

BALLARD | PARTNERS

Marion County Proposal

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March 27, 2026

Marion County
601 SE 25th Ave.,
Ocala, FL 34471

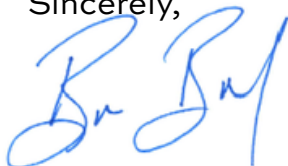
Re: Utility Lobbyist

On behalf of Ballard Partners (the “Firm”), we appreciate the opportunity to represent Marion County’s (the “County”) Utility Department and advocate for the County’s interests before the state of Florida, particularly including the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

We would be honored to serve as your government relations representative, overseeing legislative, regulatory and executive branch policies concerning Water Programs (water, wastewater, reclaimed water and water supply). We understand that you need a team with the requisite relationships with key decision makers, issue expertise, and understanding of the unique levers of government processes. Our experienced team has advised organizations operating in highly sensitive sectors and successfully navigated the labyrinth of government decision-making for decades. The cornerstone of our government relations support lies in protecting and upholding our client's brand with policymakers and outside stakeholders, maintaining a strict code of operating with ethics and integrity, and remaining laser-focused on achieving client objectives.

We feel confident in our ability to build a strong partnership with you. Thank you for the opportunity to build our relationship with Marion County in support of your deeply important advocacy objectives. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Brian D. Ballard
President

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About Us



The Beginning

In 1998, Brian Ballard founded the Firm with one office located in Tallahassee, Florida. Since the firm's founding, Ballard Partners has grown exponentially, with offices in Washington D.C., Boston, Los Angeles, Sacramento, Chicago, Honolulu, Istanbul, Abuja, Lagos, Tel-Aviv, and multiple locations throughout Florida.



Our Team

Our team is composed of a deep bench of bi-partisan professionals with substantial backgrounds – including former members of Congress, former members of the US Diplomatic Core, and former top staff members from across the government. We combine our public policy experience, integral intergovernmental relationships, and strategic partnerships to exceed clients' goals.



Today

As recognized by *Politico*, *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, *the Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Miami Herald*, *Florida Trend*, and more - Ballard Partners is a "lobbying powerhouse" and "growing force" in the lobbying world.



Why Ballard Partners?

Ballard Partners is dedicated to achieving results for our clients. To do that requires a relentless work ethic, unparalleled experience, and deep relationships with decision makers. These are the qualities that make up the Firm's DNA and are why we have earned the trust of our clients for over two decades.



Relevant Experience

Ballard Partners has extensive experience working with state agencies, the Florida Legislature, and the Governor's Office. We know municipal utilities and the challenges and opportunities that exist when engaging with government. We also understand the multiplier effect that occurs when coordinating with aligned stakeholders and building coalitions to achieve a common purpose.

Our Florida team has extensive experience working with state agencies and the Florida Legislature on municipal utility issues. Local government utility clients include JEA, City of Punta Gorda, City of Ft. Myers, and the FWEA Utility Council. Over the years, we have assisted Emerald Coast Utility Authority, Gainesville Regional Utilities, the City of Tallahassee, and others in navigating legislative and agency processes. This extensive work brings unique institutional memory of the issues that have confronted the utility sector and enables us to speak with authority on those issues to government officials. From assisting utilities on impaired waters issues to helping secure water quality credits for water quality improvement projects, Ballard Partners' Florida Team has helped utilities across a range of issues.

A recent example of our positive collaboration with Florida utilities occurred during the 2025 Florida Legislative Session, in which David drafted and passed Senate Bill 1228 on behalf of JEA. The bill, entitled "Spring Restoration," allows JEA to amend its current approved SB 64 compliance plan for its Buckman and Southwest Water Reclamation Facility to implement an aquifer recharge project to restore Ichetucknee Springs and Santa Fe Springs. JEA groundwater withdrawals are estimated to account for 10-15% of spring flow impacts, but this project will fully offset all public water supply and agricultural groundwater withdrawals in rural north-central Florida, securing both the environment & stakeholders' groundwater uses in the region.

Passing this bill was not easy. Our team had to garner buy-in from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, St. Johns River Water Management District, Suwannee River Water Management District, and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Also, given the history and continued political support for SB 64, we had to deftly navigate political landmines to secure the Senate President's support and overcome opposition from the House Majority Whip. This effort included helping the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources put together a utility panel on SB 64 compliance efforts. This panel provided an opportunity for JEA to showcase its visionary leadership and commitment to sound water resource management, which helped tee up the need for an amendment to the SB 64 mandate to facilitate the regional spring restoration project. Ultimately, with support from strong House and Senate bill sponsors, the legislation was unanimously passed by the Florida Senate and the Florida House of Representatives. We then lobbied the Executive Office of the Governor, and Governor DeSantis signed SB 1228 on June 19, 2025.

The successful passage of the Spring Restoration legislation serves as a recent example of our track record of closely collaborating with other government stakeholders to achieve a significant, positive result. But it is not the only example. During the 2024 Legislative Session, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection introduced comprehensive water resource legislation – HB 1557 – that included a requirement for Florida utilities in impaired watersheds to upgrade their reclamation facilities to advanced wastewater treatment, including those that were providing reclaimed water for irrigation purposes. This mandate would have cost utilities hundreds of millions of dollars in compliance costs, but it would not have benefited the environment, because Florida utilities across the state already meet and surpass their total maximum daily load obligations. Our team worked closely with utility representatives to develop a compelling dossier opposing this mandate, lobbied the bill sponsors, and – after being initially rebuffed by the Department of Environmental Protection – negotiated alternative bill language with the Governor’s Office that modified the well-intentioned, yet harmful mandate.

Other recent examples of our experience working with multiple state agencies on water utility issues on behalf of our municipal utility clients include:

- **City of Punta Gorda Utility Legislation (2026).** During the 2026 Legislative Session, David successfully defeated a local bill that would have transferred authority over certain utility infrastructure from the City of Punta Gorda to Charlotte County. David was able to work with legislative leaders and the City utility director to instead adopt an interlocal agreement that achieved the desired objectives of securing the local water supply without the negative consequences associated with the legislation.
- **City of Ft. Myers (2024-2026).** David renegotiated a longstanding consent order between the City and FDEP, which will save the City millions in implementation costs. David also helped reestablish the City’s relationship with regulators and has successfully engaged on various permitting and regulatory issues since then.
- **Potable Reuse Rulemaking (2023-2025).** Over a period of two years, David negotiated a regulatory framework for permitting potable reuse with FDEP. David then supported the new rules upon adoption with FDEP.
- **Clean Waterways Act (2020-2024).** David worked with Florida legislative leaders and bill sponsors on landmark legislation that included new requirements for utilities to adopt asset management plans for their collection systems. David then worked with FDEP to help implement the legislation.
- **Water Quality Credit Trading (2013-2024).** David drafted and passed the legislation that allows water quality credit trading in impaired waterways throughout Florida. David then helped clients apply the legislation through the development and trading of water quality credits.
- **Administrative Procedures (2025).** David has drafted, amended, and helped pass several bills governing agency rulemaking and environmental permitting procedures. Most recently, in 2025, David and Eileen helped pass legislation that provided enhanced oversight of agency compliance with permit issuance timeframes.

In addition to our policy successes for clients, we have also secured millions of dollars in appropriations for firm clients. Some examples of our success during the most recent Florida Legislative Session are as follows:

- **University of Florida / IFAS.** During the 2025 Florida Legislative Session, we were able to secure \$23,125,000 of legislative appropriations for UF/IFAS, with no requested projects being left unfunded. Funded projects included the Center for Applied Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture, IFAS Workload, Fertilizer Application Rate Research, and the Animal Sciences Expansion and Renovation.
- **SAS Institute.** During the 2025 Florida Legislative Session, we were able to secure \$10,100,000 of legislative appropriations for SAS, with no requested projects being left unfunded. Funded projects included a data analytics platform to support FDLE efforts to combat internet crimes against children and \$6 million in funding to support a water quality data analytics platform at Florida Gulf Coast University.
- **US Submergent.** During the 2025 Florida Legislative Session, we were able to secure \$2,720,000 of legislative appropriations for U.S. Submergent, with no requested projects being left unfunded. Funded projects included a sand and grit removal program for rural utilities.

Representative points of contact regarding our work on these matters include:

Renee Manna
JEA
Phone: (904) 887-4440
Email: goodrr@jea.com

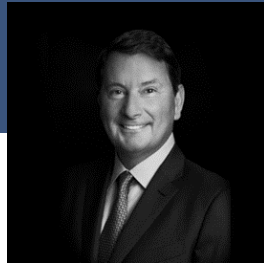
David Roberts
FWEA Utility Council
Phone: (850) 544-4560
Email: David.roberts@talgov.com

Jason Sciandra
City of Ft. Myers
Phone: (239) 321-7467
Email: jsciandra@fortmyers.gov

Tom Spencer
City of Punta Gorda
Phone: (941) 575-5055
Email: tspencer@puntagordafll.gov

We would be pleased to provide additional contact information for representative clients not listed above.

Team Members



Brian Ballard - President -

Brian has earned a reputation as a tireless, persistent, and effective advocate for his clients' interests. As a trusted counselor to presidential and gubernatorial candidates, as well as Fortune 100 leaders, he has helped navigate the intersection of government and business.

Widely recognized as a top political insider, he has been included in Vanity Fair's "New Establishment," Politico Playbook Power List's "18 to Watch," The Hill: Top Lobbyists / Hired Guns and Florida Trend's Most Influential Business Leaders. He is a frequent speaker and panelist at major conferences and policy forums in the U.S. and abroad.

Brian and his wife Kathryn were selected by three Florida governors—Ron DeSantis, Rick Scott, and Charlie Crist—to co-chair their gubernatorial inaugurations. He has also chaired the Florida Finance Committee for GOP presidential nominees John McCain (2008), Mitt Romney (2012), and Donald J. Trump (2016), served as Vice Chairman of the Presidential Inaugural Committee, and participated on the Presidential Transition Finance Committee. The Republican National Committee appointed him Finance Vice Chairman, recognizing his political and fundraising acumen.

As Chief of Staff in the Florida Governor's Office, Brian developed deep expertise in environmental policy. He was the chief architect of Preservation 2000, then the largest public land acquisition program for environmentally sensitive areas in the U.S., and led negotiations with the U.S. Department of the Interior to end offshore drilling along southeast Florida and the Keys. The American Lawyer recognized him as one of the nation's top lawyers in Energy, Environmental, and Natural Resources law.

Brian currently sits on the Board of Trustees for the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. He previously served on the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service Advisory Council (by appointment of the U.S. Secretary of Commerce) and helped lead the transition and Senate confirmation of Governor Bob Martinez as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

He earned both his B.S. in Business Administration and J.D. from the University of Florida and is a member of the University's Hall of Fame.

Team Members



David Childs - Partner -

David Childs helps clients solve problems with the government. Often, the solutions involve successful modifications to Florida statutes and regulations. Other times it involves supporting budgetary items critical to a client's interests or helping clients identify and pursue procurement opportunities. Over the past 20 years, David has earned a reputation for forthrightness and an in-depth understanding of water resource and utility policy, the legislative appropriations process, and administrative procedures.

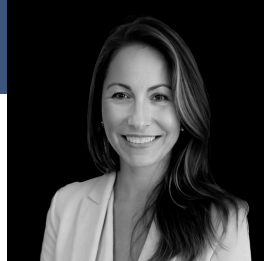
Over the past twenty years, David has represented the FWEA Utility Council, which is the state's premier domestic wastewater utility association. In this role, he has helped shape the statutes and regulations that are most critical to St. Johns County's water and wastewater utility operations. This work includes the passage of the spring restoration bill that paved the way for the Water First project (SB 1228, 2025), essential state infrastructure (SB 7018, 2020), linear facility siting (HB 405, 2018), administrative procedures (HB 183, 2016), and water quality credit trading (HB 713, 2013). He is also engaged in the Legislative appropriations process and has helped government clients receive millions of appropriated dollars.

David maintains deep relationships in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the water management districts and has shaped environmental regulatory programs that affect municipal utilities, including potable reuse, collection system asset management, numeric nutrient criteria, and biosolids application.

David is a registered lobbyist in Florida for numerous governmental entities, businesses and industries. He routinely serves as an environmental policy and permitting consultant for water and wastewater utilities throughout Florida. He was appointed by Governors Crist and Scott to the Florida Boating Advisory Council. He was also selected to Leadership Florida Class 35 and subsequently served as general counsel to the state's premier leadership organization.

Prior to attending law school, David was a staff engineer with CH2M Hill in the water business group.

Team Members



Eileen Stuart - Partner -

Eileen Stuart maintains a broad government and public affairs practice, emphasizing local, state and federal executive and legislative branch representation. She helps businesses and highly regulated industries devise comprehensive government and public affairs strategies to navigate complex regulatory environments, obtain and maintain a license to operate, identify and secure state and federal funding or incentives and develop or expand market share. Eileen is particularly adept at forming coalitions and garnering allies in support of policy or political objectives while formulating strategies to assist businesses in elevating or rehabilitating corporate brand and reputation.

Prior to entering private practice, Eileen served as Vice President, Government and Regulatory Affairs for The Mosaic Company, one of the world's largest manufacturers of mineral fertilizers. She developed and executed strategic government advocacy plans in that role, particularly regarding local, state and federal permitting, environmental, energy and tax issues. She also served as a primary voice and face for the company with state and federal policymakers and key external stakeholders while crafting and directing the company's local, state and federal political engagement, community relations and corporate philanthropy. This experience provided her with an in-depth understanding of the water resource policies that also affect Florida's municipal utility sector – an experience that she built upon over the past four years working with David Childs in representing water and wastewater utilities.

Eileen also served as Deputy Policy Director in the Executive Office of the Governor, where she developed and managed multiple policy and appropriations initiatives. In that role, she interacted with key leaders and staff of all executive branch agencies and was closely involved in the annual policy and budget priority-setting process.

Eileen's previous professional experience also includes roles as Deputy Political Director on a statewide gubernatorial campaign, as well as serving as a Legislative Fellow, working in the Florida Senate and at the Florida Public Service Commission.

Team Members



Brady Benford - Partner -

With 15 years of experience in government relations, Brady Benford is a well-respected professional among his peers and legislators. He has advocated before the Legislative and Executive branches on a variety of high-profile issues such as casino gaming, pari-mutuel wagering, tobacco, alcohol, retail convenience stores, telecommunications and health care.

Brady has previously served as the Governmental Affairs Director for two of Florida's major law firms. During that time, he represented a wide array of clients, including several Fortune 500 companies before the Legislature, Cabinet, Executive Agencies and other governmental entities. He also managed the firm's regulated industries practice and advised clients on extensive legislative and executive issues, as well as campaign participation strategy on numerous statewide and local efforts.

Brady also previously served as the President of Benford and Associates, where he was the principal lobbyist at the firm and managed multiple clients and associations. He has also worked for the Republican Party of Florida, Senate and House campaigns and managed the absentee ballot program in the Central Florida area during the 2000 presidential election.

Brady received his Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from Florida State University.

Scope of Work

Ballard Partners is a nationally recognized bipartisan lobbying advisory firm with a lengthy track record of representing municipalities, corporations, trade associations, asset managers, and other stakeholders around the world.

Our firm provides strategic counsel and government affairs support in responding to, managing, and capitalizing on policy developments, as well as identifying and neutralizing government-related risk to operations. We have helped our clients achieve significant legislative and regulatory victories across both state and federal governments. Partners at the firm are consistently ranked as among the most effective lobbyists in Florida.

A differentiator for your Ballard Partners team is our deep regulatory backgrounds and substantive expertise, which we lean on when developing and advancing policy solutions to achieve client objectives. Your proposed team will make it a priority to become deeply knowledgeable in the details of the County's operations and objectives. Our extensive experience enables us to look around corners and anticipate both threats and opportunities. We will actively brainstorm with you on your most pressing needs and concerns and then work with utility representatives to craft solutions that improve the County's operating position. Further, our legal and policy backgrounds help us meticulously analyze filed legislation and determine whether bills will affect the County's interests, even when the potential impacts are not immediately obvious.

Accordingly, our team in Tallahassee is uniquely qualified to assist the County's efforts, including navigating political headwinds impacting operational concerns, mitigating risks posed by regulatory and legislative developments, and providing actionable and meaningful advocacy to ensure the County's priorities are recognized in government.

To support the County's priorities most effectively, we propose a holistic government relations workplan consisting of the following:

- Engaging with FDEP leadership, members of the Florida Legislature, the Executive Office of the Governor, and key government officials to advance objectives via legislative or regulatory channels;
- Facilitating meetings and conversations for County leadership and building/transferring key relationships through identification of and engagement with relevant policymakers and staff;
- Creating and managing coalitions if and when needed around policy issues; and
- Tracking and monitoring relevant legislative and regulatory developments in real-time, including combining political intelligence and analysis to drive advocacy.

Cost Proposal

The Firm proposes an annual contract fee of \$108,000, payable in twelve (12) equal installments of \$9,000, inclusive of the reasonable and approved costs associated with the representation, including but not limited to lobbyist registration fees. This flat fee proposal includes all the Firm's work in pursuit of the scope of work outlined in this proposal.

We appreciate being considered and the opportunity to provide this proposal. It would be a true privilege to represent the County. We are available to discuss this proposal and answer any questions you might have. We look forward to working with you.

In The News

The New York Times
Lobbying muscle.
(10/17/25)

The Washington Post
Most influential.
(03/21/26)

Washington Examiner
Ballard Partners has a history of snagging wins for its clients.
(03/06/25)

Bloomberg
Real relationships.
(10/01/25)

B
Most sought after lobbyists.
(06/02/25)

POLITICO PRO
The country's top lobbying shop.
(02/08/26)

VANITY FAIR
Best connected.
(03/10/26)

abc NEWS
Dominant force.
(12/04/2024)

POLITICO
Most sought-after firm.
(08/21/25)

POLITICO Influence
Top lobbying firm in Washington.
(01/09/26)

POLITICOPRO

Lobbying powerhouse.
(11/06/25)

POLITICO

One of the go-to firms for companies and trade associations
(04/21/25)

FINANCIAL TIMES

Top tier of influence shops.
(04/23/25)

The New York Times

Go-to for major corporations.
(11/07/24)

PBS NEWS

Powerful.
(11/22/24)

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
WSJ

Most desired envoys.
(11/30/24)

The Miami Herald

Considered one of the all-time greats of lobbying.
(12/05/23)

USA TODAY

Influential.
(06/25/22)

The Washington Post

Powerhouse.
(10/25/25)

NBC NEWS

Top Lobbyist.
(08/30/22)

The Korea Herald

Leading Washington lobbying firm.
(09/02/24)

TIME

Powerhouse lobbyist in Tallahassee and D.C.
(05/19/23)

Representative Clients

Our team represents over 1,000 clients across industries, from top global innovators and disruptive technologies to major league sports dynasties and Fortune 500 companies. Meet a few of our clients we have been privileged to represent.

Financial Services

Blackstone
New York Stock Exchange
Nationwide
Bankers Financial Corporation
J.P. Morgan
Coinbase
Ripple
Block
Robinhood
H&R Block
VyStar Credit Union

Sports

Major League Baseball (MLB)
National Football League (NFL)
New York Yankees
National Basketball Association (NBA)
LA28
Tampa Bay Lightning
Miami Heat
PGA Tour
Churchill Downs
Jacksonville Jaguars
Miami Marlins
FanDuel
Draft Kings

Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals

Walgreens
Bayer
Broward Health
Children's Hospital Association
American Healthcare Association
Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida
United Health Group
LabCorp
Tampa General Hospital
Jackson Health System
Mt. Sinai
UF Health Shands
Philips North America

Hospitality, Food Services, and Retail

Hard Rock
Publix
Seminole Hardrock
Delaware North
Pernod Ricard
MGM
Sunkist
Oishi
Southern Glazers Wine and Spirits
LVMH

Media and Entertainment

Motion Pictures Association
Disney
Paramount
Netflix
Comcast

Telecommunications

Dish
Sprint
AT&T
Comcast

Real Estate, Construction, and Resiliency

Suffolk
Related Group
Core Construction
Miami Design District
AECOM
Jacobs
Parsons
Continental Heavy Civil Corp

Agriculture, Environment, Cannabis, and Tobacco

Mosaic Company
U.S. Sugar Corporation
Florida Tomato Exchange
Reynolds America
Dole
California Avocado Commission

Technology

Amazon
Doordash
Meta
Uber
SAP America
NTT Data
Zscaler
SAS Institute
Zillow
Palantir
Booz Allen
Bird Global
Getaround
Zoox
Flock Safety

Consumer Goods

3M
Shark Ninja
New Mexico Cattle Growers Association
Harry's
United States Sugar Corporation
The Toy Association
Breitling
Balsam Brands

Automotive and Aerospace

GM
Boeing
L3 Harris
Blue Origin
Leonardo
Rolls Royce
BMW

Education

Harvard University
Vanderbilt University
University of Florida
University of Miami
University of Michigan
Florida Poly
University of Florida
Florida Atlantic University
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University

Local Governments

Miami Beach
City of Jacksonville
City of Miami
Miami Dade County
Nashville
City of Long Beach

Energy and Transportation

Florida Power and Light
Crowley
Chevron
JEA
Constellation
American Road and Transportation Builders Association
HNTB Corporation
Jacksonville Port Authority
Jacksonville Transportation Authority
Florida Transportation Builders Assoc.
Archer Western
Babcock Ranch