

# THE FLORIDA SENATE



2024-2026

*Ben Albritton*

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE





## *Message from the President*

**BEN ALBRITTON**  
**PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE**

We are so pleased you have taken time to experience a part of Florida's past, present, and future by walking the halls and chambers where citizen legislators have gathered for generations.

The Florida Senate is comprised of independently elected women and men of differing walks of life, family backgrounds, and communities of faith. Each Senator comes to Tallahassee to represent over half a million Floridians. The microphones on our desks amplify not only our voices, but the millions of Floridians we collectively represent.

My colleagues and I share a commitment to the people of our state, the courage to boldly address the challenges of our day, and a passion for freedom and independence which has defined our nation, our state, and the institution of the Florida Senate throughout our history.

I'm a proud son of rural Florida, Florida's Heartland, six generations deep. Our small, tight-knit, legacy communities are filled with some of the nicest, hardworking people you will ever meet. Rural communities across Florida are also full of opportunity. During the 2024-2026 Legislative Term, we are focused on a rural renaissance in the State of Florida. We want to foster more opportunities to improve our rural quality of life, while preserving the time-honored way-of-life that has been deeply cherished generation after generation.

An important part of Florida's Rural Renaissance includes an increased focus on our amazing farmers and the food supply chain in Florida. Farm families serve all of Florida's families, protect our environment, strengthen our national security, and feed the nation, and our state.

Rural communities are strong and proud. I can tell you the last place they'll look for guidance is the government. But, there are things we can do to help. We can support innovation and help rural Florida invest in new technologies that expand education, health care, commerce, transportation, and support agriculture, and its supply chain. We can, and we will, save from extinction our iconic Florida citrus industry.

You play an important role in the legislative process, and we encourage you to stay involved by contacting your local Senator with suggestions, ideas, and feedback. Thank you again for visiting the Florida Senate. I look forward to seeing you around the Capitol.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Albritton".

# *The Florida Senate*

When the first Senate was convened on January 7, 1839 — six years before Florida became a state — no business could be transacted because only seven of the sixteen Senators were present. There was no quorum of Senators for three of the first four days, and it was not until the fifth day of the first session that Territorial Governor Richard Keith Call addressed the Senate and the House of Representatives in joint session.

Since the beginning days, the Senate has evolved into a highly organized, smoothly functioning legislative body that meets annually to conduct the people's business. The Florida Senate today has 40 members, each elected from a single-member district and each representing approximately 560,000 Florida citizens. Each Senator is elected for a four-year term. He or she may be elected for more than one term, but may not seek reelection if, at the end of the current term, the Senator would have served in that office for eight consecutive



years (see Article VI, Section 4, State Constitution). The Constitution of the State of Florida specifies that Senators must be at least 21 years of age, registered voters, residents of the district from which they are elected, and must have resided in Florida for two years.

While members of the other branches of government work full time in public service, the Legislature maintains its identity as the citizen legislature. Senators work in a different business or profession when not carrying out their legislative duties. Their occupations include law, business, education, agriculture, and real estate. “Once a Senator, always a Senator” is a catchy phrase of good fellowship that conveys something of the camaraderie of the Senate.





The Senate membership includes 24 men and 15 women. There are 28 Republicans and 10 Democrats and 1 No Party Affiliation. Four Senators have served in the U.S. Military. Thirty-three Senators have college degrees. Twenty-nine Senators have served in the House of Representatives prior to their elections to the Senate. The Senate is presided over by a President, elected by the members of the Senate. Also elected is the President Pro Tempore. The President for the 2024-2026 term is Senator Ben Albritton from Wauchula. The President Pro Tempore is Senator Jason Brodeur from Sanford.



Additional information on these officers and the other members of the Senate is contained on the following pages of this handbook. The handbook also further outlines and describes the Senate, its operations, and its relationship to the House of Representatives and the other two branches of Florida government.



# President of the Senate



The Senate President is a constitutional officer who leads the Florida Senate for a two-year term. The President, who is elected by members of the Senate, manages the operations of the Senate and presides over its sessions. The President's many duties include: selecting a Majority Leader, appointing Senators to standing Senate committees, appointing committee chairs, and appointing citizens to a variety of boards and commissions.



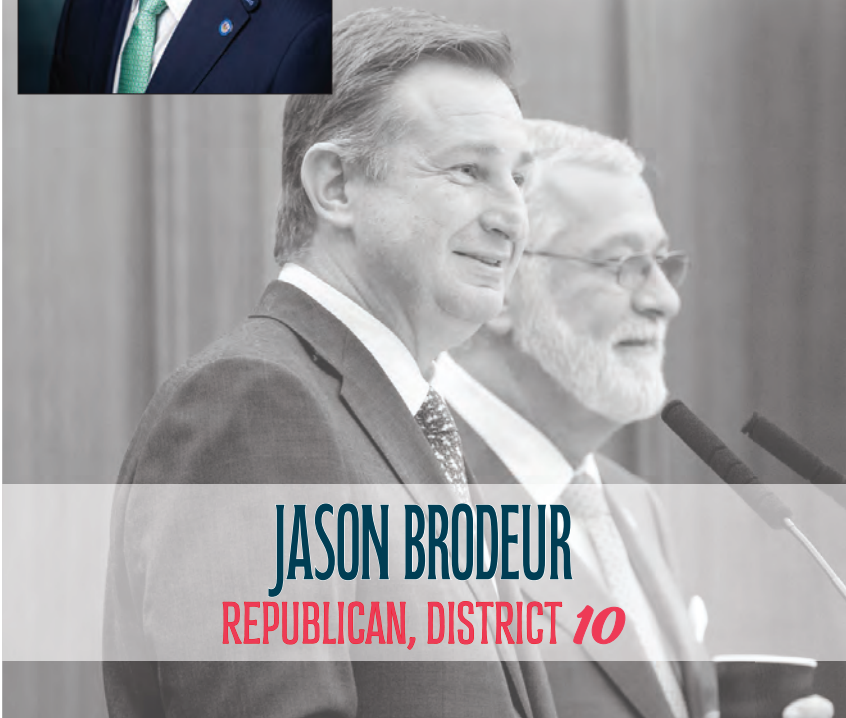
**BEN ALBRITTON**  
**REPUBLICAN, DISTRICT 27**

**OCCUPATION** Agribusiness Owner **BORN** in Lakeland  
**EDUCATION** Florida Southern College, B.S., Business/Citrus, 1990  
**SPOUSE** Missy of Wauchula **CHILDREN** Rebecca, Joshua, Ryan  
**LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2018, reelected subsequently; Majority (Republican) Leader: 2022-2024; House of Representatives: 2010-2018  
**RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Spending time with family, reading  
**EMAIL** [albritton.ben.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:albritton.ben.web@flsenate.gov)

# President Pro Tempore



The role of the President Pro Tempore is defined by the President and the Senate Rules. Additionally, the President Pro Tempore may preside over sessions during the absence of the President.

A grayscale background image showing two men in suits at a podium. The man in the foreground is Jason Brodeur, looking towards the right. The man behind him is older, with a white beard and glasses, also looking towards the right.

## JASON BRODEUR

REPUBLICAN, DISTRICT 10

**OCCUPATION** Healthcare Consultant **BORN** in Daytona Beach  
**EDUCATION** University of Florida, B.S., Food and Resource Economics, 1997; University of Florida, M.B.A., 2003; Dartmouth College, M.P.H., 2022 **SPOUSE** Christy Daly Brodeur of Tallahassee  
**LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2010-2018 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Outdoorsman, travel, reading **EMAIL** [brodeur.jason.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:brodeur.jason.web@flsenate.gov)

# Members of the Florida Senate

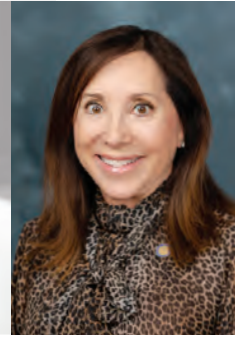


**OCCUPATION** Small Business Owner **BORN** in Holiday **EDUCATION** Valencia College, A.A. **SPOUSE** Brandon Arrington of Kissimmee **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024; House of Representatives: 2020-2024 **HISTORICAL** Brandon Arrington, husband, current Osceola County Commissioner: 2008-present; Mary Jane Arrington, mother-in-law, current Osceola Supervisor of Elections: 2008-present; former Osceola County Commissioner: 1994-2002 **RECREATION** Traveling, reading, boating, hanging with my dogs **EMAIL** arrington.kristen.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Academic Dean **BORN** in Hialeah **EDUCATION** Miami Dade College, A.A., 2004; University of Miami, B.A., 2006; Florida International University, M.S., 2010; Florida International University, Master of Public Administration, 2010 **SPOUSE** Cindy Gil of Bogota, Colombia **CHILDREN** Olivia Rose, Brandon **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2014-2022, Speaker Pro Tempore: 2020-2022, Majority Deputy Whip: 2016-2018 **MILITARY SERVICE** Florida Army National Guard, Captain, April 2016-present **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **RECREATION** Spending time with family, playing sports, exercising, traveling, reading **EMAIL** avila.bryan.web@flsenate.gov





**OCCUPATION** Attorney **BORN** in New York, New York; moved to Florida in 1958 **EDUCATION** Tufts University, B.A.; University of Miami, General Educational Development, LL.M.-Estate Planning, 2002; 1980, magna cum laude, George Washington University Law School, J.D., 1983 **SPOUSE** Jeffrey Ganeles of Plainview, New York **CHILDREN** Caryn Ganeles, Steven Ganeles **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2018, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2010-2018 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Jewish **RECREATION** Skiing, travel, tennis, reading **EMAIL** berman.lori.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Attorney **BORN** in Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Moved to Florida in 1986 **EDUCATION** Florida State University, B.S., Political Science and Criminal Justice, 1997; University of Florida Levin College of Law, J.D., 2002; University of Florida Levin College of Law, LL.M. in Taxation, 2003 **SPOUSE** Shawn Bernard of San Francisco, California **CHILDREN** Macall, Mackenna, Kennedy **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024; House of Representatives: 2009-2012 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Seventh-day Adventist **RECREATION** Weightlifting, running, cooking **EMAIL** bernard.mack.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Insurance and Investments **BORN** in Bradenton **EDUCATION** Florida State University, B.S., 1978 **SPOUSE** Sandra Woodard of Palmetto **CHILDREN** Ansley, Austin **GRANDCHILDREN** Houston **HISTORICAL** Hugh Boyd, grandfather, House of Representatives: 1941; Wilbur H. Boyd, uncle, House of Representatives: 1959-1966; Florida Senate: 1966-1972; President Pro Tempore: 1970-1972 **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2010-2018 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Baptist **RECREATION** Golf, quail hunting **EMAIL** boyd.jim.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Attorney **BORN** in Tachikawa U.S. Air Base in Tokyo, Japan; moved to Florida in 1988 **EDUCATION** University of Florida, B.A., Criminology, 1991; Florida State University, J.D., 1995 **SPOUSE** Rob Bradley of Green Cove Springs **CHILDREN** Connor, Stephanie, Caroline **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently **HISTORICAL** Rob Bradley, spouse, Florida Senate: 2012-2020 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Gator football, dogs, gardening **EMAIL** bradley.jennifer.web@flsenate.gov



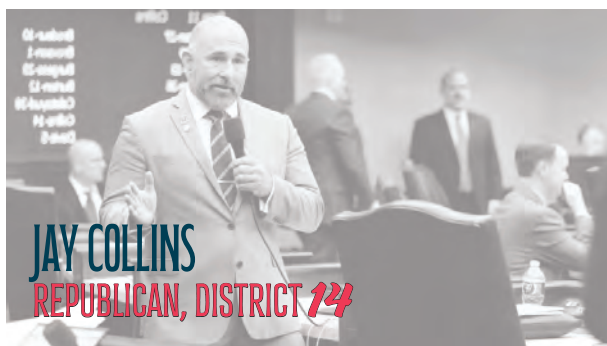
**OCCUPATION** Attorney, U.S. Army Reserve Major **BORN** in Zephyrhills  
**EDUCATION** University of South Florida, B.A., Political Science, 2008; Barry University School of Law, J.D., 2011; The U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School, 2013 **SPOUSE** Courtney Clem of Lithia **CHILDREN** Adeline, Danny III, Eleanor **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2014-2019 **MILITARY SERVICE** U.S. Army Reserve Major, 2021-present; U.S. Army Reserve Captain, 2012-2021 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **RECREATION** Community involvement, spending time with my wife and children, studying history and politics, traveling in an RV with my family **EMAIL** burgess.danny.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Former Nonprofit Executive Director, Polk Vision, Imperial Symphony Orchestra **BORN** in Heidelberg, Germany; moved to Florida in 1987 **EDUCATION** California State University, Sacramento, B.S., Public Administration, 1980 **SPOUSE** Brad Burton of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey **CHILDREN** Chris, Tim, Elizabeth **GRANDCHILDREN** Blake, June, Tucker **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022; House of Representatives: 2014-2022 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **RECREATION** Spending time with family, traveling, cooking **EMAIL** burton.colleen.web@flsenate.gov



**BORN** in Miami **EDUCATION** Florida International University, B.S., 2017  
**LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022 **RELIGIOUS**  
**AFFILIATION** Nondenominational Christian **EMAIL** calatayud.alexis.web@  
 flsenate.gov

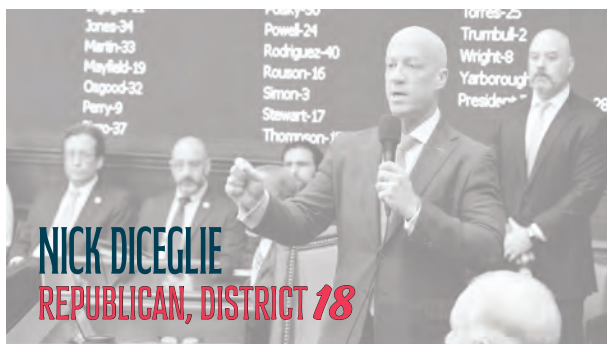


**OCCUPATION** Chief Program Officer of a national 501(c)(3) with a focus  
 on food needs in and out of disaster zones **BORN** in Scobey, Montana; moved  
 to Florida in 2019 **EDUCATION** Special Forces Qualification Course, 2005;  
 American Military University, B.S., Health Sciences, 2010, summa cum  
 laude; Norwich University, 2012 **SPOUSE** Layla Sangid Collins of Princeton,  
 West Virginia **CHILDREN** Gabe, Colt **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected  
 to the Senate in 2022 **MILITARY SERVICE** Retired 23-year Army Green  
 Beret **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Family time,  
 running, cycling, reading **EMAIL** collins.jay.web@flsenate.gov

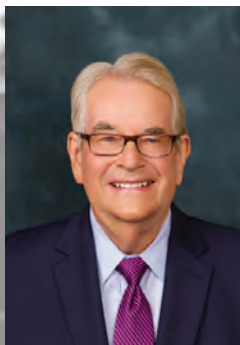
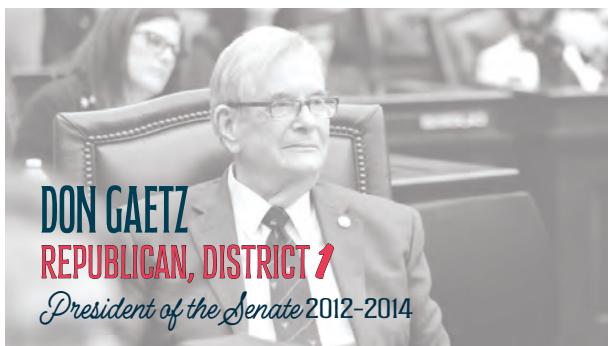




**OCCUPATION** El-Card Staffing Solutions **BORN** in Jacksonville  
**EDUCATION** Edward Waters University, B.S., Elementary Education, 1994, magna cum laude; University of North Florida, M.Ed., Educational Leadership, 2001 **SPOUSE** Robert E. Davis of Jacksonville **CHILDREN** Antonisha, Robert Jr., Brittnie **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2016-2022 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Nondenominational **RECREATION** Traveling, shopping, skating, movies **EMAIL** davis.tracie.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Small Business Owner **BORN** in McAlester, Oklahoma; moved to Florida in 1996 **SPOUSE** Erica Rowell of Augusta, Maine **CHILDREN** Livia, Carlo **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022; House of Representatives: 2018-2022 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Catholic **RECREATION** Golfing, boating, fishing, running, cooking Italian Sunday dinner **EMAIL** diceglie.nick.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Retired Healthcare Executive **BORN** in Rugby, North Dakota; moved to Florida in 1978 **EDUCATION** Concordia College, B.S., Religion and Political Science, 1971; Troy State University, M.P.A., 1999 **SPOUSE** Victoria Quertermous of Fort Walton Beach **CHILDREN** Matt, Erin **GRANDCHILDREN** Julia **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024; Prior Senate 2006-2016; Senate President: 2012-2014 **HISTORICAL** Matt Gaetz, son, former U.S. Congressman; Jerry Gaetz, father, former mayor and senator **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Lutheran **RECREATION** Antiques, real estate, U.S. history **EMAIL** gaetz.don.web@flsenate.gov

**ILEANA GARCIA**  
**REPUBLICAN, DISTRICT 36**



**OCCUPATION** Broadcaster, Programmer, Radio and TV Personality, Influencer, Hispanic Engagement **BORN** in Miami **EDUCATION** Miami Senior High School, 1987 **CHILDREN** Victor Manuel **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **EMAIL** garcia.ileana.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Attorney **BORN** in Vero Beach **EDUCATION** Wake Forest University, B.A., Communication, 1999, cum laude; Marquette University, J.D., 2003 **SPOUSE** Michael Bielecki of Highland, Michigan **CHILDREN** One daughter, two sons **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2016-2022 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Catholic **RECREATION** Traveling, reading, watching our children discover their talents **EMAIL** [grall.erin.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:grall.erin.web@flsenate.gov)



**OCCUPATION** Certified Public Accountant **BORN** in Tampa **EDUCATION** Florida State University, B.S., 1999; University of South Florida, M.B.A., 2003 **SPOUSE** Sydney Spence of Citrus Hills **CHILDREN** Spencer, Jack Ryan, Elle **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2018, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2016-2018 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **RECREATION** College football, mountaineering, heli-skiing, concerts **EMAIL** [gruters.joe.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:gruters.joe.web@flsenate.gov)



**OCCUPATION** Health Information Technology Consultant; CEO Health IT Strategies **BORN** in Nashville, Tennessee; moved to Florida in 1943 **EDUCATION** University of Florida, B.A., Spanish, 1964; University of Florida, M.A., Latin American Studies and History, 1977 **CHILDREN** Stephanie, Jennifer, Jamie, Melinda **GRANDCHILDREN** James, Jupiter, Justice, Nicole, Anna, Aaron, Tyler, Nicholas **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2018, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2000-2008, 2010-2018 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Presbyterian **RECREATION** Grandchildren, Gator football, travel, politics **EMAIL** harrell.gayle.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Retired Firefighter; Consus Group, LLC, Partner **BORN** in Statesville, North Carolina; moved to Florida in 1972 **EDUCATION** St. Petersburg College **SPOUSE** Lee Hooper of Queens, New York **CHILDREN** Brian, Ann **GRANDCHILDREN** Amanda, Arin, John, Brianna, Brad **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2018, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2006-2014 **RECREATION** Golf **EMAIL** hooper.ed.web@flsenate.gov





**OCCUPATION** Homebuilder **BORN** in Queens, New York **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2014-2022 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **EMAIL** ingoglia.blaise.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** National Director of Development, COOP Careers **BORN** in Miami Gardens **EDUCATION** Florida A&M University, B.S., Biochemistry/Molecular Biology, 2006; Florida Atlantic University, M.Ed., Educational Leadership, Higher Ed, 2017; Florida Atlantic University, Ph.D., Educational Leadership, Higher Ed, 2022 **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2012-2020 **HISTORICAL** Eric H. Jones, father, Mayor of West Park, retired November 2020 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Nondenominational Christian **RECREATION** Running, reading, spending time with family **EMAIL** jones.shevrin.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Chief Legal Officer and EVP, Foundation Risk Partners, Corp.  
**BORN** in Columbus, Ohio; moved to Florida in 1982 **EDUCATION** University of Central Florida, B.A., 1992; Stetson University College of Law, J.D., 1997, cum laude **SPOUSE** Michelle of Ormond Beach **CHILDREN** Alexandria, Sarah **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024; House of Representatives: 2016-2024 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Presbyterian **RECREATION** Boating, hunting, college football **EMAIL** leek.tom.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Attorney **BORN** in Cherokee, Iowa; moved to Florida in 1986 **EDUCATION** Stetson University, B.A., 2004; Stetson University B.S., 2004; Liberty University School of Law, J.D., 2007 **SPOUSE** Amy D'Alessandro Martin of Fort Myers **CHILDREN** Ryker, Reagan, Rhett **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Traveling, boating, hunting **EMAIL** martin.jonathan.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Retired Banking Executive **BORN** in Pensacola, Florida  
**SPOUSE** Dr. Robert P. Scaringe **CHILDREN** Evan, Samuel, Coleman  
**LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate on June 10, 2025, prior service 2016-2024, House of Representatives, 2008-2016, 2024-June 9, 2025  
**RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **RECREATION** Family activities, sailing, boating, fishing **EMAIL** mayfield.debbie.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** State Certified Residential Contractor; Marion County Building Industry Association, Executive Officer **BORN** in Norfolk, Virginia; moved to Florida in 1961 **SPOUSE** Jessica of Crystal River **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024; House of Representatives: 2016-2024  
**RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Spending time with family, fishing, playing golf, exploring “Old” Florida **EMAIL** mcclain.stan.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Chief Executive Officer **BORN** in Fort Lauderdale  
**EDUCATION** Florida A&M University, 1983-1985; Nova Southeastern University, Bachelor's Degree, 1996; Nova Southeastern University, Master's Degree, 1997; Nova Southeastern University, D.P.A., 2002; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, MDiv, 2010 **CHILDREN** Shennette, Anthony, Gabriel **GRANDCHILDREN** Kyla, Gabriel **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Baptist **RECREATION** Reading, writing, traveling, basketball **EMAIL** [osgood.rosalind.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:osgood.rosalind.web@flsenate.gov)

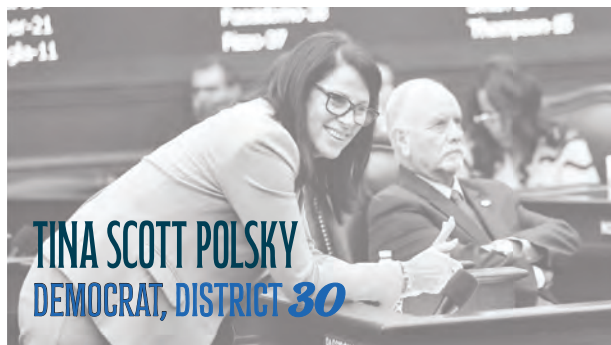


**OCCUPATION** Attorney, Kelly, Passidomo & Kelly, LLP **BORN** in Jersey City, New Jersey; moved to Florida in 1979 **EDUCATION** Trinity University, Washington, D.C., B.A., 1975; Stetson University College of Law, J.D., 1978 **SPOUSE** John M. Passidomo of Naples **CHILDREN** Catarina, Francesca, Gabriella **GRANDCHILDREN** William, Emilio **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2016, reelected subsequently; Majority (Republican) Leader: 2018-2020; President: 2022-2024; House of Representatives: 2010-2016 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **RECREATION** Cooking, opera **EMAIL** [passidomo.kathleen.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:passidomo.kathleen.web@flsenate.gov)





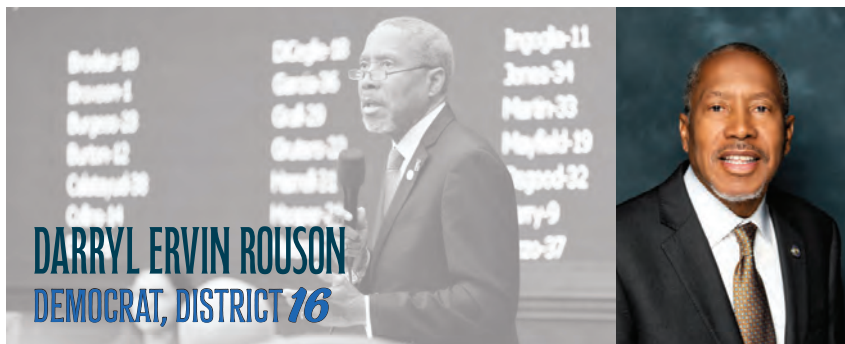
**OCCUPATION** Attorney **BORN** in Somerville, New Jersey; moved to Florida in 2007 **EDUCATION** New York University, B.A., 1999; Columbia University, M.S., 2007; University of Miami, J.D., 2010 **CHILDREN** Jack, Julian **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2018, reelected subsequently **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **EMAIL** pizzo.jason.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Mediator, Lawyer **BORN** in Merrick, New York; moved to Florida in 2005 **EDUCATION** University of Pennsylvania, B.A., 1990, cum laude; Columbia University School of Law, J.D., 1994 **SPOUSE** Jeff Polsky of Paramus, New Jersey **CHILDREN** Rebecca, Jesse **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2018-2020 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Jewish **RECREATION** Family, dogs, tennis **EMAIL** polsky.tina.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Senior Vice President of Miami Realtors **BORN** in Miami  
**EDUCATION** Florida International University, School of Journalism and Mass Communications, B.S., Communications, 1999; Nova Southeastern University, H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business, M.S., Leadership, 2009  
**SPOUSE** Dr. Clemente M. Canabal of Cartagena, Colombia **CHILDREN** JC, Nina, Eros, Hermes **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2020, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2018-2020 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Roman Catholic **RECREATION** Traveling, reading, sewing, spending time with family **EMAIL** rodriguez.anamaria.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Attorney, Rubenstein Law **BORN** in New Orleans, Louisiana; moved to Florida in 1959 **EDUCATION** Xavier of New Orleans, B.A., 1977; University of Florida, J.D., 1980 **SPOUSE** Angela Holmes Rouson of St. Petersburg **CHILDREN** Antonio Winston, Sakeisha Winston, Danielle Rouson, Giselle Rouson, Evan Holmes, Daniel Rouson, Emanuel Rouson, Jared Rouson, Aaron Rouson **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2016, reelected subsequently; House of Representatives: 2008-2016 **RECREATION** Reading, public speaking, power walking **EMAIL** rouson.darryl.web@flsenate.gov



**BARBARA SHARIEF**  
**DEMOCRAT, DISTRICT 35**



**OCCUPATION** Doctor of Nursing Practice, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner **BORN** in Miami Beach **EDUCATION** Jackson Memorial Hospital School of Nursing, 1992; Miami-Dade Community College, A.S., Nursing, 1994; Florida International University, B.S., Nursing, 1996; Florida International University, M.S., Nursing APRN, 2000, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner (ARNP) Certification; Wilkes University, Doctor of Nursing Practice, 2017 **CHILDREN** Amanda, Alyssa, Hailey **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Islam **RECREATION** Traveling, spending time with family, writing, collecting African American memorabilia and antiques **EMAIL** sharief.barbara.web@flsenate.gov



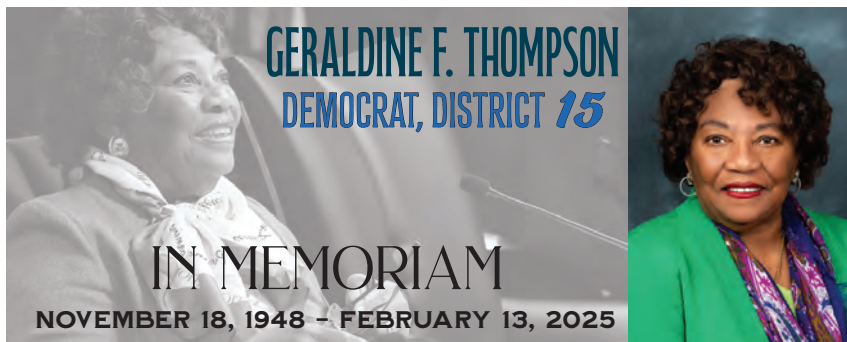
**COREY SIMON**  
**REPUBLICAN, DISTRICT 3**



**OCCUPATION** Athlete Alumni Engagement and Development Director **BORN** in Pompano Beach **EDUCATION** Florida State University, B.S., Information Studies, 1999 **SPOUSE** Natasha Givens Simon of Wildwood **CHILDREN** Corey “CJ,” Jr. **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Hunting, fishing, golfing, cooking **EMAIL** simon.corey.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Non-profit management **BORN** in Fort Lauderdale  
**EDUCATION** University of Central Florida, B.S., Business Administration, 2003; John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, Senior Executives in State and Local Government Program, Certificate of Completion, 2023 **SPOUSE** Jerick Mediavilla Negron of Corozal, Puerto Rico **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024; House of Representatives: 2016-2022 **RECREATION** Performing arts, orchestra, ballet, film, karaoke, J. R. R. Tolkien **EMAIL** smith.carlos.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Retired College Administrator, Museum Founder **BORN** in New Orleans, Louisiana; moved to Florida in 1955 **EDUCATION** Miami Dade College, A.A., 1968; University of Miami, B.Ed., 1970; Florida State University, M.S., 1973 **SPOUSE** Emerson R. Thompson, Jr. of Windermere **CHILDREN** Laurise, Emerson, Elizabeth **GRANDCHILDREN** Jasmyne, Imani, Kiara, Symone, Jacqueline, Julia **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently; Prior Senate: 2012-2016; House of Representatives: 2006-2012, 2018-2022 **HISTORICAL** Emerson R. Thompson, Jr., husband, served as County Judge, Circuit Court Judge, and Appellate Judge **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Baptist **RECREATION** Published author, writer, and world traveler

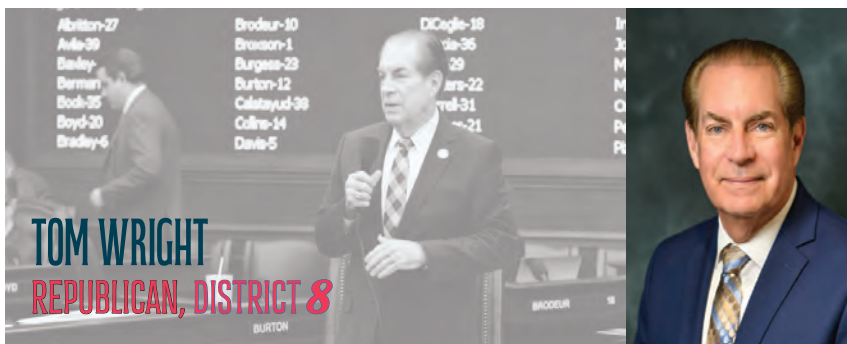




**OCCUPATION** Agribusiness **BORN** in St. Cloud, Minnesota; moved to Florida in 1979 **EDUCATION** Leesburg High School **SPOUSE** Dodi of Eustis **CHILDREN** Dylan, Ashton **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2024; House of Representatives: 2020-2024 **MILITARY SERVICE** United States Air Force, Veteran **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Lutheran **RECREATION** Boating, family camping, fishing, hiking, kayaking **EMAIL** truenow.keith.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Business Owner **BORN** in Panama City **EDUCATION** Auburn University, 2011 **SPOUSE** Brittany Fishel of Panama City **CHILDREN** Merritt, Tripp, Emery **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022; House of Representatives: 2014-2022 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Christian **RECREATION** Fishing, hunting **EMAIL** trumbull.jay.web@flsenate.gov



**OCCUPATION** Retired Businessman **BORN** in Rochester, Minnesota; moved to Florida in 2004 **EDUCATION** Stewartville Public Schools, High School, 1970 **SPOUSE** Cindy L. Copeman of Wykoff, Minnesota **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2018, reelected subsequently **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Lutheran **RECREATION** Collecting classic cars **EMAIL** [wright.tom.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:wright.tom.web@flsenate.gov)



**OCCUPATION** Business Development **BORN** in Mobile, Alabama; moved to Florida in 1985 **EDUCATION** University of North Florida **SPOUSE** Jordan Ellison of Merritt Island **CHILDREN** Emerson, Grayson, Barrett, Archer **LEGISLATIVE SERVICE** Elected to the Senate in 2022; House of Representatives: 2016-2022 **RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION** Baptist **RECREATION** Spending time with family **EMAIL** [yarbrough.clay.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:yarbrough.clay.web@flsenate.gov)



# *Senate Committees*

**AGRICULTURE**

**APPROPRIATIONS**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT, AND  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
CRIMINAL AND CIVIL JUSTICE**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
HIGHER EDUCATION**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
PRE-K - 12 EDUCATION**

**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION, TOURISM, AND  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**BANKING AND INSURANCE**

**CHILDREN, FAMILIES, AND  
ELDER AFFAIRS**

**COMMERCE AND TOURISM**

**COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**

**CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

**EDUCATION POST SECONDARY**

**EDUCATION PRE-K - 12**

**ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

**ETHICS AND ELECTIONS**

**FINANCE AND TAX**

**FISCAL POLICY**

**GOVERNMENTAL OVERSIGHT AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY**

**HEALTH POLICY**

**JUDICIARY**

**MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS,  
SPACE, AND DOMESTIC SECURITY**

**REGULATED INDUSTRIES**

**RULES**

**TRANSPORTATION**

**JOINT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES  
COMMITTEE**

**JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC COUNSEL  
OVERSIGHT**

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDITING COMMITTEE**

**JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON  
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING**

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET COMMISSION**

# Florida Senate Seating Chart

## 2024-2026

### SECRETARY OF THE SENATE



**TRACY C. CANTELLA**



**AVILA (R)**  
District 39



**DICEGLIE (R)**  
District 18



**TRUMBULL (R)**  
District 2



**SIMON (R)**  
District 3



**SHARIEF (D)**  
District 35



**COLLINS (R)**  
District 14



**OSGOOD (D)**  
District 32



**HARRELL (R)**  
District 31



**BERNARD (D)**  
District 24



**YARBOROUGH (R)**  
District 4



**RODRIGUEZ (R)**  
District 40



**ROUSON (D)**  
District 16



**SMITH (D)**  
District 17



**DAVIS (D)**  
District 5



**JONES (D)**  
District 34



**HOOPER (R)**  
District 21  
*APPROPRIATIONS CHAIR*



**LEEK (R)**  
District 7



**BURTON (R)**  
District 12



**BOYD (R)**  
District 20  
*MAJORITY LEADER*



**PASSIDOMO (R)**  
District 28  
*RULES CHAIR*

**SECRETARY'S DESK**

**SENATE  
PRESIDENT**



SERGEANT AT ARMS



DAMIEN KELLY



MARTIN (R)  
District 33



MCCLAIN (R)  
District 9



TRUENOW (R)  
District 13



ARRINGTON (D)  
District 25



ALBRITTON (R)  
District 27  
PRESIDENT



INGOZIA (R)  
District 11



GRALL (R)  
District 29



CALATAYUD (R)  
District 38



MAYFIELD (R)  
District 19



BURGESS (R)  
District 23



BERMAN (D)  
District 26  
MINORITY LEADER



VACANT  
District 15



POLSKY (D)  
District 30



BRADLEY (R)  
District 6



GARCIA (R)  
District 36



BRODEUR (R)  
District 10  
PRESIDENT  
PRO TEMPORE



GRUTERS (R)  
District 22  
FISCAL POLICY CHAIR



GAETZ (R)  
District 1



PIZZO (NPA)  
District 37



WRIGHT (R)  
District 8



# *Secretary of the Senate*

At its organization session every two years, the Senate elects a Secretary of the Senate pursuant to the Constitution of the State of Florida. This nonmember constitutional officer compiles and publishes the Journal and the calendar, keeps all Senate records, and authenticates each act and resolution passed by the Senate.

Other operations within the Secretary's Office include: bill drafting, bill and amendment filing, duplication and distribution of documents, and other supporting functions. Special chamber computer programs, such as the electronic vote system, are custom designed and operated by the Secretary's Office.

Working with the Office of Legislative Information Technology Services and the Senate Information Technology Director, the Secretary's Office coordinates the development and maintenance of computer applications used by Senate staff. The Secretary's Office maintains Senate information available on the Florida Senate website and on Online Sunshine, the website of the Florida Legislature.

The Secretary speaks to various visiting civic and student groups during the year. The Secretary's Office also hosts numerous mock sessions throughout each year. Staff and facilities are provided for the YMCA Youth in Government, Boys State, Girls State, Florida 4-H, and other youth legislatures.



*Tracy Cantella*  
**SECRETARY OF THE SENATE**

Secretary Cantella was unanimously elected as the Senate Secretary on November 22, 2022, following two decades of service as a member of the Senate Professional Staff. She began her career in the Secretary's Office and became well-versed in every facet of the office, before serving as professional staff to the Committee on Rules for more than 10 years. In this role, she was responsible for providing Senators with concise,

accurate, and impartial interpretations of the Senate Rules during sittings. Senators also rely on the Secretary for her thoughtful, fair, and decisive knowledge of floor processes. Secretary Cantella resides in Tallahassee with her husband, Chad, and their teenage sons, Jason and Wyatt.

# *Senate Sergeant at Arms*

The incoming Senate President appoints a Sergeant at Arms during each organization session. The Sergeant is responsible for the security and maintenance of the Senate Chamber as well as all Senate offices and property.

The Sergeant at Arms, under the direction of the President, maintains order on the Senate floor and in the public gallery when the Senate sits to do business. The Sergeant at Arms or a member of his staff is also present at each Senate committee meeting and ensures proper order and decorum as required by the Senate Rules.

The Sergeant at Arms also coordinates with the Division of Capitol Police in Tallahassee and local law enforcement throughout the state to ensure Senators, Senate staff, and members of the public can fulfill their responsibilities in a safe and secure manner.

The recorded history of the Office of Sergeant at Arms dates back to the 1400s, though it likely existed well before that because preserving order was essential to conducting business in even the earliest legislative chambers. The first Florida Senate Sergeant at Arms was Alfred A. Fisher, who was appointed in 1839 when Florida was still a territory.

## *Damien Kelly* SENATE SERGEANT AT ARMS

Sergeant Kelly moved to the United States from Ireland to play Division I soccer for Eastern Illinois. He was a three-time All-American and went on to play soccer professionally before joining the Memphis Police Department. After moving to Florida, Sergeant Kelly served as a special agent for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement on the protective detail for three Governors and their families. He is an expert in firearm certification and proficiency, surveillance, and protective operations, as well as gang investigation and interrogation. In 2018, Sergeant Kelly was appointed by Governor Scott as the first Director of Safe Schools. Appointed Senate Sergeant in 2020, Sergeant Kelly has worked to upgrade the security within Senate facilities and enhanced security protocols to ensure Senators, staff, and visitors are safe as we all participate in the legislative process. Sergeant Kelly resides in Tallahassee with his wife, Deborah, who is also a retired law enforcement officer. They have an adult daughter, Caitlin.



# *The Senate Chamber*

The Senate Chamber, also known as the “floor,” is the room on the fourth floor of the Capitol where Senators debate the merits of proposed legislation. The current chamber is the fifth used since the first session of the Senate was called to order in 1839. A major renovation occurred in this chamber in 2016. The chamber now has a timeless design which accommodates modern technology and reflects the design elements of the Florida Historic Capitol.

On the floor above the chamber is the public gallery where visitors may observe the Senate in session. From the gallery, attention is drawn to the rostrum where the President presides. Above the rostrum is the Senate Seal, which was originally adopted in 1972 and revised most recently in 2016.

The President occupies the “chair,” pacing the flow of legislation, deciding who will speak, and ruling on parliamentary disputes. The President may also call on other Senators to preside from time to time. The portraits hanging below the gallery commemorate past Presidents of the Senate. After each President’s term, a portrait is painted and hung in this area. The portraits are arranged in chronological order with the most recent to the right of the President’s rostrum. Each time a new portrait is added, the oldest one is taken down and moved to the Historic Capitol, keeping 100 years of past Presidents on display in the Senate Chamber.

In front of the President’s rostrum is the Secretary’s desk, which is staffed by the Secretary of the Senate. Legislative business is not properly before the Senate until it is “on the desk.” Clerks at this desk read the bills and amendments and record Senate actions. These actions are published in the Journal, the official record of Senate proceedings.

Senators can access legislative information from their offices or the chamber by using a custom computer application designed to display amendments and bill information.





Voting boards on each side of the chamber record a Senator's green "yes" or red "no" vote. An amber light next to a Senator's name indicates that the Senator wants a Page to deliver a message or retrieve a file from his or her office. The voting boards also display the number of the bill or amendment being debated and other information related to the proceedings. Electronic voting was first used in the Senate in 1966, and now most votes are recorded electronically.



The seating arrangement in the chamber is determined by the President. Telephones at each chamber desk provide direct communication with the Senator's district staff. Only members of the Senate and designated staff are allowed in the chamber while the Senate is in session. Certain present and past state officials and guests invited by the President may also enter the chamber during a session.

The Senate rules require a Senator to address another Senator by title and district number or title and surname. A Senator must not address or refer to another Senator by his or her first name.



Just above the main entrance is the press gallery, where members of the media report Senate actions. The remainder of the gallery is open to the public. A portion of the gallery is also reserved for the Senators' families and other sections are often temporarily reserved for visiting students.

Robotic cameras from The Florida Channel are positioned in the chamber to provide live, televised coverage of all Senate sessions. Florida's legislative telecasts were used as a model for a similar system installed in 1979 in the U.S. House of Representatives. In addition, live and unedited feeds of some legislative events can be found at [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov) and [www.thefloridachannel.org](http://www.thefloridachannel.org).

# Contacting a Senator



Senators are interested in hearing opinions concerning issues on which the Senate will vote. Below are some tips on how to express those opinions.

Most people communicate with a Senator by email; however, others communicate by telephone or in person. No matter which method you choose, the same guidelines apply:

- Know the subject matter well.
- Know the full name of the Senator with whom you wish to communicate and learn the position he or she has taken on the issue.
- Do not use form letters; instead, write the essential points in your own words.
- If representing others from the community formally, or even informally, indicate that to the Senator.
- Be brief in any presentation. Provide supporting documentation with a cover letter.
- Be courteous.
- Be completely fair when presenting the facts.
- Refer to a specific bill by number. This information is available on the Senate website at [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov). Note that Senate bills are even-numbered and House bills are odd-numbered.
- Always provide contact information so that the Senator or a member of his or her staff can request further data or discussion.
- If meeting personally with a Senator, prepare carefully for the meeting and be on time.



# Committee Testimony

Many Floridians follow bills as they progress through the legislative process. The Senate website provides detailed information on all bill actions through a variety of resources ([www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov)). Senate Tracker is a custom-designed feature that allows people to track bills, committees, press releases, publications, and more throughout the website; view the latest updates on the Tracker tab; and receive email notifications when those items are updated. Tracker is a free service provided by the Florida Senate, and users can sign up for an account online.

Public testimony on issues is an important element of the committee process. A committee appearance record is provided by each committee for each speaker on each bill. The form is available at: [www.flsenate.gov/UserContent/Committees/CommitteeAppearanceForm.pdf](http://www.flsenate.gov/UserContent/Committees/CommitteeAppearanceForm.pdf) and in printed form at every committee meeting.

When offering comment on a bill that is scheduled for a public hearing, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Generally, each committee chair follows the order of the bills listed on the agenda.
- Prepare comments in advance and be brief unless asked to elaborate.
- Time may be limited so it is important to be specific and to-the-point regarding the bill.
- Be prepared to answer questions from committee members on the position taken on the bill. If you do not know the answer to a question, just say so.



# Presidents of the Senate



1824 Capitol



1839 Capitol



1845 Capitol

## SESSION PRESIDENT

### STATEHOOD

<b>1845</b>	James A. Berthelot
<b>1846</b>	Dennitt H. Mays
<b>1847</b>	Daniel G. McLean
<b>1848-1849</b>	Erasmus D. Tracy
<b>1850-1853</b>	Robert J. Floyd
<b>1854-1855</b>	Hamlin V. Snell
<b>1856</b>	Philip Dell
<b>1858-1859</b>	John Finlayson
<b>1860-1861</b>	Thomas Jefferson Eppes
<b>1862-1863</b>	Enoch J. Vann
<b>1864</b>	Abraham K. Allison
From 1865 through 1887, the Lt. Governor served as President.	
<b>1865-1868</b>	William W. J. Kelly
<b>1868-1870</b>	William H. Gleason
<b>1870</b>	Edmund C. Weeks
<b>1871-1873</b>	Samuel T. Day
<b>1873-1874</b>	Marcellus L. Stearns
<b>1874-1877</b>	A.L. McCaskill* (President Pro Tempore)
<b>1877-1879</b>	Noble A. Hull
<b>1881-1885</b>	L.W. Bethel
<b>1885-1887</b>	Milton Mabry

\* Presided over the Senate in the absence of Lt. Governor Stearns who became Governor on March 18, 1874, upon the death of Governor O.B. Hart





1891 Capitol



1910 Capitol



1924 Capitol

## SESSION PRESIDENT

<b>1889**</b>	Patrick Houstoun
<b>1889</b>	Joseph B. Wall
<b>1891</b>	Jefferson B. Browne
<b>1893</b>	William H. Reynolds
<b>1895</b>	Frederick T. Myers
<b>1897</b>	Charles J. Perrenot
<b>1899</b>	Frank Adams
<b>1901</b>	Thomas Palmer
<b>1903</b>	Frank Adams
<b>1905</b>	Park M. Trammell
<b>1907</b>	W. Hunt Harris
<b>1909</b>	Frederick M. Hudson
<b>1911-1912</b>	Frederick P. Cone
<b>1913</b>	Herbert J. Drane
<b>1915</b>	Charles E. Davis
<b>1917-1918</b>	John B. Johnson
<b>1919</b>	James E. Calkins
<b>1921</b>	William A. MacWilliams
<b>1923</b>	Theodore T. Turnbull
<b>1925</b>	John S. Taylor
<b>1927</b>	Samuel W. Anderson
<b>1929</b>	Jesse J. Parrish
<b>1931</b>	Patrick C. Whitaker
<b>1933</b>	Truman G. Futch
<b>1935</b>	William C. Hodges

\*\* Extraordinary Session



1936 Capitol



1950 Capitol



1978 Capitol

## SESSION PRESIDENT

<b>1937</b>	D. Stuart Gillis
<b>1939</b>	J. Turner Butler
<b>1941</b>	John R. Beacham
<b>1943</b>	Philip D. Beall
<b>1945</b>	Walter W. Rose
<b>1947-1948</b>	Scott Dilworth Clarke
<b>1949</b>	Newman C. Brackin
<b>1951</b>	Wallace E. Sturgis
<b>1953</b>	Charley E. Johns
<b>1955-1956</b>	W. Turner Davis
<b>1957</b>	William A. Shands
<b>1959</b>	Dewey M. Johnson
<b>1961-1962</b>	W. Randolph Hodges
<b>1962-1963</b>	F. Wilson Carraway
<b>1965</b>	James E. Connor
<b>1967</b>	Verle A. Pope
<b>1968-1970</b>	John E. Mathews, Jr.
<b>1970-1972</b>	Jerry Thomas
<b>1972-1974</b>	Mallory E. Horne
<b>1974</b>	Louis de la Parte***
<b>1974-1976</b>	Dempsey J. Barron
<b>1976-1978</b>	Lew Brantley
<b>1978-1980</b>	Philip D. Lewis
<b>1980-1982</b>	W.D. Childers
<b>1982-1984</b>	N. Curtis Peterson, Jr.

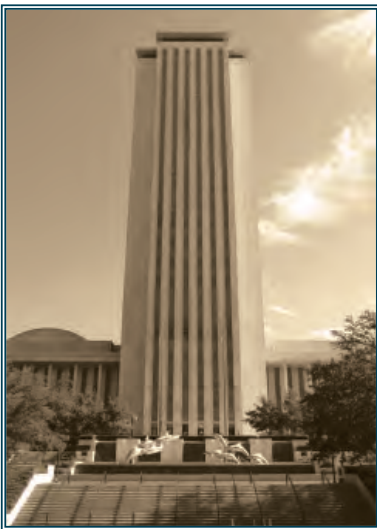
\*\*\* As President Pro Tempore, served as Acting President from July 1, 1974, when President Horne resigned, until November 6, 1974



1821 Historic Capitol



1989 Capitol



Today's Capitol

## SESSION PRESIDENT

<b>1984-1986</b>	Harry A. Johnston II
<b>1986-1988</b>	John W. Vogt
<b>1988-1990</b>	Bob Crawford
<b>1990-1992</b>	Gwen Margolis
<b>1992-1993</b>	Ander Crenshaw
<b>1993-1994</b>	Pat Thomas
<b>1994-1996</b>	James A. Scott
<b>1996-1998</b>	Toni Jennings
<b>1998-2000</b>	Toni Jennings
<b>2000-2002</b>	John M. McKay
<b>2002-2004</b>	James E. "Jim" King, Jr.
<b>2004-2006</b>	Tom Lee
<b>2006-2008</b>	Ken Pruitt
<b>2008-2010</b>	Jeff Atwater
<b>2010-2012</b>	Mike Haridopolos
<b>2012-2014</b>	Don Gaetz
<b>2014-2016</b>	Andy Gardiner
<b>2016-2018</b>	Joe Negron
<b>2018-2020</b>	Bill Galvano
<b>2020-2022</b>	Wilton Simpson
<b>2022-2024</b>	Kathleen Passidomo
<b>2024-2026</b>	Ben Albritton





# Symbols of FLORIDA

## STATE SEAL

In 1985, a revised Great Seal of the State of Florida was presented to the Governor and Cabinet. The previous version of the state seal had several historical errors that were corrected in the 1985 seal. The current seal features a Seminole woman rather than a western Plains Indian, as was depicted on earlier seals. The image of a steamboat has been made more accurate, and the seal now includes a sabal palm, our state tree, instead of a cocoa palm.

Through the years, the appearance of the state seal has changed considerably. The steamboat, for instance, has been depicted in a variety of ways. Also, the earliest official state seal pictured a mountainous background that was later removed because it did not represent Florida's flat terrain. The Native American woman has worn various types of clothing, some of them more historically accurate than others. In one version of the seal, for example, the woman wore a feather headdress of a style worn only by men. Despite the changes in the appearance of the seal, the basic elements of the Great Seal of the State of Florida have remained the same.



## STATE FLAG

The 1899 Legislature adopted a joint resolution that led to the design of our current flag: "The State Flag shall conform with standard commercial sizes and be of the following proportions and descriptions: The seal of the state, in diameter one-half of the hoist, shall occupy the center of a white background. Red bars, in width one-fifth the hoist, shall extend from each corner towards the center, to the outer rim of the seal."



## STATE MOTTO

"In God We Trust" was adopted by the Florida Legislature as part of the state seal in 1868. This is also the motto of the United States and is a slight variation on Florida's first state motto, "In God is our Trust." In 2006, "In God We Trust" was officially designated in state statute as Florida's motto.



## STATE ANTHEM

Responding to an initiative to find a new Florida state song, the Florida Music Educators Association managed an online contest to find a new song to represent the state. The winning song was "Florida, Where the Sawgrass Meets the Sky," written by Jan Hinton, a music teacher from Pompano Beach. In the 2008 Legislative Session, a compromise was reached that kept the old state song "Old Folks at Home" (with revised lyrics) and designated "Florida, Where the Sawgrass Meets the Sky" as the new state anthem. Sawgrass grows in Florida's coastal marshes and is particularly common in the Everglades, where it stretches as far as the eye can see.

### ***Florida, Where the Sawgrass Meets the Sky***

*Florida, where the sawgrass meets the sky,  
Florida, where our hearts will ever lie,  
Sitting proud in the ocean like a sentinel true,  
Always shielding your own, yet giving welcome.*

*Florida, land of flowers, land of light.  
Florida, where our dreams can all take flight.  
Whether youth's vibrant morning or the twilight of years,  
There are treasures for all who venture here in Florida.*

*Mockingbirds cry and 'gators lie out in the sun,  
Bridges span southward to the Keys and  
rockets skyward run,  
The orange blossoms' sweet perfume and  
fireworks fill the air,  
And cultures rich our native people share.*

*Florida, where the sawgrass meets the sky,  
Florida, where our hearts will ever lie,  
Sitting proud in the ocean like a sentinel true,  
Always shielding your own, yet giving welcome.*

*Florida, land of flowers, land of light.  
Florida, where our dreams can all take flight.  
Whether youth's vibrant morning or the twilight of years,  
There are treasures for all who venture here in  
Florida, Florida.*

# Official State Designations

This is just a sample of the numerous official designations for our state. Other designations range from the state motto and state anthem to the state pie and state horse. A longer list may be found in the Capitol Rotunda between the legislative chambers. A complete listing of the state designations can be found in Chapter 15, Florida Statutes.

## STATE BUTTERFLY

*Zebra Longwing*



## STATE SHELL

*Horse Conch*



## STATE WILDFLOWER

*Coreopsis*



## STATE BIRD

*Mockingbird*



## STATE ANIMAL

*Florida Panther*



## STATE SALTWATER MAMMAL

*Porpoise*



## STATE BEVERAGE

*Orange Juice*



## STATE MARINE MAMMAL

*Manatee*



## STATE TREE

*Sabal Palmetto Palm*



## STATE REPTILE

*American Alligator*





# Senate Page Program

Be a part of history! The Senate Page Program gives students the rare opportunity to observe and participate in the legislative process.

During a regular session, participating students come to Tallahassee for one week to work in the Senate by distributing materials and delivering messages to Senators and staff. Pages learn about the legislative process through a hands-on approach and experience a “mock session” in which Pages role-play as Senators and engage in debating, discussing, and voting on legislation.



Professional dress is required. Pages must choose between a stipend or community service hours for participating in the program. Students are expected to provide their own transportation, housing, and meals while in Tallahassee. More information regarding this program and the application process may be found on the Senate website at [www.senatepages.flsenate.gov](http://www.senatepages.flsenate.gov).



# Three Branches of Government



Florida's Constitution, in the traditional American pattern of "separation of powers," divides state government into three separate and independent branches, known as the executive, legislative and judicial branches. This division of powers creates a system of "checks and balances" ensuring that all three branches properly perform their constitutional duties in the administration of state affairs. Tallahassee is the seat of Florida's state government.



# *The Executive Branch*



*Governor Ron DeSantis*

The Florida Constitution vests the supreme executive power of the state in the Governor and provides that he or she shall ensure that the laws are faithfully executed. It provides for a Lieutenant Governor to be elected in a joint candidacy with the Governor. The Lieutenant Governor works with the Governor and performs duties as assigned by the Governor or as otherwise provided by law. The Constitution also provides that the Governor shall be assisted by an elected Cabinet consisting of an Attorney General, a Chief Financial Officer, and a Commissioner of Agriculture.

The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and members of the Cabinet are elected to four-year terms. They take office on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January following their election in November of non-presidential election years. The Governor may serve a consecutive term in office unless he or she has served more than six years in two consecutive terms. Cabinet members may not seek reelection if, by the end of their current term, they will have served in that office for eight consecutive years.

# *The Judicial Branch*



The Judicial Branch interprets the law and applies the Constitution. Florida's court system consists of a series of circuit and county courts, district courts of appeal, and the state Supreme Court.

County courts preside over criminal trials of misdemeanors and some civil cases. They also have the power to issue warrants of arrest. There is one county court located in each of Florida's 67 counties. The number of judges in each county court varies with the population and caseload of the county. County judges are elected to six-year terms.

Circuit courts are located in each of Florida's 20 judicial circuits. Some circuits contain only one county, but most are multi-county. The circuit courts are at the top of the trial system, and they also hear limited appeals from county courts. Circuit judges are elected by the voters of the circuits to serve six-year terms.

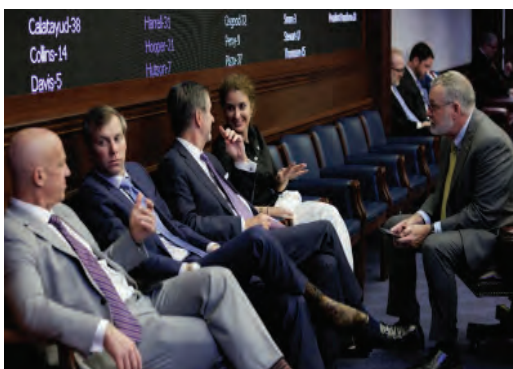
The District Courts of Appeal are intermediate appellate courts that receive most of the appeals from trial courts. There are six judicial districts in Florida, with courts located in Tallahassee, Lakeland, Daytona Beach, West Palm Beach, Tampa, and Miami. Appointed by the Governor to serve in each district court, these judges must be reconfirmed by the voters every six years.

The Supreme Court is at the top of Florida's court system and is the final state court of appeal. The Supreme Court determines the constitutionality of statutes, has the authority to issue advisory opinions to the Governor, and has administrative responsibilities over all lower courts. There are seven Supreme Court justices, each appointed by the Governor and retained by a popular vote every six years.

# *The Legislative Branch*

The Legislative Branch has exclusive lawmaking power. It may delegate limited rulemaking power to some executive agencies.

**Composition and Organization.** The Constitution of the State of Florida requires that members of the Legislature be elected at the general election in November of even-numbered years. Florida's Legislature is composed of two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Each house is the sole judge of the qualifications and elections of its members and has the power to choose its own officers and establish its own rules of procedure. All legislative sessions are open to the public, except in very limited circumstances when appointments or suspensions of public officials are considered in executive session. Either house of the Legislature may initiate legislation on any subject.



The State Constitution provides that the Legislature shall be apportioned into 30 to 40 senatorial districts, and 80 to 120 representative districts. The 1972 Legislature established 40 Senate districts and 120 House districts. Senators serve four-year terms and representatives serve two-year terms. While a Senator may be elected for more than one term, he or she may not seek reelection if, at the end of the current term, the Senator would have served in that office for eight consecutive years (see Article VI, Section 4, State Constitution).





**Legislative Sessions.** The Florida Constitution provides for the meeting dates for the Legislature. Two weeks after each general election, the Legislature convenes for the exclusive purpose of organization and selection of officers. No legislation is considered during the organization session. During the organization session, each house adopts its rules of procedure to be followed for the next two years. The rules provide for

orderly proceedings and determine how each house will conduct its business.

Regular sessions of the Legislature convene on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March of each odd-numbered year, and on the second Tuesday after the first Monday in January of each even-numbered year, for a period not to exceed 60 consecutive days. Session may be extended by a three-fifths vote of each house.



Once every 10 years, the Constitution requires the Legislature to reapportion the state's voting districts, convening in January. Special sessions may be called by the Governor, or may be convened by joint proclamation of the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. Special sessions may not exceed 20 days, unless extended by a three-fifths vote of each house. Each "call" for a special session outlines the business to be considered. Finally, the Senate may resolve itself into executive session to consider appointment to or removal from public office, even when the House of Representatives is not meeting.



**Committees.** A committee functions to consider filed legislation and make recommendations for action to the full body. The Senate and House rules provide for standing committees, subcommittees, and select committees. The presiding officers select the chairs and members of all committees.

Bills are assigned to one or more committees for study. Committees may hold public hearings where committee members hear sponsoring legislators and others who are interested in the bill. The committee may vote to recommend the bill favorably; favorably with a committee





substitute; unfavorably; or favorably with amendments to be considered when the bill is debated on the floor by the respective house.



When the Senate and House are unable to agree on the final content of a bill, it goes to a conference committee. This committee, composed of members of both houses, tries to resolve the differences between the Senate and House versions of a bill. Other committees commonly used are joint committees, which are composed of members from each house, and select committees, which are usually appointed to make recommendations on special or unique problems.

**Lobbying.** A lobbyist is someone who represents a company, group or cause before the local, state, or federal government.

Paid lobbyists of our state government must register with the Lobbyist Registration Office in the Office of Legislative Services. Each lobbyist must also state any direct business association or partnership with any current member of the Legislature. Lobbying firms must make periodic reports on compensation.



**Journals and Calendars.** The Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House each publish daily journals and calendars during the legislative session. Each journal details the proceedings on the floor, committee reports, and related actions of the previous day. Calendars serve as official notification of legislative activities, such as sessions, committee meetings, bills to be considered, schedules, deadlines, and other significant information.

**Forms of Legislation.** Legislative proposals may be in the form of bills, resolutions, concurrent resolutions, joint resolutions, or memorials. A bill is a proposed law, and it may be either a general bill or a local bill. A general bill would have a general impact within the state; a local bill would affect only a particular county, city, or town named in the bill. A majority vote is required to pass a bill, unless otherwise provided in the Constitution. Companion bills are often used as a timesaving device.

These are identical bills introduced in both houses, which allow simultaneous committee study in each body. The appropriations bill is one of the most important bills considered by the Legislature. This bill is the state's budget, and it specifies the amount of money available to various state agencies during the next year. The appropriations bill follows the same course as other general bills, but because it is difficult to get both houses to agree on all items in the bill, a conference committee is usually appointed to resolve the differences.

## *Glossary of Legislative Terms*

ACT – A bill passed by the legislature.

ADJOURN – To end a committee meeting or a day's legislative sitting.

ADOPT – To vote to accept.

AMENDMENT – A proposal to change the original terms of a bill.

BICAMERAL – Consisting of two houses. All states have bicameral legislatures except Nebraska, which has only one house (unicameral).

BILL – A proposed law.

BUDGET – A bill that states how much money will be spent on government programs and services.

CALENDAR – A publication containing legislative activities or a list of bills awaiting action.

CHAIR – A legislator who presides over a committee meeting or a session.

CHAMBER – Also known as the “floor,” it is the room in which the Senate or the House of Representatives meets.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – The person designated by the House of Representatives to assist the members of the House in the detailed processes of enacting laws and to record that history.

COMMITTEE – A group of Senators or Representatives appointed by the presiding officer to consider important issues and to report its recommendations for action by the body that originated it.

CONSTITUENT – A citizen who resides in the district of a legislator.

CONSTITUTION – The written instrument, embodying the fundamental principles of the state, that establishes power and duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people.

CONVENE – To meet in formal legislative session.

DEBATE – To argue the merits of a bill, for and against.

DECORUM – Appropriate behavior and conduct.

DISTRICT – The area from which a legislator, state or federal, is elected.

GALLERY – The seating area for visitors located above each chamber (on the fifth floor of the Capitol).

GOVERNOR – The chief executive of the State.

JOURNAL – The official record of the proceedings of the Senate or the House of Representatives.

LAW – The final product of the legislative process. It is the end result of the introduction of a bill, its passage by both houses, its approval by the Governor (or the overriding of his veto by the legislature), and its recording by the Secretary of State.

**MAJORITY PARTY** – The political party having more than half of the seats in a house.

**MINORITY PARTY** – The political party having fewer than a majority of the seats in a house.

**MOTION** – A proposal, usually oral, made to the presiding officer and relating to procedure or action before a legislative body.

**OATH OF OFFICE** – An oath or vow taken by a public official prior to taking up his or her official duties.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS** – The defined routine of procedure in the legislative body each day. It can be deviated from only by waiver of the rules.

**PASSAGE** – Favorable action on a measure before the legislature.

**PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE** – The presiding officer of the Senate. He or she is designated as President by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the full membership of the Senate for a term of two years.

**PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE** – Literally, president “for a time.” Elected by the Senate, he or she performs specified duties as prescribed by the Senate Rules or the Senate President.

**QUORUM** – The number of members required for the conduct of business.

**REPEAL** – The removal of a provision from the law.

**ROLL CALL** – To determine a vote on a question by the taking of names in favor of and opposed to.

**RULES** – Provisions for the procedure, organization, officers, and committees of each house of the legislature.

**SECRETARY OF THE SENATE** – The person designated by the Senate to assist Senate officers, members, and staff in the detailed processes of enacting laws and to record that history.

**SERGEANT AT ARMS** – The person in each house who is responsible for the security of the legislative house and the maintenance of that house’s property.

**SESSION** – The period during which the legislature meets.

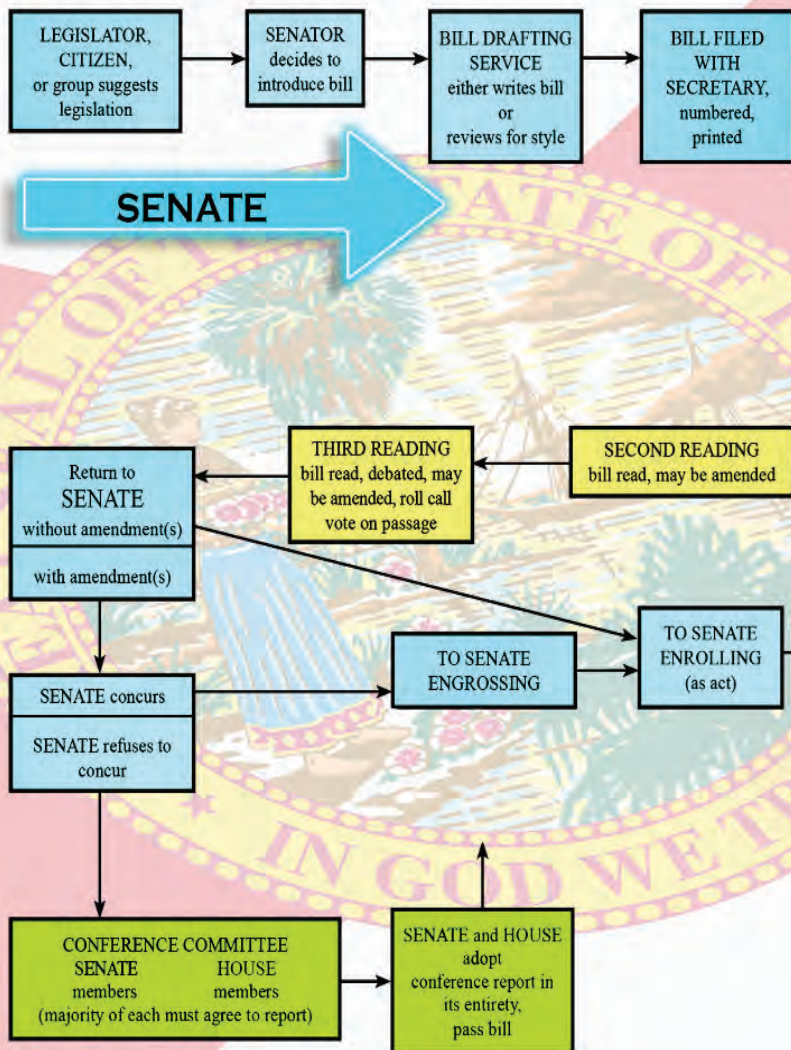
**SINEDIE** – Refers to final adjournment of a legislative session. The term is sometimes used to denote the ceremony involving the dropping of white handkerchiefs, which symbolizes the end of a regular session.

**SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES** – The presiding officer of the House of Representatives. He or she is designated as Speaker by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the full membership of the House for a term of two years.

**VETO** – Return by the Governor to the legislature of a bill without his or her signature; the veto message from the Governor usually explains why he or she thinks the bill should not become a law.

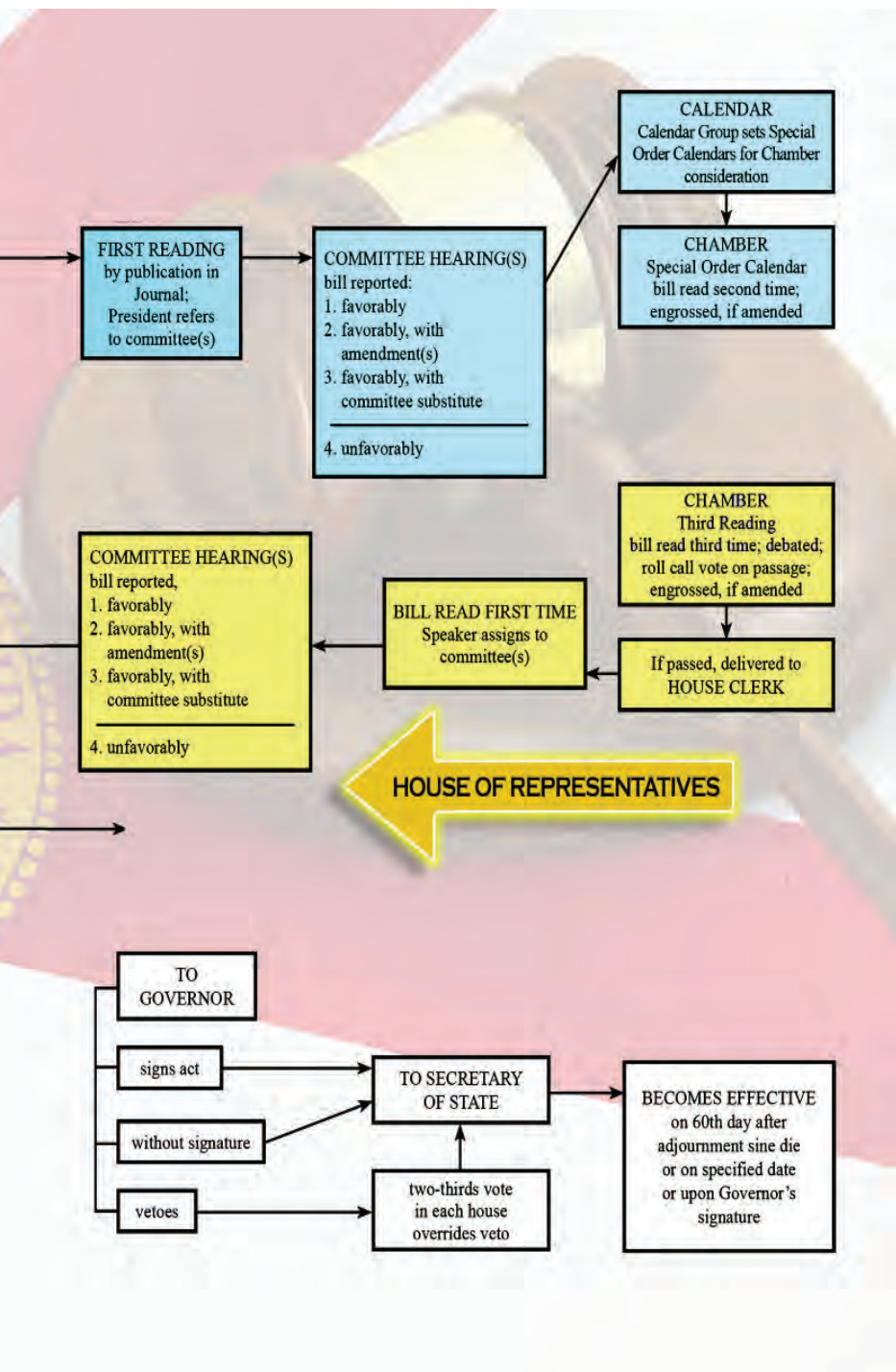
**VOTE** – A decision on a question, either affirmative or negative.

# HOW AN IDEA BECOMES A LAW



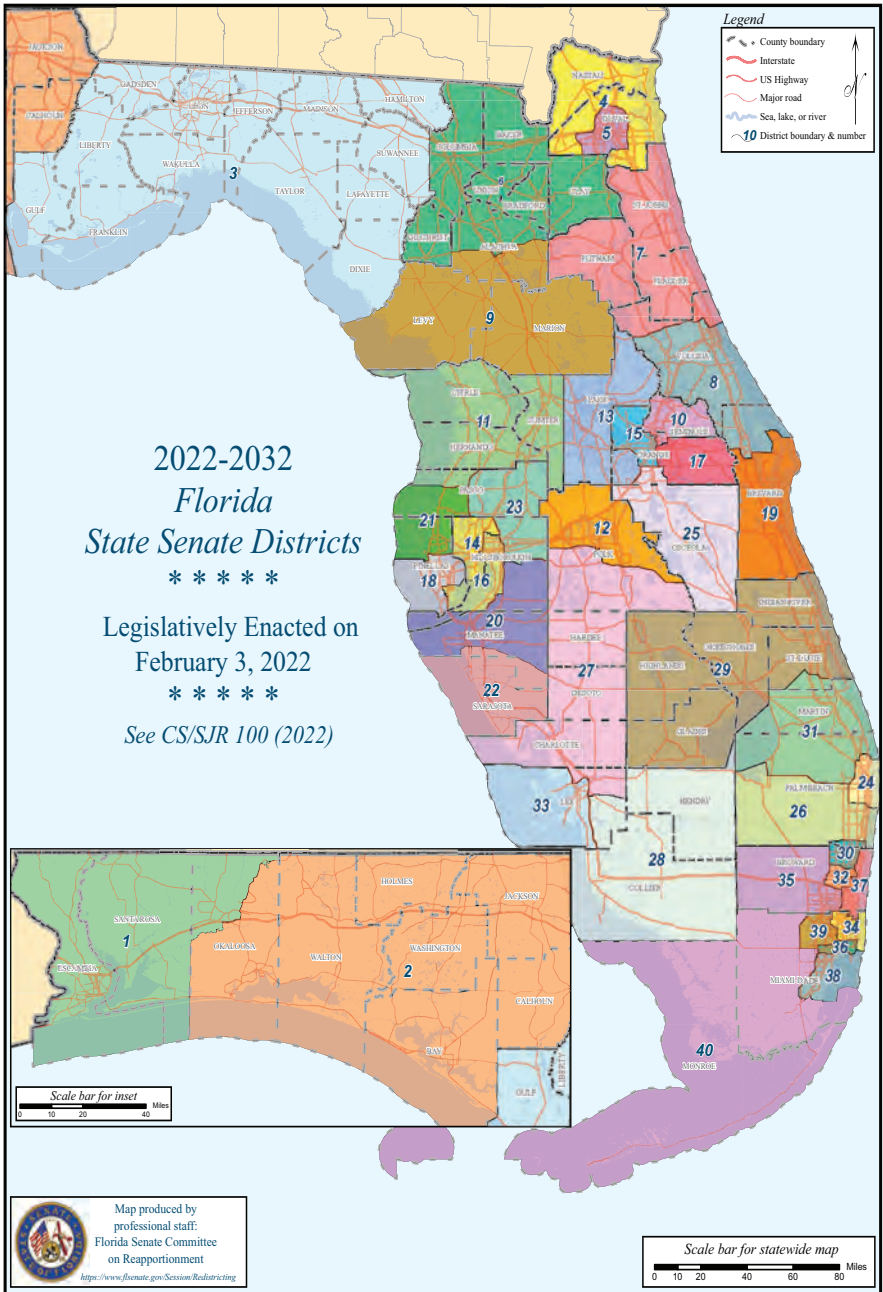
A simplified chart showing the route many bills take through the Florida Legislature. Bills may originate in either house. This bill originated in the Senate.





# Florida Senate District Map

- |                                  |                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> DON GAETZ               | <b>21</b> ED HOOPER           |
| <b>2</b> JAY TRUMBULL            | <b>22</b> JOE GRUTERS         |
| <b>3</b> COREY SIMON             | <b>23</b> DANNY BURGESS       |
| <b>4</b> CLAY YARBOROUGH         | <b>24</b> MACK BERNARD        |
| <b>5</b> TRACIE DAVIS            | <b>25</b> KRISTEN ARRINGTON   |
| <b>6</b> JENNIFER BRADLEY        | <b>26</b> LORI BERMAN         |
| <b>7</b> THOMAS LEEK             | <b>27</b> BEN ALBRITTON       |
| <b>8</b> TOM WRIGHT              | <b>28</b> KATHLEEN PASSIDOMO  |
| <b>9</b> STAN MCCLAIN            | <b>29</b> ERIN GRALL          |
| <b>10</b> JASON BRODEUR          | <b>30</b> TINA SCOTT POLSKY   |
| <b>11</b> BLAISE INGOGLIA        | <b>31</b> GAYLE HARRELL       |
| <b>12</b> COLLEEN BURTON         | <b>32</b> ROSALIND OSGOOD     |
| <b>13</b> KEITH TRUENOW          | <b>33</b> JONATHAN MARTIN     |
| <b>14</b> JAY COLLINS            | <b>34</b> SHEVRIN JONES       |
| <b>15</b> VACANT                 | <b>35</b> BARBARA SHARIEF     |
| <b>16</b> DARRYL ROUSON          | <b>36</b> ILEANA GARCIA       |
| <b>17</b> CARLOS GUILLERMO SMITH | <b>37</b> JASON PIZZO         |
| <b>18</b> NICK DICEGLIE          | <b>38</b> ALEXIS CALATAYUD    |
| <b>19</b> DEBBIE MAYFIELD        | <b>39</b> BRYAN AVILA         |
| <b>20</b> JIM BOYD               | <b>40</b> ANA MARIA RODRIGUEZ |



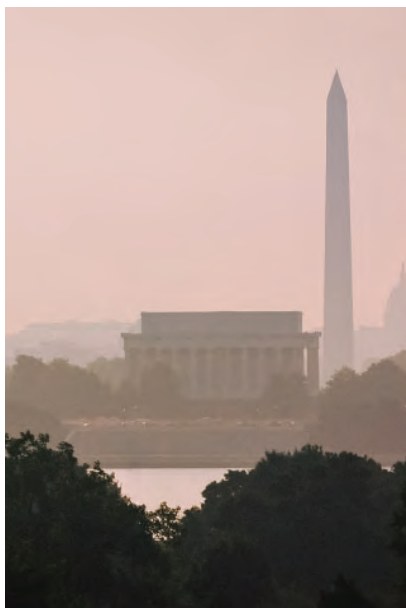
## *Florida in the 119th Congress*



Longworth House Office Building

Washington, D.C. is the seat of the nation's government. The names and office addresses of Florida's federal representatives may be found online. Further information on each member of Congress may be found at the official websites for the United States Senate ([www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)) and the United States House of Representatives ([www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov)).

## *United States Senate*



Washington, D.C skyline

The Senate is composed of 100 members, two from each state. A Senator must be at least 30 years of age, have been a citizen of the United States for nine years, and be a resident of the state from which the Senator is chosen. The term of office is six years, and one-third of the total membership of the Senate is elected every second year. The terms of both Senators from a particular state are arranged so that they do not terminate at the same time. Of the two Senators from a state, the one who was elected first is referred to as the "senior" Senator from that state. The other is referred to as the "junior" Senator. Senators Rick Scott and Ashley Moody represent Florida in Washington, D.C.





## *United States House of Representatives*

*The* House of Representatives is composed of 435 members elected every two years from among the 50 states, apportioned according to their total populations.

A Representative must be at least 25 years of age, have been a citizen of the United States for seven years, and, when elected, be a resident of the state in which the Representative is chosen.

In addition to the Representatives from each of the states, there is a Resident Commissioner from the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and Delegates from the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Resident Commissioner and the Delegates cannot vote on matters before the House.

Under the provisions of Section 2 of the 20th Amendment to the United States Constitution, Congress must assemble at least once every year, at noon on the third day of January, unless by law it appoints a different day. A Congress lasts for two years, commencing in January of the year following the biennial election of members, and is divided into two sessions.

Unlike some other parliamentary bodies, both the Senate and the House of Representatives have equal legislative functions and powers (except that only the House of Representatives may initiate revenue bills).

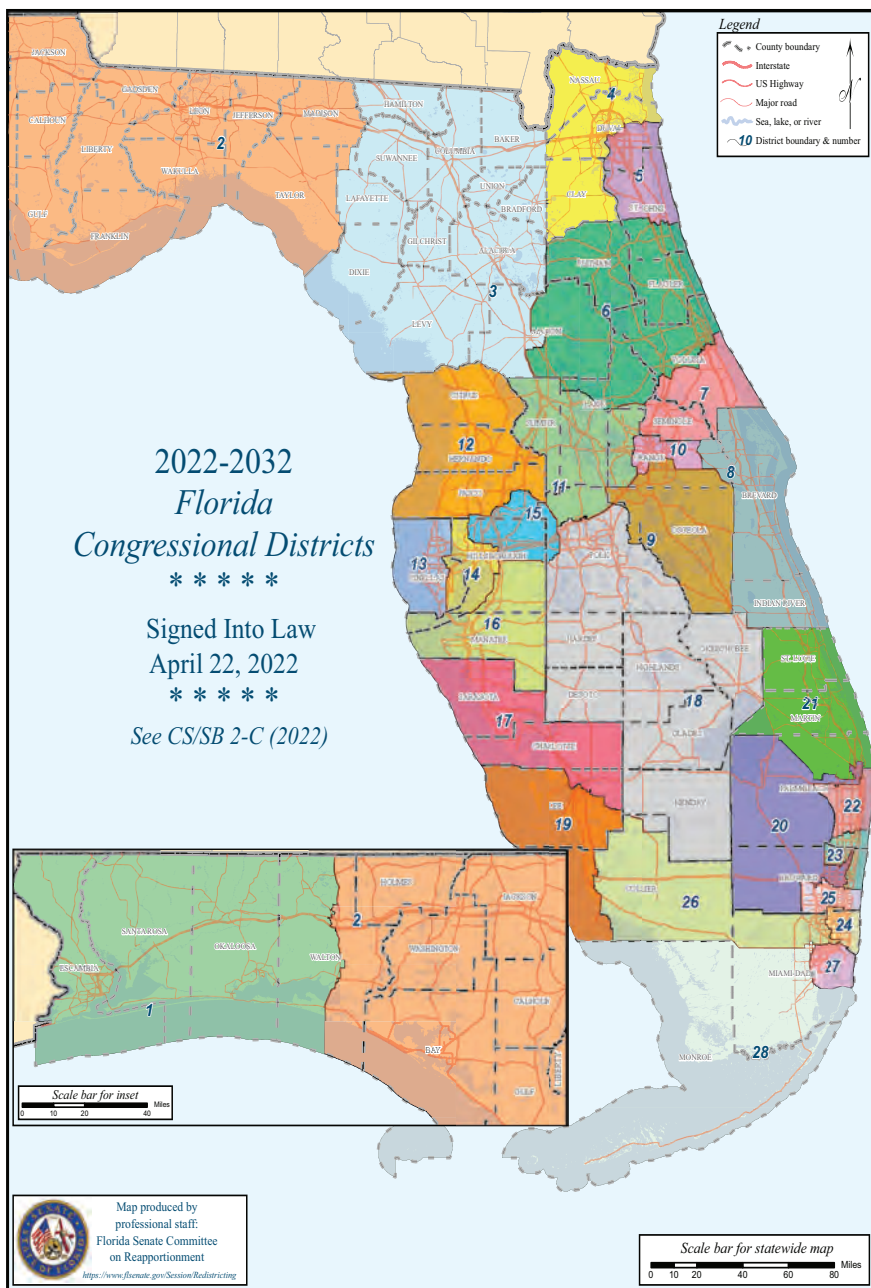
The United States Constitution authorizes each house to determine the rules of its proceedings. Pursuant to that authority, the House of Representatives adopts its rules on the opening day of each Congress. The Senate, which considers itself a continuing body, operates under standing rules that it amends from time to time.

The chief function of Congress is the making of laws. In addition, the Senate has the function of advising and consenting to treaties and to certain nominations by the President. In the matter of impeachments, the House of Representatives presents the charges – a function similar to that of a grand jury – and the Senate sits as a court to try the impeachment. Following a presidential election, both houses meet in joint session on the sixth day of January, unless by law they appoint a different day, to count the electoral votes.

## *Congressional Districts* *2024-2026*

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Jimmy Patronis (R), Panama City   | *17. Greg Steube (R), Sarasota              |
| 2. Neal Dunn (R), Panama City        | 18. Scott Franklin (R), Lakeland            |
| 3. Kat Cammack (R), Gainesville      | 19. Byron Donalds (R), Naples               |
| *4. Aaron Bean (R), Fernandina Beach | 20. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D), Tamarac |
| 5. John Rutherford (R), Jacksonville | 21. Brian Mast (R), Port St. Lucie          |
| 6. Randy Fine (R), Melbourne Beach   | 22. Lois Frankel (D), Delray Beach          |
| 7. Cory Mills (R), Lake Mary         | 23. Jared Moskowitz (D), Coral Springs      |
| *8. Mike Haridopolos (R), Melbourne  | *24. Frederica S. Wilson (D), Miami Gardens |
| *9. Darren Soto (D), Kissimmee       | *25. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D), Sunrise  |
| 10. Maxwell Frost (D), Orlando       | *26. Mario Díaz-Balart (R), Doral           |
| *11. Daniel Webster (R), Clermont    | 27. María E. Salazar (R), Miami             |
| 12. Gus Bilirakis (R), Palm Harbor   | 28. Carlos Gimenez (R), Miami               |
| 13. Anna Paulina Luna (R), Seminole  |   |
| 14. Kathy Castor (D), Tampa          |   |
| 15. Laurel Lee (R), Thonotosassa     |   |
| 16. Vern Buchanan (R), Brandon       |   |

\* Indicates those who formerly served in the Florida Senate





# AMERICA

# 250

YEARS IN THE MAKING

## ON JANUARY 29, 2025, PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNED AN EXECUTIVE ORDER CELEBRATING AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY ON JULY 4, 2026

"By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and in anticipation of the 250th anniversary of American Independence on July 4, 2026, it is hereby ordered:

It is the policy of the United States, and a purpose of this order, to provide a grand celebration worthy of the momentous occasion of the 250th anniversary of American Independence on July 4, 2026. It is also the purpose of this order to take other actions to honor the history of our great Nation."

This order establishes the White House Task Force on Celebrating America's 250th Birthday with The President as the Chair of Task Force 250 and the Vice President serving as Vice Chair.

The Task Force 250 will organize, and execute an extraordinary celebration of the 250th Anniversary of American Independence and will be housed in the Department of Defense.

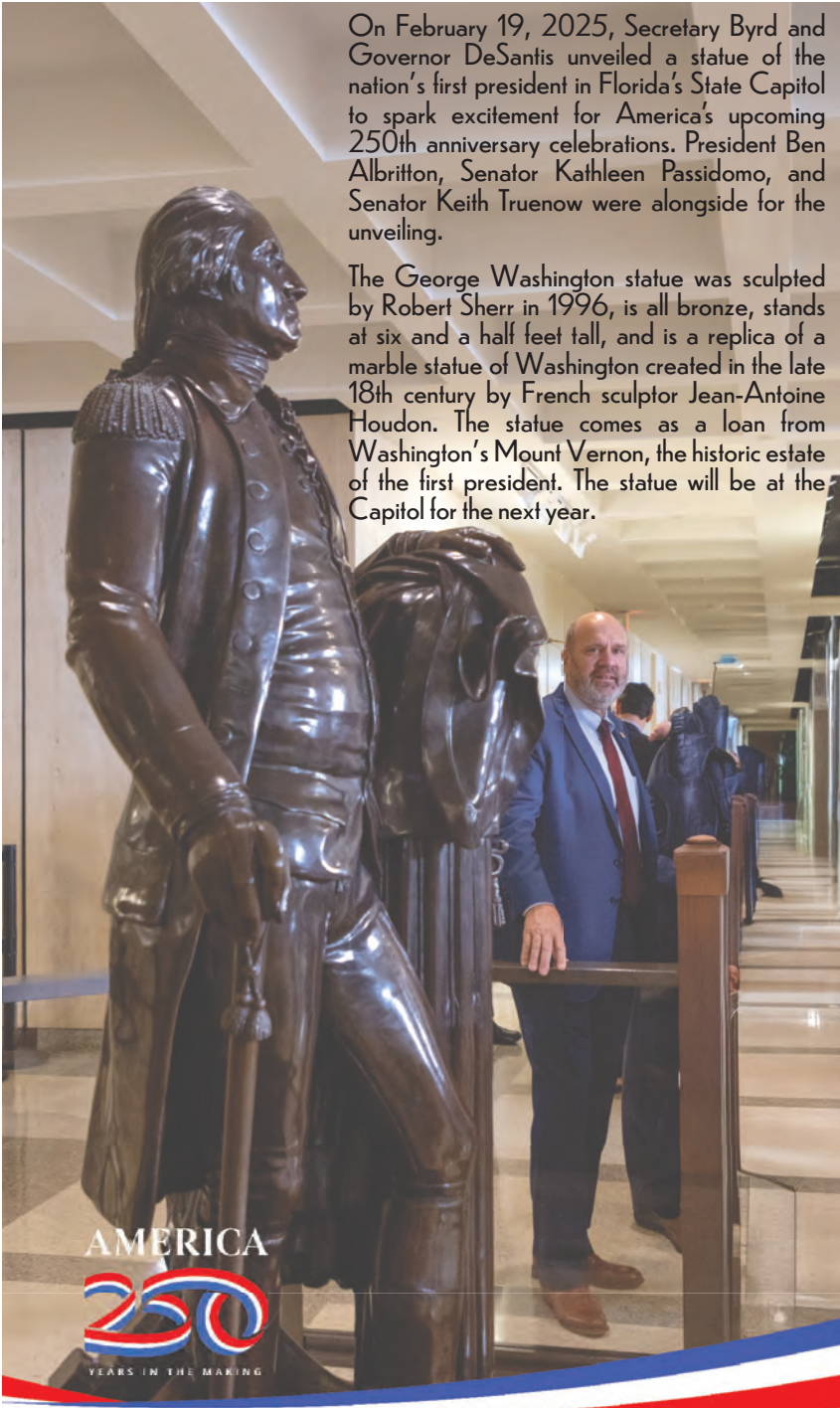
It reinstates Executive Order 13934, Building and Rebuilding Monuments to American Heroes and Executive Order 13978, Building the National Garden of American Heroes as they were prior to issuance of Executive Order 14029 of May 14, 2021.

The Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy will recommend to the President additional historically significant Americans for inclusion in the National Garden of American Heroes, to bring the total number of heroes to 250.

The order protects America's Monuments from Vandalism. Executive Order 13933 is reinstated, Protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues and Combatting Recent Criminal Violence, as it was prior to the issuance of Executive Order 14029 of May 14, 2021.

Find more information about America250 at [www.america250.org](http://www.america250.org).





On February 19, 2025, Secretary Byrd and Governor DeSantis unveiled a statue of the nation's first president in Florida's State Capitol to spark excitement for America's upcoming 250th anniversary celebrations. President Ben Albritton, Senator Kathleen Passidomo, and Senator Keith Truenow were alongside for the unveiling.

The George Washington statue was sculpted by Robert Sherr in 1996, is all bronze, stands at six and a half feet tall, and is a replica of a marble statue of Washington created in the late 18th century by French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. The statue comes as a loan from Washington's Mount Vernon, the historic estate of the first president. The statue will be at the Capitol for the next year.

AMERICA



YEARS IN THE MAKING



## *Did you know...*

- Florida has had six Constitutions since it became a state. The first Constitution was drafted in St. Joseph, now known as Port St. Joe. Presently, Florida is governed by the Constitution of 1968, as subsequently amended.
- Florida's first Legislative Council, which was supposed to meet in Pensacola on June 10, 1822, did not meet until 44 days later due to hazardous and time-consuming travel.
- Tallahassee was named the state capital in 1824 by Florida's first territorial governor, William P. Duval.
- The total land area of Florida is 53,625 square miles. The total water area is 12,133 square miles.
- In 1824, three log cabins were erected in Tallahassee to accommodate the Legislative Council. This was Florida's first Capitol.
- In the 1890s, several efforts were made to move the state capital from Tallahassee. Choices included Jacksonville, Ocala, and St. Augustine.
- Florida's fourth and present Capitol was officially opened on March 31, 1978, by Governor Reubin Askew.
- Construction of Florida's present Capitol required 3,700 tons of structural steel and 2,800 tons of reinforcing steel. The Capitol contains 25,000 cubic yards of concrete, the equivalent of 16 football fields, each one foot thick.
- Florida has been home to such famed writers as Ernest Hemingway, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Tennessee Williams, and Zora Neale Hurston.

- The word “Tallahassee” is of Creek derivation and is frequently translated as “old town” or “old fields.” The name may have been taken from the Seminole Indians who occupied the area.
- Juan Ponce de León came ashore on the northeast coast of Florida sometime between April 2 and April 8, 1513. He called the area La Florida, in honor of Pascua Florida (feast of the flowers), a popular celebration held in Spain around Easter.
- A prior Constitution in 1868 provided that the Seminole Tribe was entitled to a member in the Florida Senate and House.
- St. Augustine is the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in North America.
- Snow fell in Dade County on January 20, 1977.
- Dr. John Gorrie of Apalachicola patented the process of making ice artificially in 1851.
- The St. Johns River is one of the few rivers that flows north instead of south, and at 273 miles in length, it is Florida’s longest river.
- Founded in 1973 by Rhea Chiles as Florida’s “embassy” in our nation’s capital, Florida House is owned by the people of the State of Florida. Florida is the only state to have such a facility. It enjoys approximately 10,000 visitors a year. Florida House serves as “home base” for tourists as well as the business community ([www.floridaembassy.com](http://www.floridaembassy.com)).
- The Buckman Act of 1905 consolidated the state’s public institutions of higher learning into three: the University of Florida at Gainesville, the Florida State College for Women at Tallahassee, and the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes at Tallahassee. Florida is now home to 12 state universities and 28 state colleges.
- Florida boasts over 4,500 islands or “keys” 10 acres or larger.
- In 1937, Amelia Earhart took off from Miami for an around-the-world flight and was never seen again.
- The first commercial airline service between two U.S. cities was established between St. Petersburg and Tampa in 1914.

- Eight student athletes from Florida universities have won the Heisman Trophy from 1966 to the present.



Heisman Trophy winning quarterback and NCAA national football championship winner Chris Weinke visiting the legislature - 2001

- The unified government of Florida was established March 30, 1822, when President Monroe signed into law the act which provided for a Governor and a Legislative Council of 13 citizens. Florida was the 27th state to be admitted to the United States (March 3, 1845).
- DeFuniak Springs is home to one of the two naturally round lakes in the world.
- Ft. Lauderdale is known as the “Venice of America” because it has 165 miles of local waterways.
- In anticipation of statehood, 56 commissioners elected from Florida’s 20 counties gathered at St. Joseph (Port St. Joe) to draft a constitution. The convention lasted from December 3, 1838, until January 11, 1839.

- Florida’s highest natural point is 345 feet, located near Lakewood in Walton County.
- “Stormsong,” the 50-foot-long pod of leaping dolphins in front of the Capitol, is made of stainless steel and recycled aluminum and weighs five tons.



- The Florida quarter was released by the U.S. Mint as part of its 50 State Quarters Program in 2004.
- The first Cuban American to serve as Senate President Pro Tempore was Senator Roberto Casas, 1996-1998.



- Senator Arthenia L. Joyner was the first African American woman to serve as Minority (Democratic) Leader, 2014-2016.



- In 2022, Senator Alexis Calatayud (R-Miami) became the youngest Senator in recent history, elected just days after her 29th birthday.

- Senator Tom Wright (R-New Smyrna Beach) served as law enforcement officer before moving to Florida. Senator Ed Hooper (R-Clearwater) served as a firefighter.



- In 2022, Senator Corey Simon (R-Tallahassee) became the first Republican and the first African American Senator to represent the Capital City since the end of the Reconstruction Era in 1887.
- Senator Corey Simon (R-Tallahassee) played football for Florida State University on the 1999 National Championship Team. He later played football professionally for eight years, including playing in Super Bowl XXXIX for the Philadelphia Eagles.



- Two current Senators previously served terms as Senate President. Senator Don Gaetz (R-Crestview) served in the Senate from 2006-2016 and served as the 85th Senate President since statehood from 2012-2014. Senator Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) served as the 90th Senate President since statehood from 2022-2024.



- The 1998 movie *The Truman Show*, starring actor Jim Carrey, was filmed at the home of Senator and Mrs. Gaetz in Seaside, Florida.

## *Senators Who Served In Our Military*

- Senator Bryan Avila, Florida Army National Guard, Captain, April 2016-present
- Senator Danny Burgess, U.S. Army Reserve Major, 2021-present; U.S. Army Reserve Captain, 2012-2021
- Senator Keith Truenow, U.S. Air Force, Veteran

### SPOTLIGHT

#### SENATOR JAY COLLINS

U.S. ARMY GREEN BERET, RETIRED



As a Green Beret, the first to serve in the Florida Senate, Senator Collins led Americans into battle on some of the most demanding missions in the War on Terror. A highly-decorated Army Special Forces combat veteran and Purple Heart recipient with over two decades of service, Senator Collins served in deployments to Afghanistan, Iraq, and South America. In Afghanistan, in 2007, he sustained injuries that would eventually lead to the amputation of his leg. Senator Collins overcame his injuries, and following his amputation, was one of the first members of our United States Military ever to requalify as a fully deployable Green Beret, going on to serve over five more years on active duty. Senator Collins is married to his wife of 21 years, Layla, a retired veteran with 20 years of service herself. The couple has two young sons.

The Senate is grateful to all active duty and retired service men and women who have answered the call to serve our nation as members of the United States Armed Forces!



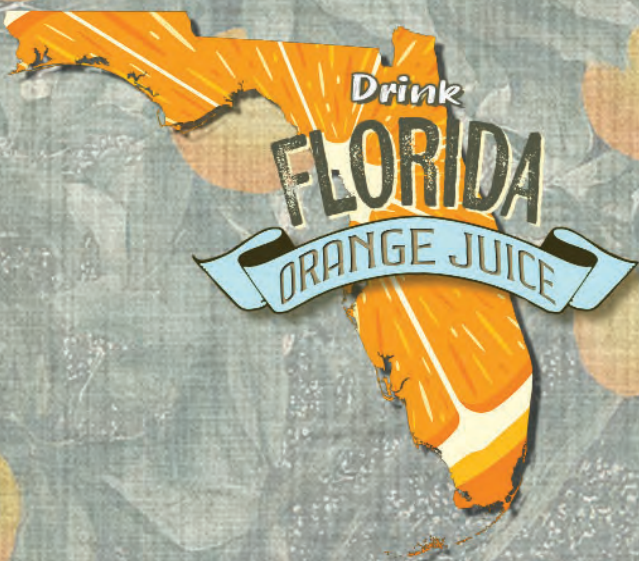
**THIS 2024-2026 SENATE HANDBOOK IS  
DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF**

**SENATOR GERALDINE F. THOMPSON**  
SENATE DISTRICT 15

NOVEMBER 18, 1948 - FEBRUARY 13, 2025

Senator Thompson was elected to the Senate in 2022, reelected subsequently, and served previously in the Senate from 2012-2016. She served in the House of Representatives 2006-2012, 2018-2022. She died in office on February 13, 2025.





*Visit the Florida Senate at*  
**WWW.FLSENATE.GOV**



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