Political Science in 1994 and earned his J.D. from The University of Georgia School of Law in 1997. Ian serves as the Regional Managing Attorney and General Counsel for Vernis & Bowling. Ian provides operation management, support and services to all of the firm's offices throughout the Southeast.

Ian was admitted to the Georgia Bar in 1997, and is licensed to practice law before all state courts in Georgia. He is also licensed to practice before the U.S. District Courts for the Middle and Northern Districts of Georgia. For over 20 years, Ian has represented defendants in general liability, premises liability, automobile liability, bad faith/extra-contractual liability, commercial vehicle liability, insurance coverage, SIU/fraud (including first party arson/property claims and medical provider fraud), and UM/UIM liability matters. He also provides claims/litigation file audit services, and litigation management operations and process improvement consulting.

Ian previously served in-house with P&C insurance companies as a National Litigation Manager and Director of Litigation Management (AIG), managing litigation staff and procedures, as well as class actions and "Bad Faith" claims nationwide. With over 10,000 litigation matters under management, he was also responsible for final trial approval decisions in hundreds of cases

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per year. He regularly and proudly wears his "litigation management" and "home office insurance guy" hats while encouraging efficiency, communication, and delivery of timely results at the firm. This experience has also led to Ian serving as a speaker at numerous seminars throughout the nation, including at national insurance, litigation management and SIU conventions on topics including Premises Liability, Good Faith Claims Handling, Ethical Adjusting Practices, Personal Lines Litigation, SIU/Fraud Best Practices, Negotiation and Settlement Strategies, and Legislative and Case Law Updates.

Ian is a Founding Board Member and Past-President of the National Retail & Restaurant Defense Association (NRRDA), was the Charter Board President of the Georgia Chapter of the National Society of Professional Insurance Investigators (NSPII), and is a member of GDLA, DRI, CLM, ACA and numerous other litigation, claims, insurance and bar related organizations.

Ian and his wife, Stephanie, have two wonderful children, Charlotte (Charlie) and Harrison. Ian is an advocate for special needs children, raises money for Autism-related causes, and is a proud #AutismDad. His other interests include gardening, baking the best sourdough bread in the Southeast, cooking, and watching the UGA Bulldogs. He is always ready to share photos of his kids, plants, his 110+ varieties of fig trees, or why his hydroponic lettuce is better than anything you can buy.