



**THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
**SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON**  
*President*

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** All Senators  
All Senate Professional Staff

**FROM:** Wilton Simpson

**SUBJECT:** 2021 Opening Day and Session Protocols

**DATE:** February 17, 2021

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Thank you for your partnership and commitment to keeping the Senate as safe as possible during our Interim Committee Weeks. With the 2021 Regular Session quickly approaching, I wanted to provide a few updates regarding the protocols the Senate will employ this session to reduce the spread of COVID-19. As a reminder, these protocols were developed in consultation and coordination with infectious disease experts at Tampa General Hospital, the Florida Department of Emergency Management, the Florida Department of Health, and our own in-house epidemiologist.

### **Opening Day – Tuesday, March 2, 2021**

- **Guests and Testing:** Each Senator may bring one guest on the floor for opening day. All Senators and guests must be tested for COVID-19 on Sunday, February 28, or Monday, March 1. **The testing sign up link will be sent in an upcoming email.**
- **Joint Session:** Senators will remain in the Senate Chamber during the Joint Session and will observe the State of the State Address on the Senate overhead screen.
- **Senate Family Luncheon:** A luncheon will be held immediately following the Joint Session (approximately 12:00pm) – Capitol location to be determined. Seating will be socially-distanced and limited to Senators, their opening day guest, and children. All adults attending the luncheon must be COVID tested. The testing sign up link will be sent in an upcoming email. Please **RSVP to Jacqui Peters at [Peters.Jacqui@FLSenate.gov](mailto:Peters.Jacqui@FLSenate.gov) by Friday, February 26, 2021.**
- **Staff:** Floor access for staff is limited to those specifically identified as having a role that requires their presence on the Senate Floor.

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- **Flowers:** All flowers should be delivered to Senate Offices. Flowers will not be permitted on the floor.
- **Gallery:** The public gallery will be closed.
- **Media:** The press gallery will be open. All media must be tested weekly for the duration of the 2021 Regular Session.

### **Session Programs**

- **Senate Spouse Program:** Senate Spouses are welcome during Session, but must be tested for COVID-19 each week. The testing sign up link will be sent weekly. Spouses who have not tested will not be permitted to enter Senate areas of the Capitol, including private offices. The Spouse Lounge will be open for a very limited spouse program.
- **Doctor of the Day/Chaplain Programs:** Separate communications from the Secretary were sent regarding Senators who wish to sponsor a Doctor of the Day and or a Chaplain. All participants in these programs will be tested for COVID-19.
- **Page Program:** As previously noted, the Senate Page Program has been suspended for the 2021 Session.

### **Reaffirmation of Existing Senate COVID-19 Protocols**

- **Weekly Testing:** Tampa General Hospital affirms weekly testing is appropriate given the current status of the virus.
- **Additional Testing:** Please do not ignore symptoms. If you experience any (even mild) cold, flu, allergy or COVID-19 symptoms, you should immediately schedule an appointment to receive a rapid antigen test here in the Senate. Email [Covid-19@flsenate.gov](mailto:Covid-19@flsenate.gov) to make an appointment, ideally before you enter the building.
- **Vaccines:** The Senate will continue to offer vaccines for Senators and staff according to the state issued criteria.
- **In-Person Meetings:** Senate areas will remain closed to visitors. Senators and professional staff are encouraged to meet with members of the public via phone, teleconferencing, or outdoor (social distance) meetings.

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- **Committee Room Admittance:** In-person committee viewing will remain limited to Senators, staff, subject matter experts invited to present information before the committee, and members of the media. Public Testimony will continue to be accepted from the Civic Center.
- **Senate Sitings:** Senators will be temperature checked prior to entering the Chamber. The Chamber will be sanitized after each sitting, and portable HEPA filters will continue to run before, during, and after Senate sittings. The public gallery will be closed.
- **Additional Protocols:** Please be mindful that testing is only one of multiple protection strategies. In keeping with CDC guidelines, there is a mask requirement in the Senate. Speakers in a committee meeting may temporarily remove their mask. The risk of transmission in Senate committee rooms is extremely low because all Senators and professional staff are tested prior to meetings, social distancing guidelines are observed and the Senate is closed to the public. Please continue to observe social distancing and sanitizing guidelines, both in Tallahassee and in Senate District Offices.

Specific protocols noted in prior communications, but not readdressed here, remain in place. A summary of Senate COVID-19 Protocols can be found on the Senate website. Again, I am grateful for your diligence in adhering to these protocols; your patience with one another as we navigate the current status of the pandemic; and, above all, your commitment to serving the people of our state during these trying and unprecedented times. We will get through this together. I look forward to serving alongside each of you this session.