

THE EDGE



**MITCHELL A. BIERMAN**

Equity Partner, Weiss, Serota, Helfman, Pastoriza, Cole and Boniske, P.L.

As a third generation born and bred Miamian, Mitchell Bierman feels a special connection to the area. His work in government affairs law allows him to be involved with his community on issues that impact the quality of life in South Florida. It is his understanding of law not only at the national but also at the state and local levels that gives him a competitive advantage.

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**F**or the past 16 years Mitchell Bierman has been at Weiss, Serota, Helfman, Pastoriza, Cole and Boniske, P.L. His work has included winning and negotiating large public contracts, public and private partnerships, public infrastructure improvements, and affordable housing developments, as well as advocating for industry clients on legislative issues affecting their industries. Bierman also chairs the firm's Airports and Aviation Service Group.

**EXECUTIVE South Florida magazine:** *Even though your father, Donald Bierman, is a legendary criminal lawyer, what made you decide to go into law?*

**Mitchell Bierman:** I thought the practice of law would give me the opportunity to be involved in the community in a very meaningful way. As an attorney, my work in the community includes representing businesses and governments in public/private transactions, and it is through these types of partnerships where community and public infrastructures are produced.

I also serve as the city attorney for the Town of Cutler Bay and the Village of Pinecrest; I'm also part of a team of attorneys at the firm who serve as city attorneys for another 13 cities. In addition, I represent numerous government and quasi-government entities including the Miami Dade School Board, Miami Dade Expressway Authority, and Miami Dade College.

**EXECUTIVE:** *Seeing Miami's growth and development, do you think it is on the right course?*

**Bierman:** I absolutely do. I am really excited about what is going on here and I'm very excited about the participation of the not-for-profit players who are providing a platform for businesses to succeed. I see great things coming from the Miami Foundation, the Knight Foundation, One Community One Goal, and some of the not-for-profit incubators and accelerators.

**EXECUTIVE:** *What are some examples of the public and private partnerships that you have worked on?*

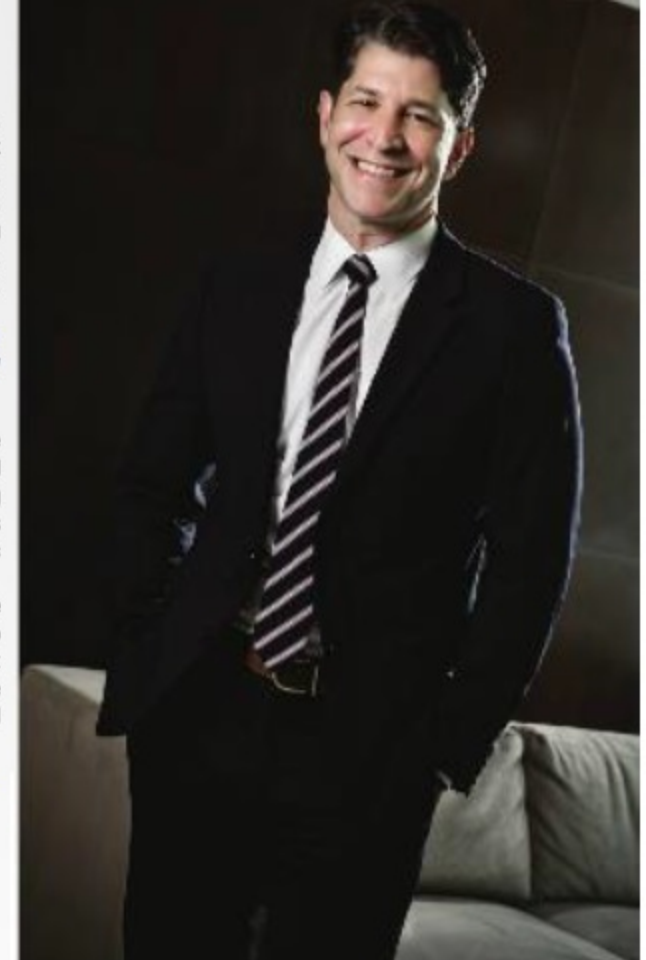
**Bierman:** One of the most significant public and private program that our firm worked on was the development of the North Terminal at Miami International Airport. We have represented American Airlines for many years and when the North Terminal was proposed, it was essentially a public and private partnership between American Airlines and Miami-Dade County.

I also worked on two significant upgrades to the Miami-Dade transit system. One was the creation of a unified fare collection system that uses smart cards. The other is going on now and is about to be implemented. It is a computer-aided dispatch which provides real time passenger information about the transit system.

**EXECUTIVE:** *With the development of public and private business partnerships, what are some of the challenges you face with these types of relationships?*

**Bierman:** I think this is where my competitive advantage comes in. I understand these transactions from all perspectives because I've represented both sides. I started my career as an assistant county attorney at Miami International Airport and made these types of deals for the airport. Essentially they are commercial deals but with a government owner.

As I advise my clients in the private sector, I provide a fairly rare level of insight into the values and decision-making factors that typically influence



a government decision. Conversely when I represent government in the transaction, I am very aware of business's pressure points and motivations.

**EXECUTIVE:** *Do you think that the relationship between the public and private sectors will become more important as Miami continues to grow?*

**Bierman:** Yes, because the types of infrastructure and services that are needed for this community, at the rate at which it is growing, are going to outpace the ability for the government to accomplish them in a meaningful way.

**EXECUTIVE:** *Recognizing that you have a specific expertise and skill set, do you think it is important for today's law firms to have a niche and to drill down in their areas of expertise?*

**Bierman:** I see two significant trends in the future practice of law. The first is that the commodity-type of legal work is going to be less expensive for clients. Fewer clients are willing to pay high hourly rates for work that doesn't require a specific expertise. But clients are willing to pay very high hourly rates for highly specialized work within a very specific knowledge set.

It is important for lawyers to realize that in addition to knowing the law, they must also have a higher level of specialization and very specific industry knowledge. **E**