

**Candidate Statement for Thomas K. Equels**  
*Independent Director Candidate*

Dear Members of the Nominating and Governance Committee:

It is with great enthusiasm and a deep sense of responsibility that I submit my candidacy for the Independent Director position. With over four decades of leadership experience across military, law, business, public service and martial arts, I bring a wealth of expertise that can contribute meaningfully to the governance and strategic direction of USA Judo.

My journey began with an unyielding commitment to service, honed during my time as a combat pilot in the Vietnam War, where I was honored with two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star, 15 Air Medals, and the Purple Heart. It was as an Army Aviator that I first learned and practiced 'Unarmed Combat' which was the Army's mix of karate and judo. My military experiences instilled in me a profound respect for discipline, courage, and ethical leadership—principles that have guided me throughout my career.

As a lawyer and former Managing Director of the Equels Law Firm, I have had the privilege of representing national and state governments, as well as major corporations across a variety of industries including biotech, insurance, aviation, and construction. My practice was devoted to complex litigation, with particular emphasis on civil racketeering, business torts, and commercial matters. These experiences, coupled with my role as the international litigation coordinator for the post-Noriega government of Panama, have provided me with a global perspective and a deep understanding of the complexities of international law and business.

My leadership in the biotech sector, is recognized by awards such as the BioFlorida Entrepreneur of the Year award. I was also asked to serve on the board of BioFlorida, the state's BioTech industry organization, a public service I am honored to perform. My service at AIM and BioFlorida has been driven by a commitment to advancing health solutions that make a difference in people's lives.

Beyond my professional achievements, was awarded a black belt in Torasamado katate, an American style founded by Army Vietnam Vet Master Bill Klase, RIP, and based upon principles of military 'Unarmed Combat'. I was (retired from the sport as I am 72 and suffered a serious hamstring rupture at a tournament in early 2023) a dedicated karate competitor and champion, having won North American Sport Karate Association (NASKA) National Championships in five different divisions and also honored as an Amateur Athletic Union Athlete of the Year. These accomplishments reflect the same discipline and determination that I strive to bring to every aspect of my work. Additionally, I am deeply committed to community service and have been honored with numerous awards for my contributions, including the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Award and the Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award. I have also been knighted by Pope Benedict XVI, reflecting my dedication to ethical leadership and service. My retirement from karate competition has not stopped me from continuing to contribute, having recently started a dojo scholarship fund for 'tuition' for underprivileged students in Miami.

As an Independent Director, I would bring not only my extensive legal and business acumen but also a steadfast commitment to ethical governance and strategic oversight. I am eager to contribute to the continued success and growth of the organization, ensuring that we navigate challenges with integrity and seize opportunities with vision.

I respectfully ask for your support in this election, and I look forward to the possibility of serving this esteemed board and contributing to the important service it performs.

Sincerely,

**Thomas K. Equels**

# Thomas K. Equels

## CONTACT

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## EXPERIENCE

Tom Equels currently serves as CEO of AIM ImmunoTech. He was the Managing Director of the Equels Law Firm through 2015. His practice was devoted to complex litigation, with particular emphasis on civil racketeering, business torts and commercial matters. For more than 25 years, Tom represented national and state governments, banks, biotech, insurance, aviation, construction and real estate development companies. He has extensive experience in international matters and served as the international litigation coordinator for the post-Noriega government of Panama for over 15 years, served as counsel for Chinese National Petroleum Corp. and Trinidad and Tobago's National Petroleum Corp., and worked extensively as an international law specialist in Europe, South/Central America, and Africa.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS

- Juris Doctor, high honors, Florida State University College of Law, 1980; Master of Science, Troy State University, 1976; Bachelor of Science, summa cum laude, Troy State University, 1975

## PROFESSIONAL AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Honored with two Distinguished Flying Crosses, the Bronze Star, 15 Air Medals, 3 with "v" device, and the Purple Heart for combat actions as a pilot during the Vietnam War
- Awarded the Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Award
- Awarded the Federal Bar Public Service Award
- Awarded The Guild of Catholic Lawyers' St. Thomas More Award
- Received the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Community Service Award
- Knighted by Pope Benedict XVI
- Awarded BioFlorida Entrepreneur of the Year Award
- Selected for BioFlorida Board of Directors
- Author of numerous law, horse and aviation related articles and the novel, *The Horseman's Tale*.

## EXPERIENCE

### Leadership Experience

- Military: combat pilot, instructor pilot and Training and Doctrine Command Project Officer; Former President and Managing Director of Equels Law Firm; Court-appointed receiver in numerous industries; CEO of AIM ImmunoTech Inc.

## SPORTS

- Equestrian: International champion and regional champion rider in numerous USEF sanctioned competitions
- Karate: 5-time NASKA National champion and AAU (Florida) Athlete of the Year