

From: [Fred G. Minnis](#)
To: [Eggers, Dave](#)
Subject: Minnis-Renaming Courthouse or Law Library
Date: Wednesday, March 3, 2021 8:33:31 AM
Attachments: [Minnis-Courthouse or Library Letter.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This message has originated from **Outside of the Organization**. Do Not Click on links or open attachments unless you are expecting the correspondence from the sender and know the content is safe.

Morning Commissioner Eggers,

I hope this email finds you well! The Fred G. Minnis Sr. Bar Association, many voluntary bar associations in the 6th Judicial Circuit, community organizations and leaders are excited about the consideration of renaming a courthouse or law library in honor of Fred G. Minnis, Sr.

Fred G. Minnis, Sr. is a legal pioneer who greatly impacted Pinellas County. Here are some highlights:

- First full time African American lawyer in Pinellas County
- He was the only black researcher for the New Deal Agency that formed the Social Security Act and also served as a Legal Adviser to the War Claims Commission.
- He is represented individuals which led to integration of Pinellas County
- He is the "grandfather" where he provided opportunities to black attorneys including Judge James Sanderlin, Ike Williams and Morris Milton.

I have attached the letter submitted to the County administration in December.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Danielle Weaver-Rogers, Esq.
President, 2020-2021
Fred G. Minnis, Sr. Bar Association

December 1, 2020

Pinellas County Board of Commissioners
315 Court Street
Clearwater, FL 33756

VIA U.S. MAIL

Dear Commissioners,

Please join the Fred G. Minnis, Sr. Bar Association and friends in honoring the life, legacy and impact of Attorney Fred G. Minnis, Sr. (“Mr. Minnis”) by naming a Pinellas County Courthouse or the Pinellas County Law Library in his honor. Mr. Minnis is deserving of this honor because of his lifetime of service to the legal profession, to the community and to the pursuit of justice of all.

Born in 1908, Fred Gillam Minnis, Sr. was an immigrant from the Bahamas who was adopted by the Gillam family. A true trailblazer, in 1925, he helped raise funds for supplies to start the first high school for black students in Miami, Booker T. Washington High School. He graduated with honors from Booker T. Washington and later obtained his bachelor’s degree in Political Science from Howard University. After college, Mr. Minnis served his country as a member of the United States Air Force and provided logistics to the Tuskegee Airmen. After his service, he obtained a master’s degree and law degree from Howard University.

His career was extraordinary. In 1951, Mr. Minnis was quietly sworn into the Florida Bar in Bradenton as news reporters were afraid to cover Minnis as the first black lawyer in the area. He was the only black researcher for the New Deal Agency that formed the Social Security Act and also served as a Legal Adviser to the War Claims Commission. He was admitted to practice in the Court of Military Appeal, United States Tax Court, and the United States Supreme Court.

Mr. Minnis credited Lou Brown, Sr. and Enoch Davis, pastor of Bethel Community Baptist church for persuading him to begin his practice in St. Petersburg in 1956. With his law practice located at 624 22nd Street, Minnis became the first black lawyer to establish a full-time practice in Pinellas County. Mr. Minnis is affectionately referred to as the “grandfather” of black lawyers in Pinellas County. He paved the way and provided opportunities to a generation of lawyers through clerkships and mentorships. Minnis’ associates included Ike W. Williams, followed by Morris Milton, Frank Peterman and Judge James Sanderlin.

Mr. Minnis was a legal pioneer who fought for the rights of African Americans and advocated that all people be treated with fairness, dignity and respect.



Minnis and his associates handled many of the civil rights cases including representing students arrested for sit-ins, representing sanitation workers in their labor strikes, and arguing the case that integrated county-operated golf courses. He represented the NAACP and NAACP Youth Council in many legal actions throughout the 1950's and 1960s.

A community activist and champion for equal opportunities in education, Mr. Minnis is credited with sending more than 500 students to Howard University, his alma mater. He taught at Florida A & M University, the University of South Florida, the University of Tampa and Eckerd College. He actively served his community as a member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

Mr. Minnis was a proud husband to Frankie, who served as a principal at Bay Pointe Middle School and father to Charles and Fred Jr. In 1991, Minnis was buried in the historic Arlington National Cemetery. Even though he is no longer with us, his legacy lives through the Fred G. Minnis, Sr. Bar Association founded in 2000.

Fred G. Minnis, Sr. is deserving of having a courthouse or law library named in his honor to commemorate this rich history in Pinellas County. Due to his leadership and mentorship, generations of black lawyers and judges have practiced in Pinellas County. Though we all still strive for equality in the law, due to his sacrifice and persistence, "justice for all" became a reality within reach.

We write, therefore, as representatives of the generations of attorneys who have learned and benefited from Mr. Minnis' legacy. Naming a courthouse or law library in Mr. Minnis honor affirms the history of our past and guides us to build a better present and future for every citizen of Pinellas County.

If there are any questions, please email us info@minnisbar.com.

Sincerely,

2020-2021 Executive Board of the Fred G. Minnis, Sr. Bar Association

cc: Barry A. Burton, Pinellas County Administrator
Andrew Pupke, Director of Facilities and Real Property Division

Organizations and Individuals in support of this letter:

Senator Daryl Rouson
Florida State Senate, District 19

State Representative Michele Rayner-Goolsby
Florida House of Representatives, District 70



State Representative Ben Diamond
Florida House of Representatives, District 68

The Honorable Sean Shaw

Stetson University College of Law

The George Edgecomb Bar Association

St. Petersburg Bar Association

Pinellas Chapter of Florida Association of
Women Lawyers

Clearwater Bar Association

Pinellas Latin Bar Association

Pinellas Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers

Delta Omicron Sigma Chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.

National Pan-Hellenic Council Pinellas County

St. Petersburg Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

St. Petersburg Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Zeta Upsilon Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Bridgette Domingos, Esq. (Past President)

Zackary Zuroweste, Esq.

Sandra Diamond, Esq.

Jeannine Williams, Esq. (Past President)

Deborah Bushnell, Esq.



From: [Gentry Byrnes](#)
To: [Comments, BCC Agenda](#)
Cc: [Burton, Barry](#); [White, Jewel](#)
Subject: Comments for March 9 Board Meeting
Date: Monday, March 8, 2021 1:51:55 PM
Attachments: [GBB letter to County Commission.docx](#)

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Dear Commissioners,

Please see the attached letter for the March 9 board meeting in support of naming a building after Fred G. Minnis, Sr.

Thank you,

Gentry Barnett Byrnes on behalf of the named past presidents of the St Petersburg Bar Association
(727) 773-7420
gentry.byrnes@gmail.com

March 5, 2020

Pinellas County Board of Commissioners
315 Court Street
Clearwater, FL 33756

Dear Commissioners,

As Past-Presidents of the St. Petersburg Bar Association (SPBA), we support the naming of a Pinellas County Courthouse or the Pinellas County Law Library in honor of the legacy of Attorney Fred G. Minnis, Sr. Mr. Minnis handled many civil rights cases in Pinellas County and advocated for equal rights and respect for all residents, including black residents, in our county.

We support the Fred G. Minnis, Sr. Bar Association letter dated December 1, 2020 that outlines Mr. Minnis' extraordinary life and accomplishments and the reasons his legacy should be honored.

Sincerely,

William C. Ballard, 1983 SPBA President
Aubrey O. Dicus, Jr., 1987 SPBA President
Kent G. Whittemore, 1996 SPBA President
Doreen S. Young, 2001 SPBA President
John V. Tucker, 2002 SPBA President
David J. Abbey, 2003 SPBA President
William H. Walker, 2004 SPBA President
Seymour A. Gordon, 2005 SPBA President
Camille J. Iurillo, 2007 SPBA President
Jeannine S. Williams, 2008 SPBA President
James D. Thaler, Jr., 2009 SPBA President
John W. Biesinger, 2010 SPBA President
Gentry Barnett Byrnes, 2011 SPBA President
Timothy A. Miller, 2012 SPBA President
Raleigh "Lee" Greene, 2013 SPBA President
J.S. Lucas Fleming, 2014 SPBA President
Cary A. Cash, 2015 SPBA President
Erica K. Smith, 2016 SPBA President
William B. McQueen, 2017 SPBA President
Gregory J. Hoag, 2018 SPBA President

Cc: Barry A. Burton, Pinellas County Administrator
Jewel White, County Attorney

From: [Tracy, Jan H](#)
To: [Comments, BCC Agenda](#)
Subject: FW: Fred G. Minnis
Date: Monday, March 8, 2021 10:12:52 AM

I am forwarding an email Commissioner Seel received regarding the renaming of the courthouse.
Jan

Jan H. Tracy

Executive Aide to Commissioner Karen Williams Seel
Pinellas County Commission
315 Court Street, 5th Floor
Clearwater, FL 33756
727-464-3278
jhtracy@pinellascounty.org
www.pinellascounty.org

From: Jack Day <jday@dayincourt.us>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 3:33 PM
To: Seel, Karen <kseel@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Subject: Fred G. Minnis

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Dear Karen,

I am writing to encourage your support to rename the Pinellas County Law Library in honor of the late Fred G. Minnis. Mr. Minnis was a true waymaker and pioneer in our legal community, and a role model for lawyers of all backgrounds.

In my time on the Circuit Court bench, I was troubled by the racial division within our Pinellas legal community. This small gesture would be a substantial step forward.

Thank you for your attention.

Best regards,

Jack

PS - You may remember that my son Mike spent the day shadowing you as a college student about 17 years ago. I thought you'd like to know that he too is following a career of public service, as a foreign affairs officer with the State Department, and is currently on a one year Congressional fellowship through the

Brookings Institution.

From: [Walsh, J Doyle](#)
To: [BoardRecords](#),
Subject: FW: Fred G. Minnis
Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 2:02:53 PM

Jordan Doyle Walsh

Office of Commissioner Janet C. Long
District 1, Pinellas Board of County Commissioners
Phone: 727-464-3365

From: Jack Day <jday@dayincourt.us>
Sent: Tuesday, February 23, 2021 12:56 PM
To: Long, Janet C <JanetCLong@co.pinellas.fl.us>
Subject: Fred G. Minnis

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Dear Janet,

I write to encourage your support to rename the Pinellas County Law Library in honor of the late Fred G. Minnis. Mr. Minnis was a true waymaker and pioneer in our legal community, and a role model for lawyers of all backgrounds.

In my time on the Circuit Court bench, I was troubled by the racial division within our Pinellas legal community. This small gesture would be a substantial step forward.

Thank you for your attention.

Best regards,
Jack Day