

# Derek E. Bruce

**Government Affairs Consultant, Orlando Office Managing Shareholder**

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## Practice & Industry Areas

- Government Affairs Law & Lobbying
- Government Procurement
- Environmental & Land Use Law
- Hospitality & Clubs

## Education

- University of Florida, J.D., 1998
- University of Florida, M.B.A., 1998
- University of Florida, B.S., 1994

## Bar & Court Admissions

- Florida Bar, 1998

## Overview

With nearly 25 years of experience in bid protest litigation, Derek represents clients in all aspects of state and local government procurement, including analyzing potential contracting opportunities, assisting clients in responding to competitive solicitations, contract negotiation, contract implementation and contractual disputes.

Derek also represents clients in civil litigation and administrative law proceedings before the Florida Division of Administrative Hearings relating to state and local government procurement and contracting issues. In addition, Derek represents clients in civil litigation matters, including property tax matters and all aspects of land use challenges.

Derek's practice includes representing landowners and developers in land use, zoning and comprehensive planning cases. In such cases, he endeavors to use his understanding of the role of the political process and the need to balance legal rights with the practical needs of

policy makers to advise clients on how to achieve their goals in ways that make business sense. Derek has worked on projects related to residential communities, retail, office and industrial properties, mixed-use development, and agricultural use of land.

Since Florida's adoption of Amendment 2 in 2016 creating the state's medical marijuana program, Derek has provided legal and lobbying representation for a wide range of cannabis clients, working with physicians, ancillary service providers and medical marijuana licensure applicants, helping them to navigate the constantly shifting landscape of cannabis regulations. He strives to use his knowledge of statutory and regulatory laws related to medical marijuana – together with his understanding of operations and logistics for Medical Marijuana Treatment Center organizations – to add value to his clients in pursuit of their goals in this emerging area.

Within Gunster, Derek has held a number of leadership positions, including currently serving as the Orlando Office Managing Shareholder and formerly as chair of the firm's Diversity & Inclusion Committee.

In his community, Derek has been actively involved with Leadership Florida (Class XXII Member; Class XXXVII Chair and former board member); the African-American Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida where he serves as general counsel; the board of the Florida State Parks Foundation, Victim Service Center and the McCormick Research Institute. He is a founding board member of the Randy Roberts Foundation and a past board member of the Central Florida Foundation. He has also had the privilege of serving as president of the Tiger Bay Club of Central Florida and chairman of Business Force, Central Florida's largest political action committee.

## **Representative Matters**

- Prosecuting a challenge to the Florida Department of Health's Medical Marijuana Treatment Center selection process, resulting in a client's licensure as one of the state's first MMTCs.
- Defending a "reject all" procurement decision by a local government water authority through circuit court litigation and on appeal.
- Defending a Methadone-Assisted Treatment provider in protests challenging the Florida Department of Health's contract award to provide addiction treatment services in counties throughout the State of Florida.
- Representing clients in property tax cases challenging the denial of agricultural classification of lands, resulting in ad valorem tax savings of approximately 90%.
- Securing land use approvals and entitlements for "The Grow," Orange County's first residential farm and garden community.
- Securing dismissal of a lawsuit challenging an amendment to the City of Eustis' Comprehensive Plan increasing developable land options within the City's boundaries.

## Honors

- *The Best Lawyers in America*®, Government Relations Practice, 2018-23
- AV rated as independently determined by Martindale-Hubbell
- *Orlando Business Journal*, “40 Under 40”

## Publications & Presentations

- “Evolving Future of the Hybrid Workplace,” *Orlando Business Journal*, roundtable participant, June 16, 2022
- “Embracing History: Juneteenth Celebration,” UCF Downtown, panelist, June 15, 2022
- “The Intersection of Law & Politics: Navigating an Unpredictable Environment,” CLE Lunch & Learn, presenter, Association of Corporate Counsel Central Florida, June 9, 2022

## Professional Associations & Memberships

- Florida Prepaid College Foundation, board of directors, 2020-present
- [The National Black Lawyers – Top 100](#)
- Orlando Economic Partnership, Alliance for Regional Transportation (ART) workgroup, 2019-present
- BusinessForce, board member and past chair
- Leadership Florida, past board member
- Kissimmee/Osceola Chamber of Commerce, board of directors, past member
- Florida Chamber of Commerce, East Central Florida Regional Leadership Council, past chair

## Civic & Community Service

- Victim Service Center of Central Florida, board member
- Randy Roberts Foundation, board member
- Frederick Leadership Initiative, board member emeritus
- Orlando Marine Institute, past board member
- National Kidney Foundation, past board member
- Central Florida Foundation, past board member
- Tiger Bay Club of Central Florida, past president
- Seminole State College of Florida Foundation, past board member
- Metropolitan Orlando Urban League, past board member