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Bernard V. Kears, III

Bernard V. Kears, III, graduated from Wofford College in 1972, where he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Mr. Kears received his Juris Doctor degree from the University of South Carolina School of Law in 1976, where he served as an editor for the *South Carolina Law Review*, and received a masters in law in estate planning from the University of Miami in 1977.

Mr. Kears has practiced law for over 20 years and has concentrated in the human resources/employee benefits and estate planning areas. His experience includes: designing and drafting of wills and trust documents associated with estate planning and elder law and with designing and drafting pension, deferred compensation, severance, self-funded medical and other benefit plans (including ESOPs); representation of clients regarding formation of limited liability companies and representation of clients regarding employee terminations and benefit plan issues (including retiree medical and COBRA issues) involving corporate acquisitions and divestitures.

Mr. Kears is a member of the Georgia, Illinois, South Carolina, Virginia and American Bar Associations. He is Co-Chair of the Group F (Employee Benefits) Committees and past Chairman of the ESOP Committee of the Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section of the American Bar Association. He is a past Vice Chairman of the Plan Terminations, Mergers and Acquisitions Committee and a member of the Government Plans and Nondiscrimination Committee of the American Bar Association. He is also a member of the Business Law and Tax Sections of the American Bar Association and a past member of the Pension Advisory Board to the State of Georgia Department of Human Resources. In 2000, Mr. Kears was elected to The Charter Class of Fellows in The American College of Employee Benefits Counsel, Inc.

Mr. Kears has previously practiced with both a national and a regional law firm and served as the Employee Benefits Counsel for a Fortune 200 company with approximately 30,000 employees worldwide.

Mr. Kears is a frequent lecturer on topics within his practice area and has served as an adjunct instructor at Oglethorpe University, Atlanta, Georgia.