



**Hunter O'Connor, Esq.**  
*Attorney*

Vernis & Bowling of the  
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## VERDICTS AND DISPOSITIONS

*Digennaro v. Malgrat, et. al.*

## AREAS OF PRACTICE

Administrative Law  
Affordable Housing  
Business and Real Estate Law  
Code Enforcement  
Contract Law (Drafting and Defense)  
Cyber Security  
Education Law  
Eminent Domain  
Ethics  
First and Third Party Property and Casualty Claims  
Labor and Employment Law  
Land Use and Zoning  
Municipal/Government Liability Defense  
PIP/Personal Injury Protection Litigation  
Public Finance  
Public Procurement  
Public Records Law  
Public Sector Liability  
Sunshine Law  
Tax Referendum/Election Law

## BAR & COURT ADMISSION

Hunter is a Florida native born and raised in the Florida Keys. Following his graduation from the University of Central Florida, he returned to Key Largo to attend law school at St. Thomas University in Miami Gardens, graduating in 2020. After admission to the Florida Bar, Mr. O'Connor began practicing with Vernis & Bowling of the Florida Keys.

As an associate with Vernis & Bowling of the Florida Keys, Mr. O'Connor has practiced in a wide variety of areas with a focus towards local government law.

Mr. O'Connor handles various legal matters for The School Board of Monroe County, the City of Key Colony Beach, City of Layton, Florida Keys Mosquito Control District and Key Largo Fire & EMS District, North Fort Myers Fire District, and Monroe County. Some of the legal areas Mr. O'Connor handles include, but are not limited to, contracts, ordinances, procurement, affordable housing, public records, and sunshine law. Mr. O'Connor looks forward to continuing to expand his skills and expertise alongside the excellent attorneys at Vernis & Bowling of the Florida Keys.

## EDUCATION

*Graduate:*

St. Thomas University School of Law

*Undergraduate:*

University of Central Florida

# VERNIS & BOWLING

ATTORNEYS AT LAW • EST. 1970



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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.

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Land Use and Zoning  
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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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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

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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.



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