John S. Vento

Senior Member

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Overview

John Vento has been with Trenam since 1981 and became a Shareholder in 1985. He was named Construction Litigation Lawyer of the Year 2014 in Tampa by Best Lawyers in America. He has been consistently ranked by Super Lawyers in the top 100 in Florida and the top 50 in Tampa Bay for construction law. John is Florida Bar Board Certified in Construction Law and is a Florida Supreme Court Certified Civil Court Mediator. He has also been certified as a Mediator by the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida. John has been an Arbitrator with the American Arbitration Association since 1982 and serves on the Complex Case and Construction Panels.

John leads Trenam's Construction Law and Government Contracting Group. He has experience in the areas of Qui Tam/Whistleblower claims, federal government contracting, private, public and federal construction contracting, private, public and federal construction disputes, international law, arbitration and mediation, and medical health care fraud.

Prior to joining the firm, John was a Judge Advocate on active duty with the U.S. Air Force, including an assignment as Assistant Law Professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy. While in the Air Force Reserve, John served as an Adjunct Professor of Law at the Air Force's Judge Advocate General's School, which published the handbook he authored on Contingency Contracting and Fiscal Law and where he taught procurement law. Upon his retirement in the rank of Colonel, John was awarded the prestigious Legion of Merit Award.

Representative Matters

- Successfully represented a board certified physiatrics physician in an action filed under seal in the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida who was retaliated against by a Florida hospital for refusing to participate in an alleged fraudulent diagnosis billing scheme utilized by an national chain of rehabilitation hospitals sued in multi-state actions by five other whistle blowers alleging the same fraud resulting in a $48 million civil qui tam settlement of the alleged fraud by the company and the Department of Justice.
- In 2018, successfully defended to a zero verdict a five-week jury trial for a Top 10 world-wide engineering firm and two of its engineers in a $50 million design malpractice claim for the design of a gravity sewer and lift station.
- Lead litigation counsel for a major public transportation authority over the collapse of an elevated expressway which resulted in litigation and mediation with various design team members, settling design and insurance claims and obtaining for the authority over $85.75 million.
- Lead trial counsel for a major electrical utility in a one month trial against a major international engineering firm, securing a judgment confirmed on appeal of over $40.6 million.
- Successfully defended a world-wide engineering and construction firm in 2014, in a one week federal court trial, obtaining a judgment in excess of $1,000,000 on a counterclaim involving construction contracting on a military base and defeating a $1 million plus claim by the subcontractor.
- Successfully defended a major public transportation authority against a $25

Alternate Contact

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Practice Areas

- Construction
- Government Contracting
- Qui Tam / Whistle Blower Claims
- Mediation and Arbitration
- Professional Liability
- Insurance

Education

- Yale Law School (National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow), 1980
- LL.M., International Law, University of Michigan Law School, 1979
  - Michigan Scholar for highest academic achievement
- J.D.,*cum laude,*Duquesne University School of Law, 1974
- B.A.,*cum laude,*University of Pittsburgh, 1971

Admissions

- Florida
- United States Court of International Trade
- United States Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, Fifth Circuit, and Eleventh Circuit
- U.S. District Court, Middle and Southern Districts of Florida
- U.S. Court of Federal Claims
- U.S. Supreme Court

million claim by the contractor in dispute review committee hearings, resulting in a favorable mediated settlement for well less than half of the claim.
- Florida construction counsel for a Bolivian corporation in an ICDR arbitration claim of over $10 million for the construction of a three hundred mile power transmission line in Chile. Assisted New York arbitration counsel in obtaining a favorable settlement.
- President of an ICDR arbitration panel in a $6 million dispute involving the construction of a veterinary medical school in the Caribbean Islands.
- Lead trial counsel for a major international design and construction firm before the United States Board of Contract Appeals regarding the design and construction of a building at a U.S. military base.
- Lead litigation counsel in the successful dismissal of a qui tam whistleblower fraud case against a government contractor sued for over $600 million in damages. Obtained an involuntary dismissal of the claim during discovery.
- Lead litigation counsel in the successful defense of a government contractor sued in a $22 million qui tam whistleblower fraud case. Obtained an involuntary dismissal after the third day of trial.
- Currently claims counsel for a major international design and construction firm in a $10 million claim pending in the United States Board of Contract Appeals.
- Successfully represented a major international design and construction firm in litigation in the Northern District of Georgia arising out of its teaming agreement with a minority contractor on seven military projects, successfully resolving the matter in the favor of client.
- Successfully represented a client in an ICC International Arbitration in Canada in a dispute with its Belgium distributor, achieving a favorable result in the ICC arbitration that resulted in a favorable mediated settlement of claims pending in the Belgium Commercial Court.
- Successfully mediated numerous construction disputes in Florida.

Honors and Distinctions

- AV Preeminent Peer Review Rated by Martindale-Hubbell
- *Tampa Bay Magazine's* Top Lawyers List, 2010, 2017-2018, 2020, 2022-2026
- *Thirteenth Judicial Circuit* Pro Bono Award, April 2017
- Florida Bar Board Certified in Construction Law, 2005-present
- Certified Circuit Civil Mediator, 2013present
- *National Law Journal*, Tampa's Top Attorneys, 2011
- *Chambers USA* Ranked, Construction: Mediators, 2010-2020, 2022-2026
- *The Best Lawyers in America*
- Construction Law, 2006-2027
- Commercial Litigation, 2021-2027
- Litigation - Construction, 2011-2027
  - *Lawyer of the Year*, 2014
- *Florida Super Lawyers*, Construction Litigation, 2006-2026 (20+ year recognition)
  - "Top 100: Florida Super Lawyers Top List", 2014-2018
  - "Top 50: Tampa Bay Super Lawyers Top List", 2014-2018
- *Florida Trend's Legal Elite*, 2005, 2010-2013, 2016-2020
- *American Law Journal*, Tampa's Top Lawyers, 2011
- *American Law Journal*, Top Lawyers, 2011
- *Tampa Bay Business Journal*, Who's Who in Law, 2007
- *Quien Es Quien* in U.S. Commerce, 1994-1996
- *Who's Who Legal: Construction*, 2013, 2019, 2020

Professional Involvement

- American Bar Association, Forum on the Construction Industry
  - Governing Committee, 2011-2014
  - Division 8 Steering Committee, 2005-2011
  - Liaison between ABA Forum on Construction Law to the ABA's Commission on Hispanic Rights and Responsibilities, 2015-2019
  - Governing Committee Liaison to the Membership, Technology, and Diversity Committees, 2011-2014
  - Division 8, International Contracting, Chair, 2007-2009
  - Division Chairs, Membership and Technology Committees, 2006-2011
  - Special Committee on Communications, 2007
- ABA Section of Litigation : Construction Litigation Committee, Co-Chair, 1994-1996
- American Arbitration Association: Construction and Large Complex Panels, 1982-present

- Hillsborough County Bar Association: Construction Law Committee, Co-Founder and Co-Chair, 2006-2008
- Tampa Bay Hispanic Bar Association, 2007-present
- National Hispanic Bar Association, 2011-present
- Associated Builders and Contractors, Associate Member, 2005-present
- American Institute of Architects, Associate Member, 2008-present
- Associated General Contractors of America, 2000-2005
- Florida Chapter of Design Build Institute America, Co-Founder, 2001
- Mid-Florida Region of the American Arbitration Association, Governing Board, 1998-2002

Community Involvement

- Tampa Bay Kiwanis Club (Senior Status), 1982-Present
  - Honored with 40+ years membership, 2022
- Tampa Bay Kiwanis Foundation, President, 1999-2001
- University of Michigan Alumni Association, Director Emeritus, 1989
- University of Michigan Alumni Club of Tampa Bay, President, 1985-1987
- Sant' Yago Educational Foundation (Tampa's Latino Scholarship Foundation), Special Counsel, 2005-Present

Thought Leadership

- "Contractors, how do you fight the feds?," Panelist, ABA Forum on Construction Law, Summer Conference, July 2022
- "Effective Construction Arbitration," Panelist, Hillsborough County Bar Association, February 2021
- "Contractors Overcharging Local Governments Beware Unveiling the Mysteries of the Florida and Federal False Claims Acts," Speaker, The Florida Bar City, County & Local Government Law Section's 43rd Annual Local Government Law in Florida Webinar, July 2020
- "Shutting down Tampa Bay construction during coronavirus would be 'devastating' to the economy," Interview, *Tampa Bay Business Journal,* April 2020
- "How Government Contracts Differ from Private Work," Speaker, American Bar Association Forum on Construction Law Webinar, April 2020
- "Recovery Plans, Change Orders, Liquidated Damages, and the Owner's Implied ObligationsWho Is Responsible When Schedule Slips?" Co-Author, Journal of the ABA Forum on Construction Law, Volume 39, Fall 2019
- "How Public Projects Differ from Private Work," Speaker, The Florida Bar Real Property, Probate & Trust Law Section's Construction Law Certification Review Course, March 2019
- "Damages for Construction Defects and Delay Claims," Speaker, The Florida Bar Real Property, Probate & Trust Law Section Webinar, September 2018
- "The Future is Now: AAA Arbitrator Facilitated Roundtable on Arbitration Trends, Management and Case Law Updates," Panelist, American Arbitration Association Roundtable, May 2018
- "Setting the Tone for Mediation," Author, Trenam Law Mediation Newsletter, January 2018
- "Representing Servicemembers in SCRA Cases," Author, Hillsborough County Bar Association *LAWYER Magazine*, November - December 2017
- "Difference between Private and Public Construction Projects And Prompt Pay Acts," Presenter, The Florida Bar Advanced Construction Law Certification Review Course, March 2017
- "What Really Works in Construction ADR: Mediators and Arbitrators Speak!," Panelist, Hillsborough County Bar Association Construction Law Section, November 2014
- "Life After Jag - Translating your Military Experience to Civilian Law Practice," Panelist, Hillsborough County Bar Association MVAC Panel Discussion, February 2017
- "Protesting Classified Acquisitions," Author, Trenam Kemker *Legal Update*, January 2014
- Understanding Recent Changes in Government Contracts Law and Their Impacts on Contractors and Subcontractors, in *Inside The Minds Litigation Strategies for Government Contractors*, Thomson-Reuters/ Aspatore, 2013
- "Severin Pass-Through Agreements in Federal and Florida Law, Speaker, Florida Bar Construction Law Institute, March 2012

- Over There, Over There Construction Contracting with the Federal Government Overseas," Moderator, American Bar Association Section of Public Contract Law Annual Meeting, Toronto, August 2011
- Preparing for the Exit A Look at the State of M&A in the Middle-Market Defense and Government Sector, Moderator, co-sponsored by the National Defense Industrial Association and the Florida Federal Contractors Association, July 2011
- The Admissibility of DRB Findings and Recommendations: Issues and Implications Author, *Journal of the American College of Construction Lawyers*, Summer 2011
- What Does International Trafficking in Arms Regulations Mean to Me?, Moderator, Florida Federal Contractors Association, April 2011
- "Florida Chapter and Forms and Updates," in *Fifty State Lien and Bond Law Manual*, Co-Author with Patrick Poff, Aspen Law Publishing, 2000-present
- Co-Editor, *Federal Government Construction Contracts*, Second Edition, American Bar Association Forum on the Construction Industry, 2010
- Author, "Chapter 25: Funding and Related Issues Regarding Federal Government Construction Outside the United States, in *Federal Government Construction Contracts*, Second Edition, American Bar Association Forum on the Construction Industry, 2010
- Effective Construction Mediation: A Panel Discussion of Dos and Don'ts, Moderator, Hillsborough County Bar Association Construction Law Section CLE Meeting, November 2010
- Why a Big Case is Like a Law School Exam Question, Guest Lecturer, Ave Maria Law School Distinguished Speakers Series, October 2010
- Challenges of Teaming, Panel Member, Florida Federal Contractors Association, August 2010
- Co-Author (with Carina Ohara), "Chapter 3: Practical Considerations/Risks for U.S. Companies Contracting Across Borders, in *International Contracting Desk Book*, American Bar Association Forum on the Construction Industry, 2009
- Sealed Bid Fixed Price' vs. Competitive Negotiation Best Value' Procurement, Guest Lecturer, Associated Builders and Contractors, October 2009.
- Overview of Davis Bacon Act and Service Contract Act, Guest Lecturer, Associated Builders and Contractors, September 2009
- Doing Construction and Related Business with the Federal Government, Guest Lecturer, Associated Builders and Contractors, August 2009
- Resolving Ethical Dilemmas When Dealing with Expert Witnesses, Speaker, Florida Bar Construction Law Institute, March 2009
- Terminations for Convenience Under the Federal Acquisition Regulations, Speaker, National Contract Management Association, December 2008
- Lecturer, The Florida Bar, Basic Construction Law Course, Miami; Tampa, 2007
- Author,*Contingency and Disaster Contracting and Fiscal Law Handbook*, 2000; 2005 Second Edition, Published by the Judge Advocate General's School, United States Air Force (current 2007 edition in use)
- Author, Checklist 64, International Discovery, in *Construction Checklists*, American Bar Association Forum on the Construction Industry, 2007
- Instructor, The Florida Bar's Basic Construction Law CLE Course, 2006-2007
- Lecturer, The Florida Bar, Basic Construction Law Course, Miami; Tampa, 2006
- Co-Author (with Peter Halls and Michael Black), "Chapter 8: Discovery Outside of the United States, in *Discovery Desk Book for Construction Disputes*, American Bar Association Forum on the Construction Industry, 2006
- How to Have a Successful Design Build Project. Author, F.W. Dodge's *Southeastern Construction*, Fall, 2004
- Design Build Institute of America (DBIA) Regional Meeting, Lecturer, June 2001
- Admissibility of Computer-Generated Evidence, Co-author,*The Construction Lawyer*, Vol. 14, No. 3, August 1994
- Protection Under Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act for U.S. Military and Activated Reservists, Author, *The Florida Bar Journal*, Vol. LXV, No. 2, February 1991.
- International Contracts Can Specify Where a Lawsuit Must Be Brought, Author,*Tradeline* (Tampa Bay International Trade Council), Vol. II, Issue 2, March 1987.
- Florida Bar Continuing Legal Education Program, Author, curriculum materials, 1982-present
- Continuing Legal Education Materials on Pre-Trial Motion Practice, Author,*The Florida Bar*, 1982-1984
- Note, Chilling Effect on First Amendment Rights Army Surveillance of Civilian Political Activity, 11 Duquesne Law Review 419 (1973)