

J. Andrew "Drew" Atkinson was born in Gainesville and grew up in Ft. Lauderdale and Bradenton, where he graduated from Manatee High School. He received a bachelors degree from Florida State University and a juris doctor with honors from Nova Southeastern University.

He began his legal career at the Florida Office of the Attorney General, working in the Criminal Appeals Division before serving as a Deputy Solicitor General. After clerking for the Honorable Melanie G. May of the Fourth District Court of Appeal, he served as Assistant General Counsel to the Governor before entering private practice at the statewide law firm of Broad and Cassel. He later served as General Counsel for two state agencies—the Florida Department of State and the Florida Department of Management Services. He was appointed to the Second District Court of Appeal by Governor Rick Scott in 2018.

After graduating from college and before attending law school, Judge Atkinson enlisted in the United States Army in 1997. He served in First Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. A graduate of, among other military training, Army Airborne School, the Ranger Indoctrination Program, and Ranger School, he served in his unit as a rifleman, grenadier, RTO (radio operator), automatic rifleman, machine gunner, infantry fire time leader, and supply sergeant. He fulfilled his term of service in 2001 as an E-5 sergeant.