



**Anita J. Ponder**  
Partner



Anita J. Ponder is a partner and the Director of the Chicago Government Contracts Group at Quintairos, Prieto, Wood & Boyer, P.A. (QPWB). After more than 30 years of providing consultation, strategic guidance, training and advocacy to government contractors and agencies, Ms. Ponder brings to the firm extensive legal and consulting experience in government procurement and contracting, bidding, contract compliance and diversity compliance. It is a truth universally acknowledged that no matter where she shows up, Anita Ponder is always prepared and determined to achieve her client's goals – which may explain her phenomenal legal career.

Ms. Ponder represents industry leaders including major corporations, large businesses, mid-sized and small businesses, including disadvantaged, minority, women and veteran-owned businesses. She also represents major government agencies and nonprofit business organizations. Some of Ms. Ponder's recent legal accomplishments include: developing and implementing a small business certification initiative that provides legal and business consulting services to DBE/MBE/WBE/VBE applicants; reviewing and modifying governmental solicitations and contracts of governmental agencies and related bid proposals; drafting a comprehensive Code of Conduct for a major governmental agency and one of the nation's largest airport systems; providing legal and consulting services to Section 3 and Resident Owned businesses; and preparing a comprehensive 50 State memorandum on key government procurement, bidding and lobbyist requirements.

Ms. Ponder is an active member of QPWB's "Giving Back" Committee which has spearheaded a number of noteworthy initiatives during the pandemic to benefit victims of COVID-19 and their families, support select non-profit organizations, and to acknowledge the heroic efforts of local frontline essential workers. Representing the QPWB Giving Back Committee, Ms. Ponder recently mentored a local law student in the 2021 Diversity Scholarship Foundation - First Generation Mentor-Mentee Mentorship Program. This Program was initially organized to promote diversity and inclusion by providing support to minority and other diverse law students and lawyers by helping them to achieve their fullest potential within the legal community.

Prior to joining QPWB in 2018, Ms. Ponder was a partner in the international, full service law firm of Seyfarth Shaw LLP in the Government Contracts and Construction Law Practice Groups. Seyfarth Shaw, one of the top law firms in Chicago and nationwide, has over 800 lawyers in 14 offices. Some of her major accomplishments at Seyfarth include: conducting a nationwide research project to examine government purchasing policies and procedures, and related case law, in connection with state and local minority and women business enterprise (MBE/WBE) programs; preparing a comprehensive report recommending best diversity and innovative practices, policies and procedures; providing consultation to public housing authorities (PHAs) in connection with their efforts to promote economic development, neighborhood economic improvement and individual self-sufficiency by low-income, minority residents; defending government contractors in governmental investigations and debarment proceedings related to allegations of misconduct on government contracts; and conducting DBE/MBE/WBE government project audits and providing related contract compliance training to government agencies and construction contractors.

The Chicago business and governmental communities recognizes Ms. Ponder's exceptional efforts to help businesses to develop and implement their business plan to achieve their goals in the governmental marketplace while staying in compliance with complex rules, regulations and requirements when she was the Chair of the Government Contractors Business Forum (GCBF) for approximately 10 years. The GCBF was an award-winning, innovative initiative that Ms. Ponder organized at her prior law firm to provide key information, counseling and support to government contractors and consultants in various industries, including aviation, information technology, transportation, architecture and engineering, construction, program management and financial services. Over 1000 business owners, executives, professionals and government representatives participated in and/or supported the GCBF under the dynamic leadership of Ms. Ponder.

Before she worked at Seyfarth Shaw, Ms. Ponder was a partner at the law firm of Drinker Biddle & Reath (DBR), formerly Gardner Carton & Douglas, and practiced in the Government Regulation, Lobbying and Advocacy Department. DBR is a national, full service law firm with more than 600 lawyers in 12 offices nationwide. Prior to DBR, she worked at the law firm of Quarles & Brady, another national law firm with approximately 500 attorneys in 11 offices. Some of her major accomplishments at DBR and Quarles & Brady include: providing government relations services to government contractors in various industries in connection with State regulatory hearings; conducting nationwide research to examine government purchasing policies and procedures in connection with MBE/WBE programs; representing construction contractors in government debarment proceedings in connection with issues related to DBE/MBE/WBE compliance; and providing government relations and government contract services to government contractors in connection with major spending programs of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, Cook County and federal government.

Ms. Ponder has been one of the nation's most effective advocates of supplier diversity in the public and private sectors. Throughout her distinguished professional career, she has been a strong proponent for the development, promotion and inclusion of MBE/WBEs on federal, State and local contracts. She started her career after law school with the City of Chicago in the administration of Mayor Harold

Washington in the Departments of Public Works as a Contract Compliance Specialist and subsequently, in the Procurement Services Department as the Coordinator of Contract Compliance and Director of Contract Compliance, where she was responsible for the development and implementation of the City's DBE/MBE/WBE and EEO programs. Some of her responsibilities for the City of Chicago included: developing, implementing and monitoring administrative rules and regulations applicable to over 3,000 contracts annually totaling over \$700M; drafting and negotiating major contract terms and conditions; resolving contract disputes between the City, its prime contractors and their subcontractors; developing and implementing regulations governing DBE/MBE/WBE certification; conducting contract compliance policy sessions, procurement seminars and certification eligibility meetings; developing a comprehensive Contract Compliance Training Program for City managers and employees; and coordinating and implementing the first annual City sponsored Construction Management Training Program for government contractors.

Ms. Ponder has delivered a number of speeches on government contracting and diversity compliance to major corporations, business organizations, bar associations and government agencies throughout the country, and she has prepared several articles which have been published in legal and business publications. She has appeared on television and radio programs to discuss government contract issues. Her legal, business and community affiliations have been numerous. She has received notable accolades throughout her career for her significant contributions to the legal and business communities. To name a few - her honors include the Crescent Moon Award in Legal Excellence by Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity; Business Leader of Color by Chicago United; the U.S. Small Business Administration's "Woman in Business Advocate of the Year" Award; the CUCA "Woman of the Year" Award; and the Sage Award for Excellence and Leadership from the Chicago Commission on Human Relations Advisory Council on Women. Ms. Ponder has been recognized as one of the most influential women in Chicago by Crain's Chicago Business and the Chicago Business Journal; one of the most influential Chicagoans by N'DIGO Magazine; and one of the women making a difference by Today's Chicago Woman Magazine.

Ms. Ponder received her J.D. from the University of Florida Holland Law Center in Gainesville, Florida and her B.A. with honors in public administration and political science from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. She is admitted to the bars of the State of Illinois and the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. She recently served on the board of the YWCA Metropolitan Chicago, the oldest and largest women's organization in the region whose mission is to eliminate racism and empower women. For more than 140 years, the YWCA has been committed to serving the needs of women and families annually through programs focused on safety and wellness, education and training, and economic sustainability. The YMCA also offers career training, financial management, digital literacy and business services.