

J. Ben Watkins
Director, Florida Division of Bond Finance

Mr. Watkins was appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Cabinet as Director of the Division of Bond Finance in July of 1995 and has served under four Governors.

The Division of Bond Finance is responsible for issuing bonds for the State of Florida and advising on other debt management policies for the State. The Division administers bonding programs for the Departments of Education, Transportation, Environmental Protection, Management Services as well as borrowings for the State University System. Mr Watkins has been active in numerous professional associations related to the muni bond market and has participated in collaborative industry efforts to improve practices, especially for the issuer community. Mr Watkins contributions to the municipal finance industry have been recognized, being the recipient of the Jim Lebenthal Infrastructure Champion Award in 2017, the National Federation of Municipal Analyst 2009 Industry Contribution Award for improving disclosure practices and the National Association of Treasurers 2001 Tanya Gritz Award for Excellence in Public Finance. He has also been a tireless advocate for state and local governments against federal policies that threaten tax-exemption or create hardship for local governments in issuing tax-exempt bonds.

Prior to joining the Division, Mr. Watkins practiced law with Sutherland Asbill & Brennan in Atlanta, Georgia. His practice area was concentrated in public finance.

EDUCATION

B.S., Accounting, Auburn University, 1979; former CPA with Peat Marwick
J.D., University of Florida's College of Law, 1984; member State Bars of Florida and Georgia since
1987

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Former Board Member and Vice Chairman of the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board

Government Finance Officers Association – Executive Board Member and former Chairman of the

Committee on Governmental Debt

National Association of State Treasurers/State Debt Management Network

National Association of Bond Lawyers

Leon County Investment Advisory Council

Municipal Code Corporation Board

Tall Timbers Research and Land Conservancy Board

Florida State University Coastal and Marine Lab Advisory Board