Akerman Announces Chairman and CEO Succession Plan



David I. Spector and Andrew M. Smulian

Akerman LLP, a top-100 U.S. law firm, announced the firm's succession plan for its top leadership post. **David I. Spector**, a member of the firm's Executive Committee and co-chair of Akerman's Fraud & Recovery Practice Group, was elected by a partnership vote on Sept. 9 to succeed **Andrew M. Smulian** as the firm's ninth chairman and CEO. Spector will serve a 3-year term that begins Feb. 1, 2018 when Smulian concludes a decade-long tenure as chairman and CEO.

Akerman's Executive Committee issued the following statement: "Andrew is one of the great law firm leaders of our time. He has guided Akerman through transformative growth while strengthening our commitment to be a client-driven, entrepreneurial and forward-thinking enterprise. His bold leadership has placed Akerman at the vanguard of our industry and positioned our firm to address the important challenges impacting our clients and our profession today and in the future."

"The vision and growth strategy articulated nearly a decade ago are being realized," said Smulian. "This is the right time to plan for succession and David is the right leader for Akerman's future. He is an exceptional trial lawyer and has practiced at the leading edge of innovation and business transformation. He has changed the legal landscape for his clients and I am confident that he will be just as successful as our next chairman and CEO."

Spector is a member of the firm's Board of Directors and one

of seven members of the Executive Committee. He also is the founding co-chair of one of the largest legal teams in the United States dedicated to the eradication of fraud. He previously served on Akerman's Strategic Planning Committee and is a leader in many of the firm's client-driven initiatives.

"I am honored by the confidence of my partners and Andrew to serve as Akerman's next chairman and CEO," said Spector. "Andrew is a visionary and his dynamic, forward-thinking leadership continues to guide our firm in a rapidly changing industry. I look forward to collaborating with him throughout the transition and in the years ahead."

A news release from the firm continues:

> Smulian has guided the strategic growth and management of Akerman since 2008. He is the second longest serving chairman in the firm's 96-year history. Smulian has led Akerman's unprecedented expansion and record financial performance through a strong commitment to client-driven growth. During his tenure, the firm has expanded from 12 to 24 offices, serving clients across the United States and Latin America, and in more than 35 countries. Headcount has reached an all-time high of more than 650 lawyers and business professionals, attracting 200 lawyers since 2008 and bolstering its core strengths in middle market M&A and complex disputes, and its many areas of practice in the financial services, real estate and other dynamic client sectors.
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> A commitment to collaborative innovation and transformative business practices are hallmarks of Smulian's ongoing leadership. He has overseen the creation of the legal industry's first law firm R&D co-venture with clients, which earned Akerman distinction as one of the top forward-thinking law firms in North America by the *Financial Times*. Smulian also has led the creation of one of the most diverse

and inclusive law firms, ranked no. 3 among the top U.S. law firms for Hispanic lawyers by *Law360*; no. 19 among the top U.S. law firms for female partners by *The American Lawyer*; and distinguished as a leader in LGBT workplace equality with a 100 percent rating on the Corporate Equality Index. In addition, Smulian has advanced one of the most ambitious philanthropic and pro bono efforts for abused and neglected children in the family court system, which placed Akerman among the *Financial Times*' eight most innovative law firms in social responsibility. Following his tenure, Smulian will continue to play a leadership role in many of the firm's initiatives.

Spector joined Akerman in 2009 and has built a national trial practice devoted to the investigation and litigation of complex fraud schemes, and unfair and deceptive practices, on behalf of the largest U.S. insurance companies and self-insured retailers. His work has carved a groundbreaking path in plaintiff-side fraud investigation and litigation, and developed case law that helps corporations recover financial losses caused by fraudulent acts. Spector has handled a series of cases involving issues of first impression that have had a significant implication in the eradication of fraud. Among them, Spector was lead counsel in matters resulting in trial verdicts or summary judgments relating to unlawful ownership structure of healthcare providers, medical legal referral services and statutory obligations of medical directors.

He also has significant experience in defending law firms from claims of legal malpractice and breach of fiduciary duties – one of which resulted in the successful striking of his opponents' pleadings in a case valued at more than $1 billion. Outside the courtroom, Spector regularly acts as a trusted advisor to some of the nation's largest insurers and retailers in their efforts to identify fraud and establish pre-suit strategies.

The partnership vote last Friday paved the way to an orderly transition process beginning in 2017. Spector will assume his new responsibilities on February 1, 2018.