

Sonia Escobio O'Donnell

Following her clerkship with the Honorable Peter T. Fay in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, Sonia Escobio O'Donnell became an Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida where she was involved in civil and criminal trials and appellate litigation. As an assistant for approximately 16 years, she participated in criminal cases, wrote and argued criminal appeals, supervised the appellate division and became the Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney and Special Counsel to the U.S. Attorney. As the Executive Assistant she had management and supervisory duties for all areas of the office, reviewed and approved indictments, coordinated and created the program for the Drug Task Force in Miami (HIDTA), and drafted or argued major motions in high-profile criminal cases. As Special Counsel to the U.S. Attorney, she advised the U.S. Attorney on major legal issues in the office.

Following the U.S. Attorney's Office, Ms. O'Donnell joined former prosecutors at Lehtinen O'Donnell. Later she joined Jordan Burt and then Carlton Fields, which she recently left to start her own practice where she continues to practice appellate and complex litigation. In private practice, Ms. O'Donnell represents corporations in civil litigation in both the trial and appellate levels. She advises clients on issues of grand jury subpoenas and white-collar defense. She represents criminal defendants in federal courts on issues involving the Food Drug and Cosmetic Act, Medicare Fraud, Mortgage Fraud, RICO, Hobbs Act, Extraditions and other federal charges. She has litigated against federal agencies in administrative proceedings as well as in federal district court. She has litigated, at both the trial and appellate levels, issues of Indian law, including tribal sovereignty and immunity and Indian gaming (Indian Gaming Regulatory Act). She has also litigated numerous environmental cases in federal trial and appellate courts involving violations of the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act, NPDES permits, as well as challenges to environmental consent decrees and to state statutes that violate the Clean Water Act.

Both as an Assistant U.S. Attorney and in private practice she is often called on to provide legal advice on complex issues, including jurisdictional issues such as the challenge to the high seas statute (which authorized seizure of stateless or foreign vessels on the high seas), international law issues (such as the Head of State challenge in the case of Panamanian Dictator Manuel Noriega), jurisdictional challenges in a class action (Allianz v. Negrete) where the district court enjoined a settlement in a class action in another jurisdiction, and lawsuits against government agencies (such as Miccosukee v. South Florida Water Management District - a Clean Water Act case involving discharges of pollutants from point sources). She attended and advised in the criminal homicide trial, in Costa Rica, of American Ann Bender.

She has conducted criminal jury trials and criminal-related hearings, civil non-jury trials, filed certiorari petitions, merits and amicus briefs in the United States Supreme Court. She has briefed over one hundred cases in federal appellate courts and presented over fifty oral arguments. She has also briefed and argued cases in state trial and appellate courts.