

People



## Joni Armstrong Coffey

Partner, Real Estate

Miami

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Joni Armstrong Coffey has extensive experience in a full range of local government law issues, with particular legal expertise in land use law. She focuses her practice on helping clients achieve optimal results from governmental approval processes and, where appropriate, litigation. Most recently, Joni served as the County Attorney for Broward County, Florida. Prior to her work with the Broward County Attorney's Office, she served as assistant county attorney for Miami-Dade County and headed its Zoning, Land Use and Environment Section. Board Certified in City, County and Local Government Law, Joni is past chair of The Florida Bar's Board of Legal Specialization and Education, and a former chair of The Florida Bar's City, County and Local Government Law Section. She is currently an adjunct law professor at Florida International University Law School and St. Thomas University Law School. Her work has earned her several awards for public law service.

### Notable Work

#### As Broward County Attorney:

Guided the legal work for land use, federal and state regulatory approvals, procurement, funding, and design and construction contracts for major public infrastructure projects, including:

- Fort Lauderdale International Airport's new runway and aircraft bridge over US Highway 1, as well as construction of new terminal building and renovation of four others
- Major county convention center expansion and development of waterfront convention center hotel
- Port Everglade's turning notch improvements, deepening and widening of the Port's channels, development of intermodal rail line into port, and associated port expansion activities
- New Broward County courthouse, courthouse garage, and improvements in associated courthouse facilities

### Areas of Experience

Real Estate  
Florida Land Use and Entitlements  
Land Use and Development  
Local Government Advocacy  
Public-Private Partnerships  
Government Contracts

### Education

J.D., University of Florida Levin College of Law, with honors, *UF Florida Law Review*  
B.A., Florida State University, summa cum laude; Phi Beta Kappa

### Admissions

#### Bars

Florida

#### Courts

U.S. Court of Appeals, Eleventh Circuit  
U.S. Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit  
U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida

### Related Content

Akerman Sponsors Miami-Dade Florida Association for Women Lawyers Judicial Reception  
December 05, 2024

Joni Armstrong Coffey to Speak on Land Use Law to Elected Officials, Others  
May 14, 2024

Assistant Miami-Dade County Attorney Dennis A. Kerbel Joins Akerman as Florida Land Use and Entitlements Practice Chair  
May 02, 2024

- Operating and related agreements with the Florida Panthers professional hockey team at the county-owned BBT Arena, incorporating arena improvements, additional public funding, and land conveyance to the county.

Guided the legal work for the full spectrum of issues for Broward County, a sampling of which includes development of ballot language and ordinances for a proposed transportation sales surtax; defense of challenge to county commission decennial redistricting decision; representation of elections canvassing board; successful termination of longstanding federal consent decree governing county detention facilities; continuing issues concerning allocation of responsibilities between county commission and independent constitutional officers and court administration; county-wide comprehensive planning, environmental, and platting regulation; emergency management; insurance and risk management; public sector real estate conveyances and restrictions; municipal finance, community redevelopment agencies, and special assessments; representation of tax collector in sales of tax certificates and deeds; transit, parks, and libraries; comprehensive program of social service delivery; and public sector labor and collective bargaining issues, including Airline Deregulation Act and Davis-Bacon matters.

**Argued:** Represented Broward County in persuading Supreme Court of Florida to uphold charter-imposed term limits for county commissioners. *Telli v. Broward County*, 94 So.3d 504 (Fla. 2012).

**Represented Miami-Dade County:** defense and favorable resolution of \$113M Bert Harris Act claim arising from new urbanism regulation; successful defense of first state agency challenge to a local comprehensive plan amendment in Florida; successful defense of lengthy multi-party inverse condemnation case arising from county zoning ordinance regulating development in East Everglades; successful brief and oral argument resulting in en banc decision of state appellate court on admissibility of citizen lay testimony in zoning cases; defense, successful appeal, and favorable resolution of multi-pronged challenge to development of public tennis facility in county park; defense and favorable resolution of estimated \$72M federal tax claim against county's public teaching hospital; significant amicus curiae participation in Supreme Court of Florida decision recognizing that comprehensive planning in Florida is legislative and entitled to appropriate deference in the courts.

## Affiliations

- Commercial Real Estate Women Network (CREW) Miami, Member
- American Bar Association, State and Local Government Law Section
- Florida Bar Board of Legal Specialization and Education, Past Member and Chair
- Florida Bar City, County and Local Government Section, Executive Council Member and Past Chair
- Florida Bar Environmental and Land Use Law Section
- Broward County Bar Association
- Dade County Bar Association
- Florida International University Law School, Adjunct Professor
- St. Thomas University Law School, Adjunct Professor
- St. Thomas University Law School, Board of Advisors
- Peter T. Fay Inn of Court, St. Thomas University Law School
- University of Florida Environmental and Land Use Law Program Advisory Board, Past Member

- Florida League of Cities Deepwater Horizon Task Force, Past Member
- University of Miami, former Adjunct Professor, state constitutional law
- Legal Affairs Committee, City of Miami Financial Oversight Board, Past Chair
- Children's Home Society, Southeast Florida Regional Board, Past Member and Chair

## Related Professional Experience

- Broward County Attorney, 2011-2017
- Miami-Dade County Attorney's Office, Section Chief, Zoning, Land Use and Environmental Section
- Miami-Dade County Attorney's Office, Section Chief, Aviation Section
- Miami-Dade County Attorney's Office, Assistant County Attorney
- Judicial Law Clerk, Honorable Peter T. Fay, Judge, U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth Circuit

## Published Work and Lectures

Joni has written and lectured extensively on land use and local government legal issues. A sample of work includes:

- American Planning Association Florida Gold Coast Chapter, Speaker, Planning Officials Training, May 14, 2024
- *Private Property Rights Protection Legislation: Statutory Claims for Relief from Government Regulation*, Florida Bar Environmental and Land Use Law Treatise, Vol. III, Chapter 30
- Pincus Professional Education, *Persuasive Brief Writing*, panelist and speaker, November 2017
- Miami-Dade League of Cities: *Municipal Autonomy & Countywide Concerns*, panelist and speaker, June 2016
- Broward County Local Government Summit, *Presentations Before Local Government Bodies*, panelist, January 2016
- Florida Municipal Attorney's Association, *Home Rule and State Law Preemption*, panelist and speaker, July 2015
- *High Hopes, Hollow Harvest: State Remedies for Partial Regulatory Takings*, The Urban Lawyer, Vol. 39, No. 3
- *Practical Aspects of Quasi-Judicial Hearings: Basic Tools, Recent Fine-Tuning*, Stetson Law Review, Vol. XXX, No. 3
- *Trying and Settling Land Use Cases: Substantive and Procedural Law Overview*, National Judicial College Land Use Law course for Florida circuit judges
- Florida International University Law School adjunct professor, 2006 - present: courses in land use, state constitutional law, elections, administrative law, environmental law
- St. Thomas University Law School adjunct professor, 2001-present: courses in land use, state constitutional law

## Honors and Distinctions

- Justice Harry Lee Anstead Florida Bar Board Certified Lawyer of the Year, Florida Bar Board of Legal Specialization and Education
- Ralph Marsicano Award, Florida Bar City, County and Local Government Law Section, for significant contributions to the development of local government law in Florida
- Paul S. Buchman Award, Florida Bar City, County and Local Government Law Section, for outstanding legal public service in

## Florida

- Florida Bar awards for contributions to public service legal ethics and government service
- Robert L. Shevin Public Service Award, Dade County Bar Association, for significant contributions to public service
- Florida Law-Related Education Association Award for contributions in establishing inter-mural high school mock trials in Florida
- *Best Lawyers*, 2024-2025, Listed in Florida for Real Estate Law
- *Florida Trend's* Legal Elite 2005-2022, Inducted into the "Hall of Fame" for Environmental & Land Use
- *20 Women in Law*, Daily Business Review 2015