

2014 Nonpartisan Voter Guide

FOR FLORIDA'S GENERAL ELECTION – NOVEMBER 4, 2014

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS



1 Water & Land Conservation

Official Ballot Title: Water and Land Conservation - Dedicates funds to acquire and restore Florida conservation and recreation lands

Synopsis: Amendment 1 requires 33% of the net revenue collected from the documentary stamp tax (applied primarily to real estate transactions) to go toward the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. This fund was established in 1963 with the goal of purchasing land for parks and recreational purposes. Currently, the Legislature has the authority to determine how much funding the Land Acquisition Trust Fund receives on a year-to-year basis. The Financial Impact Estimating Conference reports that the amount of state revenue that would go to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund under Amendment 1 is \$648 million during Fiscal Year 2015-16 and could grow to \$1.268 billion by Fiscal Year 2034-35, when the amendment would expire. Since 1998, voters in 24 states have approved 79 laws creating \$28 billion in new funds for land conservation. Voters in 11 states have placed funding for water and land conservation and management in their state Constitutions.

2 Medical Marijuana

Official Ballot Title: Use of Marijuana for Certain Medical Conditions

Synopsis: Amendment 2 allows individuals with debilitating diseases, as determined by a licensed Florida physician, to purchase and use medical marijuana. During the 2014 session, the state of Florida passed legislation to allow for the medical use of "Charlotte's Web," a strain of non-psychoactive cannabis. Amendment 2 would legalize all forms of marijuana for medical use but states that no insurance company or government agency can be required to cover its cost. Additionally, the amendment prohibits the operation of a car or boat while under the influence of marijuana and allows workplaces, schools and public spaces to ban marijuana from their facilities. Currently, 23 states and the District of Columbia have laws allowing for the use of medical marijuana.

Inside: Races for Governor, Attorney General, CFO and Commissioner of Agriculture

3 Judicial Appointments

Official Ballot Title: Prospective Appointment of Certain Judicial Vacancies

Synopsis: Amendment 3 would require a Governor to prospectively fill vacancies on the Florida Supreme Court or a district court of appeal when a justice or judge: (1) reaches the mandatory retirement age of 70, (2) fails to qualify for a retention election, or (3) fails to secure a majority of votes during his or her retention election. Since 2001, the 26 Judicial Nominating Commissions (JNCs) for the Florida Supreme Court, district courts of appeal and trial courts have been comprised solely of gubernatorial appointees (9 per JNC) who serve 4-year terms, from July to July. In 2006, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that JNCs could begin their interviewing and nominating process prior to a judicial vacancy occurring, but an appointment could not be made until after the justice's or judge's term actually expired. Because it is possible for a justice's or judge's term to end on the same day that a new Governor takes office, the Florida Supreme Court's 2006 opinion can be read as authorizing the newly



Constitutional Amendments continued on page 2

1 Water & Land Conservation

A vote YES on Amendment 1 would:

- Provide a long-term funding mechanism for environmental conservation without a new tax
- Remove reliance on yearly legislative funding for water and land conservation projects
- Enhance publicly held recreational lands, possibly contributing to economic growth through increased eco-tourism

A vote NO on Amendment 1 would:

- Not establish a long-term funding mechanism for environmental conservation
- Retain the Legislature's ability to make budgetary decisions on a year-to-year basis
- Not place language in the Florida Constitution relating to environmental conservation where it would be difficult to modify or remove

How and Why We Amend the Florida Constitution

The amendments that you will see on this year's ballot are proposed changes to the Florida Constitution. Like the U.S. Constitution, our Florida Constitution establishes rules and basic rights. Proposed amendments must pass with 60% of the vote to become law. Here are the ways that an amendment may be placed on the ballot:

1. Proposal by Legislature

An amendment to the Florida Constitution may be proposed by joint resolution and passed by 3/5 of each house of the Legislature. This is the most common method.

2. Constitutional Revision Commission

Every 20 years, a commission is appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Attorney General to convene and propose amendments to the Constitution, which are then voted on by citizens.

3. Citizen Initiative

Citizens may place an amendment on the ballot by collecting signatures from 8% of the number of voters who cast ballots in the most recent presidential election. To qualify for the 2014 General Election ballot, 683,149 signatures were required.

4. Other Methods

The Taxation and Budget Reform Commission meets every 10 years. Additionally, a Constitutional Convention may be called for by citizens.

2 Medical Marijuana

A vote YES on Amendment 2 would:

- Provide for the legal use of marijuana for medical purposes by individuals with debilitating diseases, as determined by a licensed Florida physician
- Maintain the current prohibition on marijuana use for recreational purposes
- Require the Department of Health to monitor centers that produce and distribute marijuana for medical purposes and to issue identification cards to patients and caregivers

A vote NO on Amendment 2 would:

- Not affect the current prohibition on marijuana use in the state of Florida
- Maintain the status quo as it relates to enforcement of the marijuana laws currently in place
- Not place language in the Florida Constitution relating to medical marijuana where it would be difficult to modify or remove

3 Judicial Appointments

(continued from page 1) sworn-in Governor to fill those vacancies. All judicial appointments must be made from a list of judicial applicants screened by the appropriate JNC. The Governor must select a nominee from that list – he or she is not allowed to reject the entire list and request a new slate of JNC nominees. In a situation in which a judicial vacancy is created on the first day of a new Governor's term, Amendment 3 would authorize the outgoing Governor – rather than the newly elected Governor – to appoint the successor judge or justice.

A vote YES on Amendment 3 would:

- Invalidate court interpretations of Florida's Constitution as to who has the authority to fill judicial vacancies
- Enable an outgoing Governor to make appointments to the Florida Supreme Court or a district court of appeal
- Possibly shorten the time of a judicial vacancy

A vote NO on Amendment 3 would:

- Ensure that a newly sworn-in Governor will fill prospective judicial vacancies
- Keep language relating to judicial appointments out of the Florida Constitution, where it would be difficult to modify or remove
- Continue to allow judicial vacancies to exist for up to 120 days, possibly creating workload issues within the courts

FAST FLORIDA FACTS

Education

- Education Week's 2014 *Quality Counts* State Report Card gives Florida a C for overall score.
- In 2012-13, 58.6% of Florida's public school students qualified for free or reduced lunch, up from 49.6% in 2008-09.
- Florida ranked 45th in the nation for public school teacher salaries in 2012-13.
- The state of Florida diverted \$207 million to provide vouchers to 51,075 students enrolled in private and religious schools during the 2012-13 school year.

Healthcare

- In 2013, Florida had one of the highest rates of uninsured residents in the country – approximately 20%.
- The Florida Legislature's decision not to accept federal dollars to extend coverage to Florida's uninsured is costing the state about \$7 million a day, and an estimated 764,000 Floridians have been left without insurance because they fall into the coverage gap.
- The price of uncompensated care costs insured households around \$1,200 per year through increased premiums.

Population & Taxes

- Florida is the fourth largest state in the U.S. (behind California, Texas and New York) with a population of more than 19.6 million.
- Florida is one of only seven states that do not have a state income tax.
- The sales tax is one of Florida's primary sources of revenue and accounted for approximately \$20.3 billion in 2013.
- Property taxes are levied by local governments and vary by county. The maximum millage rate allowed by the state is 10 mills, which equals \$10 of tax for every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Environment

- Of the 45.65 million acres of land and water in Florida, about 9.4 million acres are managed for conservation purposes by federal, state or local government entities.
- Eco-tourism generated more than \$4.9 billion for Florida's economy in 2011.
- Florida has over 1,400 water bodies that are classified as "impaired." This means that they have a level of pollutants that cause significant harm to living things.

For source information, please call 850-224-2545.

Governor

Questions Asked

1. So far Florida has refused to accept \$51 billion in federal funds that would extend affordable health care to working class citizens. Would you support the acceptance of these funds? Please explain your reasoning.
2. As a low-lying state, Florida is extremely vulnerable to the effects of sea level rise caused by global warming. Would you support joining the more than 30 states that have passed a renewable energy standard with a clear target for reducing reliance on fossil fuels and providing an incentive for businesses in developing sustainable sources of energy?
3. A quality system of public education is an economic driver. What changes, if any, do you propose that would move Florida's K-12 and university systems into the upper echelon?
4. Do you support Florida's laws that limit local governments from enacting restrictions on firearms, or do you believe that local municipalities should have greater control over gun regulations in their own communities? Please explain your position.
5. What qualities would you look for in your appointments to the judiciary and what changes, if any, do you think are needed in the judicial nomination and appointment process?
6. Do you support the restoration of civil rights for former felony offenders who have completed their sentences? Please explain your position.

All candidates were given the same word limit and their responses have been printed as submitted.

Rick Scott (R)



Age: 61

Education: University of Missouri, Southern Methodist University School of Law

Hometown: Bloomington, Illinois

www.rickscottforflorida.com

Answers

1. Our Medicaid system is already better off today than it was when I took office. We have made real, lasting reform to our Medicaid program to improve access, quality and cost for low-income families in Florida. Some states have chosen to spend MILLIONS of taxpayer money to grow their Medicaid program even more. It would be wrong to make promises to provide care that the state could ultimately not afford or sustain.
2. My administration adopted a greenhouse gas reduction program that requires industrial business to use the best available technology to reduce carbon emissions. Since 2010, power plants cut their carbon emissions rate by 10% and other emissions have decreased 37% in that time. We are also making significant investments in Everglades restoration, alternative water supplies, and beach renourishment.

3. I will continue to prioritize historic and strategic education funding investments in our K-12 public schools. During my first term, I increased the K-12 education budget with the state funds by almost \$2.3 billion. I will again seek historic funding for higher education while keeping tuition low and pushing for more \$10,000 degree programs.

4. I support having uniform, statewide regulations so that responsible gun owners can comply with the law.
5. When appointing judges, I seek individuals who will serve honorably, competently, humbly and with a demonstrated commitment to following the law.

6. I support restoration of rights for former felons on case-by-case basis. Former felons should express remorse for their past actions and demonstrate a commitment to leading a productive, crime-free life.

Charlie Crist (D)



Age: 58

Education: Florida State University, Samford University Cumberland School of Law

Hometown: St. Petersburg, Florida

www.charliecrist.com

Answers

1. I will bring back \$51 billion of our own taxpayer dollars to extend access to quality healthcare. We'll help one million Floridians obtain coverage, create 120,000 jobs, and save \$800 million over the next ten years. Rick Scott's fear of the Tea Party prevents him from taking action, but I will fight to expand access to affordable healthcare for Florida's families. It's the right thing to do – for our people and for our economy.

2. Yes. In fact, as Governor I promoted renewable energy and pushed utilities to produce 20% of their power from renewable sources. I've done it before, and I'll do it again. When asked about climate change, Rick Scott says he's "not a scientist." I'm not a scientist either, but I know climate change is real and caused by burning fossil fuels. We need a Governor who

will acknowledge the problem and take action, not one who pretends it doesn't exist.

3. The first and most important step is to undo Rick Scott's drastic cuts to education. Even during this year's budget surplus, he allocated less than 7% of the new revenue for K-12 education. Funding education isn't a revenue problem; it's a priorities problem. I'll make Florida's children a priority again by restoring funding for K-12 education, pre-kindergarten and Bright Futures to the record levels they were at when I was Governor.

4. I grew up in a sportsmen family, and I support the Second Amendment. I support real background checks and tougher penalties for criminals who use high-capacity magazines to commit a crime. I believe the state is the proper place to regulate weapons and that local communities can have a stronger voice in certain limited situations, such as protecting against gun violence in schools, etc.

5. I will respect the Bar's JNC nominations. Rick Scott's unprecedented rejections of nominees based on his narrow-minded litmus tests reduces diversity and dissuades qualified applicants. I will appoint intellectually honest and empathetic jurists. Rick Scott's attempt to create a judiciary that reflects his political views is dangerous. With the next Governor selecting at least four Supreme Court justices, this is a key issue facing this election.

6. I support the automatic restoration of civil rights for non-violent offenders who have completed their sentences and paid all restitution and fines. During my first term as Governor, we restored the rights of 150,000 Floridians. Since then, Rick Scott has reinstated barriers to deny people their rights, and only 1,200 have had them restored. I believe in forgiveness, and I'll push to once again restore rights to those who deserve a second chance.

What Does the Governor Do?

From Article IV of the state Constitution: "The supreme executive power shall be vested in a governor, who shall be commander-in-chief of all military forces of the state not in active service of the United States. The governor shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed, commission all officers of the state and counties, and transact all neces-

sary business with the officers of government. The governor may require information in writing from all executive or administrative state, county or municipal officers upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices. The governor shall be the chief administrative officer of the state responsible for the planning and budgeting for the state."

Florida's gubernatorial term is 4 years. Governors are restricted to two consecutive terms in office, after which they must wait one term before being eligible to run again. As of 2013, the Governor's salary is \$130,273 per year.

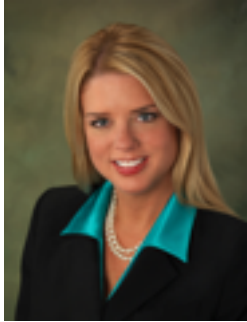
Attorney General

Questions Asked

1. There continue to be cases of both Medicaid and Medicare fraud within the state. What steps, if any, do you believe that the Attorney General's office should take in order to reduce instances of medical fraud in Florida?
2. Florida led the nation in foreclosures during the first half of 2014. What steps, if any, would you recommend to assist struggling homeowners and reduce the rate of foreclosures in the state?
3. Recently, a Monroe County judge ruled that the state's prohibition on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional. What actions, if any, would you take as Attorney General in response to this ruling?
4. Please describe your vision for using the office of Attorney General for the public good in the next four years.
5. Do you support the restoration of civil rights for former felony offenders who have completed their sentences? Please explain your position.

Did you know?
The League of Women Voters has been in existence since 1920 and is open to both men and women.

Pam Bondi (R)



Age: 47

Education: University of Florida, Stetson University College of Law

Hometown: Tampa, Florida

www.pambondi.com

Answers

1. My office will continue the good work that, from January 2011 to April 2014, resulted in our Medicaid Fraud Control Unit obtaining more than \$450 million in settlements and judgments. We will continue to enhance the role of my Office of Statewide Prosecution in prosecuting Medicaid fraud cases, and we will strengthen our partnerships with federal law enforcement.

2. My office entered a landmark \$25 billion joint federal-state agreement with major banks over foreclosure abuses and unacceptable nationwide mortgage servicing practices, resulting in an estimated \$9.12 billion in relief for Florida homeowners. The settlement requires servicers to work with homeowners to ensure foreclosure is a last resort. Additional funding from the settlement provides homeowners legal aid and counseling.

3. My office appealed the ruling, because it is my sworn obligation to defend the Florida Constitution and the decision that voters made in 2008. Finality on this federal constitutional question must come from the U.S. Supreme Court, and I will respect the Court's decision, whatever it is.

4. Over the next four years, I will build on my office's success in reducing deaths from prescription drug abuse, protecting our children from synthetic drugs, and fighting to eradicate human trafficking. As I have during my nearly 20 years as a prosecutor and as Attorney General, I will continue to fight every day to make Florida the safest place in the country to work, live and raise a family.

5. After completing their sentences, all felony offenders should be required to apply for rights restoration and show a commitment to living crime-free for a reasonable amount of time, before being considered for restoration.

George Sheldon (D)



Age: 67

Education: Florida State University, Florida State University College of Law

Hometown: Wildwood, New Jersey

www.georgeseldon2014.com

Answers

1. We need aggressive investigation and enforcement against ever-growing Medicaid fraud, with cooperation between the state's Medicaid agency and the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit. When I was Deputy Attorney General, we worked with AHCA and law enforcement to identify sources of excessive billing. I will strengthen the Medicaid Fraud Control Unit within the office.

2. Thousands of people have lost their homes because our Attorney General failed to aggressively ensure that homeowners' due process rights were respected. The people have a right to expect their Attorney General to be on the side of consumers. That's what we did when I was Deputy Attorney General under Bob Butterworth, and it's what I will do as the next Attorney General.

3. My record on marriage equality goes back more than 35 years. I voted against the legislative ban on gay adoption in 1977, and as secretary of the Department of Children and Families, I presided over the successful resolution of the lawsuit that ended the ban. That same year, I voted against the ban on same sex marriage. As Attorney General, I would not defend the ban in Florida.

4. An Attorney General must be above the partisan fray, in short be the moral conscience of this state. The Attorney General is not the Governor's lawyer or the Legislature's lawyer, but the people's lawyer. Every Attorney General since Bob Shevin stood firmly and aggressively for open government and has aggressively enforced laws against deceptive business practices, the automobile lemon laws, antitrust violations and predatory lending – until 2011.

5. I strongly support automatic restoration of civil rights except for three categories – those convicted of first-degree murder, of crimes against children or of crimes that violate the public trust. Those felons should still have to petition the Clemency Board, on which the Attorney General sits. We need to do all we can to help people get back on their feet as productive citizens of society when they have served time and come out of prison.

What Does the Attorney General Do?

From Article IV of the state Constitution: "The attorney general shall be the chief state legal officer. There is created in the office of the attorney general the position of statewide prosecutor. The statewide prosecutor shall have concurrent jurisdiction with the state attorneys to prosecute violations of criminal

laws occurring or having occurred, in two or more judicial circuits as part of a related transaction, or when any such offense is affecting or has affected two or more judicial circuits as provided by general law. The statewide prosecutor shall be appointed by the attorney general from not less than three persons nomi-

nated by the judicial nominating commission for the supreme court, or as otherwise provided by general law." Attorneys General are elected to 4-year terms. There are no term limits for the office of Attorney General. As of 2013, the Attorney General's salary is \$128,972 per year.

Chief Financial Officer

Questions Asked

1. Florida's \$77 billion budget may seem daunting to the average citizen. What steps do you propose to increase residents' understanding of, and access to, the state's budget?
2. What changes, if any, would you recommend to Florida's investment policies?
3. In your view, what are the economic adjustments that the state of Florida needs to make in order to position itself for the long term? Describe the leadership role your office would play in implementing those changes, if elected.
4. What changes, if any, would you recommend to improve the state's response to insurance fraud?
5. Do you support the restoration of civil rights for former felony offenders who have completed their sentences? Please explain your position.

Did you know?

The League is strictly nonpartisan and never endorses political parties or candidates for office.

Jeff Atwater (R)



Age: 56

Education: University of Florida, University of Florida Warrington College of Business Administration

Hometown: St. Louis, Missouri

www.jeffatwater.com

Answers

1. As Florida's Chief Financial Officer, I have been a champion for transparency in our state's budget and state contracting. To give taxpayers access to state contracts, we built a system called FACTS which tracks how the state does business and how taxpayer dollars are utilized. A nationwide watchdog, US PIRG, upgraded Florida from a "D" to "A-" for transparency, citing the unprecedented amount of public information in the FACTS system.
2. Investing taxpayer dollars means we must limit risk while bringing growth that meets Florida's needs. In the Department of Financial Services, I put in place a Chief Investment Officer and Treasury Investment Committee. This team ensures a vision for the state treasury that increases the return on

investment and also protection of taxpayer assets. The results are clear: a total interest income return for taxpayers of \$1.2 billion since I took office in 2011.

3. Florida must remain a place where individuals and small businesses keep more of the money earned by their hard work and investment. We must ensure every dollar we extract from a taxpayer is used to maximum benefit. The more dollars that stay with taxpayers, the more growth our economy will enjoy. I support policies that protect consumers, ensure the best use of taxpayer dollars, and encourage entrepreneurs to pursue their dreams and create jobs.

4. Since being elected CFO, I have gone after insurance fraud because it puts unnecessary burdens on Florida consumers. Our Division of Insurance Fraud has increased arrests and shut down fraudulent PIP clinics. I promoted reforms so that people with legitimate needs are covered but those who use staged accidents to defraud us are targeted. These reforms have reduced fraud and kept more dollars in consumers' pockets.

5. There is a timely process in place that allows those convicted of serious crimes to apply for restoration of rights after they've served their time and demonstrated they have rejoined society as law-abiding citizens. I believe this process is fair and holds accountable those who break our laws. Felony offenders must be held accountable for the impact they inflict on their victims.

William "Will" Rankin (D)



Age: 54

Education: St. Xavier University

Hometown: Cincinnati, Ohio

www.RankinForCFO.com

Answers

1. The state budget does not fall under the responsibility of the state Chief Financial Officer (CFO) but rather under the purview of the Governor's Office in working with the State Legislature. As a result, any steps proposed to increase residents' understanding of, and access to, the state's budget would come from the Governor's Office via the Department of Revenue.

2. As CFO, I would recommend alternative and innovative investment strategies and opportunities as a part of the state's financial portfolio that increases the return on investments (ROI), thereby reducing tax obligations imposed on tax payers and public employees. I would also implement a minority investment participation program.

3. As CFO, I will take the leadership role in creating financially innovative programs to support small business funding and growth; in promoting industry best practices and progressive and innovative public-private sector collaborations that sponsor economic incentive opportunities, new business and jobs growth; and in insurance reform to reduce rates and protect consumers.

4. As a former Federal Fraud Criminal Investigator and as CFO, I will implement proactive and proven investigative policies and measures that target those insurance companies in the state with unannounced audits and investigations to eradicate fraud, waste, abuse and corruption. Violators of insurance fraud will be subject to barring from operating/contracting in the state.

5. Yes, as CFO, I will advocate and support the immediate return to the 2007-2010 Rule of Executive Clemency for automatic restoration of rights to non-violent ex-felons, mid-level scrutiny for certain other offenses, and stricter scrutiny for more serious violent offenses. I will also seek appropriate funding to restore the Clemency Board staff and resources.

What Does the Chief Financial Officer Do?

From Article IV of the state Constitution: "The chief financial officer shall serve as the chief fiscal officer of the state, and shall settle and approve accounts against the state, and shall keep all state funds and securities." The Chief Financial Officer serves a 4-year

term. The state Constitution does not stipulate any term limits for the Chief Financial Officer or for any other cabinet member. As of 2013, the Chief Financial Officer's salary was \$128,972 per year.



Commissioner of Agriculture

Questions Asked

1. Please describe what changes, if any, you would make in the area of consumer protection, if elected.
2. There has been widespread concern about discharges of nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizers into Florida's waterways. What steps do you support to minimize these discharges and prevent further damage to Florida's rivers and springs?
3. Florida's citrus growers have been battling "citrus greening" and many fear that "laurel wilt" threatens Florida's avocado crops. What steps should the Department of Agriculture take in response to these damaging pests?
4. What steps would you recommend to expand the markets for locally-grown produce and products to support the efforts of Florida's small farmers?
5. Do you support the restoration of civil rights for former felony offenders who have completed their sentences? Please explain your position.

Did you know?
There are 31 local Leagues throughout the state of Florida.

Adam Putnam (R)



Age: 40

Education:
University of Florida

Hometown:
Bartow, Florida

www.adamputnam.com

Answers

1. We will build on our important work protecting consumers from disreputable charities. Protecting children's identities. Reducing fraud on our seniors. We are grateful to the League for their support in our consumer protection efforts in my first term.
2. The quality and quantity of Florida's water has been my top priority and will continue to be. Cleaning up springs, lakes, the Everglades and coastal areas are all efforts we have devoted a great deal of time and resources to. We will continue to pursue solutions that are driven by the best available science.
3. With the support of the industry and government, we have committed over \$50 million towards research efforts to determine

treatments and solutions towards greening and laurel wilt. I am also leading an international public awareness campaign to reduce the importation of pests and diseases.

4. Through the Department's specialty crop block grant – and other initiatives in my first term – we have made food access, locally grown and cottage food industries a priority, with great success.

5. I support the restoration of civil rights for felons who have completed their sentence, paid their restitution and successfully completed the clemency process. I also supported de-coupling the restoration of civil rights from the pursuit of occupational licenses so that they may find employment in society.

Thaddeus "Thad" Hamilton (D)



Age: 63

Education:
University of Arkansas

Hometown:
Marvell, Arkansas

www.voteforthad2014.com

Answers

1. Consumer Services is such an important and critical concern for the quality of life of the citizens of Florida, and approximately 90% of the citizens do not know it exists. I am going to set up the Consumer Service Community Task Force (CSCTF). Consumer Services will become a high priority, and every citizen in the State of Florida will know what services are available to them and where to go to get help when they need it.

2. The discharge of nitrogen and phosphorus is caused by nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution is the largest pollution problem in the United States, Florida and the counties and cities throughout the state of Florida. The discharges of nitrogen and phosphorus are only a part of Florida's problem. Nonpoint source pollution is pollution carried by rainfall moving over and through the ground.

3. Citrus greening and laurel wilt are serious problems in Florida. I will continue the present research with the University of Florida and private companies. It is critical that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service become partners with Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services and help find a cure and protect Florida's vast forest and citrus industries.

4. The small farm is the backbone of Florida. We must protect our small farms and ensure that they have the right to farm and to pass that farm from one generation to the next. Too many times our small farms are left to fend for themselves and end up out of business. The Florida Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services must develop a strong partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

5. Yes. Once former felony offenders have paid their debt to society, their ability to get a job, earn a living for their families and become a productive citizen are ways Florida will move forward. It costs approximately \$55,000.00 per year to keep a person locked up in prison. Instead of throwing \$55,000.00 away on keeping a person locked up in jail, we need to invest that money in our education system.

What Does the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Do?

From Article IV of the state Constitution: "The commissioner of agriculture shall have supervision of matters pertaining to agriculture except as otherwise provided by law." The Commissioner of Agriculture serves

a 4-year term. The state Constitution does not stipulate any term limits for the Commissioner of Agriculture. As of 2013, the Commissioner of Agriculture's salary is \$128,972 per year.



Why Am I Being Asked To Vote On Judges?

1. Why am I being asked to vote on judges?

Florida law requires Florida Supreme Court justices and appeals court judges to be placed on the ballot in nonpartisan elections every six years so voters can determine whether the judges or justices should remain on their courts for another six-year term. These are called “merit retention” elections. About one-third of our 61 appeals court judges will be on the ballot; there are no Supreme Court justices on the ballot this year. The appearance of a judge or justice on the ballot does not indicate anything about his or her performance or actions as a judge.

2. What do “Yes” and “No” votes mean?

A “Yes” vote means you want the judge or justice to remain on the court for another six-year term. A “No” vote means you want the judge or justice to be removed from the court. The majority of voters decides whether the judge or justice remains on the court.

3. Do appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices have opponents in merit retention elections?

No. Your vote determines whether each judge or justice should remain on the court. They are not running against opponents or each other. Merit retention elections are nonpartisan. In nonpartisan elections, candidates appear on the ballot without reference to any political party (e.g. Democrat or Republican). Florida law requires judicial elections to be nonpartisan in order to preserve impartiality.

4. How do appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices get on the court?

The Governor appoints judges or justices from lists submitted by Judicial Nominating Commissions, which screen candidates and make recommendations based on the merits of applicants. Newly appointed judges go on the ballot for the first time within two years after appointment. If the voters retain them, they then go on the ballot again every six years.

5. Which courts are subject to merit retention elections?

The Florida Supreme Court and the five District Courts of Appeal are subject to merit retention elections.

6. Can judges who commit unethical acts be removed from office?

Yes. This can result after an investigation by the Judicial Qualifications Commission, which is an independent agency created by the Florida Constitution solely to investigate alleged misconduct by Florida state judges. Through this system, judges have been removed from office for ethical violations. For more information, visit www.floridajqc.com.



7. Can appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices state their views on issues that may come before them?

Canon 7 of the Florida Code of Judicial Conduct forbids judges and justices from saying how they will decide future cases. Judges and justices must remain impartial and decide cases without regard to their personal views or beliefs. However, their decisions in prior cases are available on the opinion pages of the websites for each District Court of Appeal and the Florida Supreme Court.

8. Can I read the opinions of the appeals court judges and justices in cases they decided?

Yes. Complete records of judges' decisions can be found on the opinion pages of the websites for the District Courts of Appeal and the Florida Supreme Court. Those websites can be reached through www.FloridaBar.org/TheVotesInYourCourt.

9. Can I watch videos of the justices and appeals court judges at work?

Yes. Court arguments are webcast live and archived on court websites, which are accessible through www.FloridaBar.org/TheVotesInYourCourt. For the Second District Court of Appeal, videos of arguments can be mailed upon request.

10. How can I learn more about the judges' and justices' backgrounds?

Biographies of the judges and justices are available on their courts' websites, which are accessible through www.FloridaBar.org/TheVotesInYourCourt.

11. How did Florida decide to use the merit retention election system?

In the mid-1970s, Florida's voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment requiring that the merit retention system be used for all appellate judges. This change came about in response to the public's concern over abuses that occurred under the former system of contested elections.

12. Where can I find results from prior merit retention elections?

The Florida Division of Elections (accessible through www.FloridaBar.org/TheVotesInYourCourt) maintains a searchable database of election results since 1978. Merit retention elections occur only during general elections in even-numbered years if any appeals court judges or justices are nearing the end of their terms.



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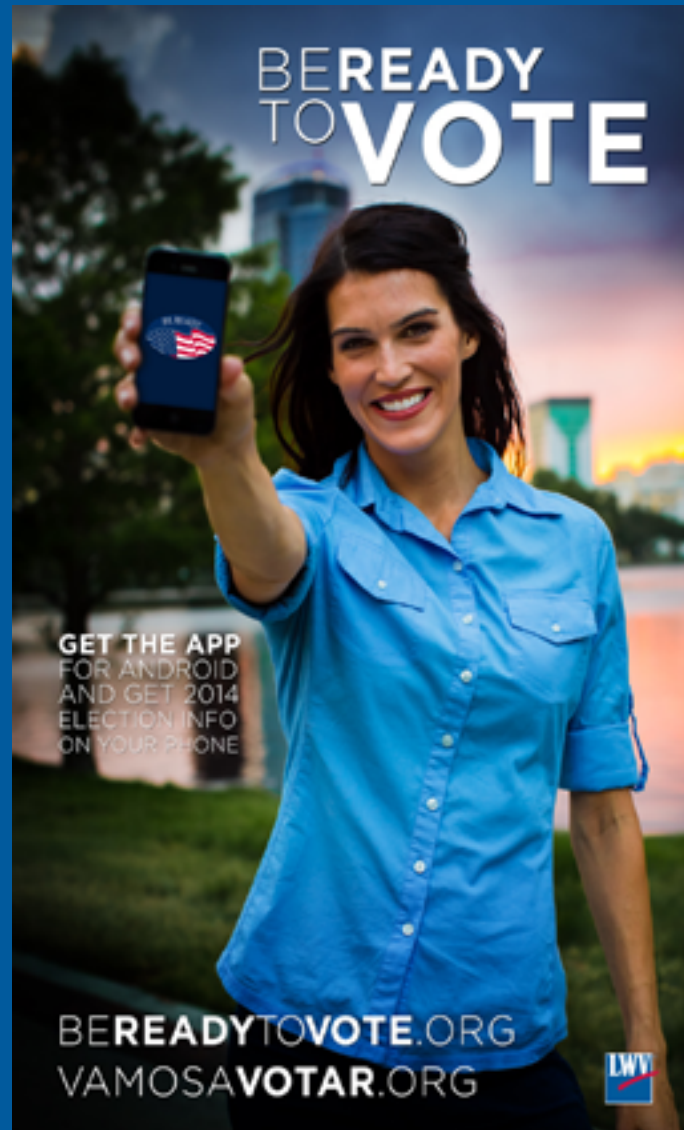


marguerite casey foundation
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The Florida Bar



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