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Katten Welcomed Former Senior Obama Advisor Valerie Jarrett as Guest Speaker for Black History Month Event

(CHICAGO) Katten announced today that Barack Obama Foundation Chief Executive Officer Valerie Jarrett was the keynote speaker during the firm's Black History Month event that celebrated her remarkable civic contributions and career in public service.

Recognized as one of *TIME* magazine's "100 Most Influential People," Jarrett shared details of her time in public service, much of which is highlighted in her *New York Times* bestselling book *Finding My Voice: My Journey to the West Wing and the Path Forward*.

Jarrett was introduced by Mayor Richard M. Daley, senior counsel at Katten, with whom she previously worked in a variety of capacities for 14 years, including as his deputy chief of staff while he served as Mayor of Chicago.

Alisa Goodwin, Katten's Director of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, moderated the event.

"Resilience" in the modern era of government and beyond was the theme of the virtual fireside chat, where Jarrett discussed a range of life experiences, before and after her time in the White House. She spoke of growing up as the only child of a physician father and mother who was a child advocate, and about lessons she learned during her time as senior advisor to President Barack Obama, from 2009 to 2017.

As the longest-serving senior advisor to a president in history, Jarrett said she often observed how many of the most effective practices found in the public sector extend to law firms, particularly those regarding leadership strategies that help promote the work of those who have not yet attained great status in an organization. She said she has always sought to support and secure greater visibility for these people on her team.

"I can't really think of a time in the White House where I made a presentation to Barack Obama. He heard my voice all the time. He did not need to see me shine, but he needed to see my team," Jarrett said.

“Whenever we would go in for a briefing, I ensured that the person who was principally responsible for the subject matter briefed him. First of all, because it would scare them to death, the thought of briefing him. Also because he would make them own it in a way they wouldn’t if they thought they’d be just handing it off to me. Most importantly, he got to see what an incredible team I had,” she added. “If you are in a position of power or authority, get out of the way of the people who are behind you, and let them shine.”

While working in the White House, Jarrett oversaw the Offices of Public Engagement and Intergovernmental Affairs and chaired the White House Council on Women and Girls. In addition to her role as foundation CEO, Jarrett currently is on the foundation’s board of directors and a Senior Distinguished Fellow at the University of Chicago Law School. She serves on several public, private and not-for-profit boards as well.

Prior to working in Washington, DC, Jarrett served in several public and private sector roles, including on corporate and civic boards and in city government as Commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development.

“We are all inspired not only by Valerie’s impressive accomplishments, but also the remarkable passion she pours into her work as a relentless champion and powerful advocate for people, especially our nation’s youth and diverse individuals,” said Katten Chairman Roger P. Furey. “At Katten, we share that same commitment. We seek to identify the talent and potential that lies within all of our attorneys and business professionals and to continually support them so they can thrive and attain even greater success.”

Katten is a full-service law firm with approximately 700 attorneys in locations across the United States and in London and Shanghai. Clients seeking sophisticated, high-value legal services turn to Katten for counsel locally, nationally and internationally. The firm’s core areas of practice include corporate, financial markets and funds, insolvency and restructuring, intellectual property, litigation, real estate, structured finance and securitization, transactional tax planning, private credit and private wealth. Katten represents public and private companies in numerous industries, as well as a number of government and nonprofit organizations and individuals. For more information, visit katten.com.

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