

2018 NONPARTISAN VOTER GUIDE



**CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS
IN-DEPTH REVIEW OF
ALL 12 ON BALLOT PAGES 2-7**

**STATEWIDE CANDIDATES
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SPECIAL THANK YOU

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GENEROSITY OF THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:
ELAYNE GOODMAN, BETTY CASTOR

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



BY PATTI BRIGHAM, LEAGUE PRESIDENT

The League of Women Voters of Florida is a non-partisan organization and does not endorse political candidates or parties, but we do take positions on policy issues including voting rights, natural resources, education, immigration and gun safety. These and other issues are reflected in the questions we have posed to the candidates this year to inform voters on their positions. The 2018 ballot will also contain a slate of constitutional amendments, which is why the League's positions are reflected in the amendment summaries in this voter guide.

The League's positions on the proposed amendments are based not only on our existing positions on issues but also on whether a proposal belongs in the state Constitution, which should be a framework for government operations.

For example, the League does not believe that tax and spending issues belong in the Constitution. Those are decisions the Legislature should make. The Constitution should not be burdened with a litany of amendments that often are driven by politics rather than governance. There are, however, some issues important enough to merit constitutional status. Offshore drilling is one example. While the League does not believe that a ban on vaping

should have a home in the Constitution, the protection of Florida's waters and shorelines from pollution should. Because the Constitution Revision Commission chose to bundle multiple and unrelated issues into single questions, such as a vaping ban with a drilling ban, the League supports Amendment 9.

The League does not take lightly the responsibility of supporting or opposing constitutional amendments. Nor should voters. These are complex issues, further complicated by the CRC's bundling of multiple questions. An informed voter is a responsible voter. The LWVFL urges you to use this guide and other sources of information to prepare to be an informed voter on Nov. 6.



2018 Florida Constitutional Ballot Amendments

Thirteen proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution are on the Nov. 6, 2018, ballot, nine more than appeared on the 2016 ballot.

However, voters face more questions than is apparent. That's because Florida's Constitution Revision Commission (CRC), which convenes every 20 years, is allowed by law to bundle more than one issue into each question. This practice, also known as "logrolling," is prohibited when amendments are placed on the ballot by citizen initiative or by the Florida Legislature. Those amendments must contain just one distinct question.

In 1978, the first CRC proposed eight amendments, at least half of which had multiple questions. All were defeated by voters. Twenty years later, in 1998, the CRC proposed nine amendments, all of which had multiple questions. All but one passed.

An example of the CRC's issue bundling in 2018 is Amendment 9, which asks voters to decide whether to ban offshore oil drilling, and whether to ban e-cigarettes at workplaces. Like the CRC's other bundled amendments, voters cannot cast separate votes on drilling and vaping. These are all-

or-nothing propositions. Of the 13 amendments on this year's ballot, eight were proposed by the CRC, three by the Florida Legislature and two by citizen initiative.

To pass, each of them must receive at least 60 percent approval by voters. This is the first time that constitutional amendments proposed by a CRC have faced the 60-percent hurdle, which voters approved in 2006. Before then, amendments just needed a simple majority for approval. Unless otherwise indicated, changes to the Constitution take effect on Jan. 8, 2019.



Amendment 1

Increased Homestead Property Tax Exemption

Source: Florida Legislature

Quick summary: Would allow homeowners to deduct up to another \$25,000 from the taxable value of a home worth more than \$100,000 up to \$125,000 starting on January 19, 2019.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 1 WOULD:

- * Allow homeowners to deduct up to another \$25,000 from the taxable value of a home worth more than \$100,000, starting on Jan. 1, 2019.
- * Exclude local school taxes from the new exemption.
- * Cost Florida's cities, counties and other taxing authorities an estimated \$687.5 million annually, starting in 2019, according to the Florida Association of Counties.
- * Likely result in cuts to services or higher local rates to make up for the revenue losses, or possibly both.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 1 WOULD:

- * Retain the current homestead tax exemptions, which total \$50,000.
- * Have no effect on the amount of tax revenue collected by city and county governments.



Amendment 2

Limitations on Property Tax Assessments

Source: Florida Legislature

Quick Summary: Makes permanent what currently is a temporary cap of 10 percent on annual property value increases for vacation homes, apartments and commercial property, effectively limiting increases on tax bills.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 2 WOULD:

- * Make permanent the 10 percent limit on increases in tax value for non-homestead property, thus reducing tax bills.
- * Continue to deny local governments (excluding school districts) tax revenue they would otherwise collect from rising property values.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 2 WOULD:

- * End the practice of limiting tax increases on non-homestead property by limiting property-value increases to 10 percent.
- * Possibly lead to higher tax bills for non-homestead property, resulting in additional revenue to local governments of about \$700 million, according to the state Revenue Estimating Conference.





Amendment 3

Voter Control of Gambling in Florida

Source: Citizen initiative

Quick Summary: Requires approval of any new casino gambling through a citizen-initiative constitutional amendment, effectively barring the Legislature from making those gambling decisions by passing laws.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 3 WOULD:

- * Require that voters approve a constitutional amendment through citizen initiative to authorize any new casino gambling in Florida, essentially stripping that authority from the Legislature.
- * Preclude constitutional approval of casinos through other means, including amendments offered by the Legislature or by the CRC.
- * Continue to allow the Legislature to approve other types of non-casino gambling, such as poker rooms, bingo, lotteries and fantasy sports.
- * Allow the Legislature to oversee, regulate and tax any casino-type gambling that voters approve through a constitutional amendment.
- * Not affect the state's ability to negotiate casino agreements with Native-American tribes.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 3 WOULD:

- * Continue to allow casino gambling either through new laws passed by the Legislature or through various types of constitutional amendments.



Amendment 4

Voting Restoration Amendment

Source: Citizen initiative

Quick Summary: Restores the voting rights of ex-felons after they've completed their sentences, except for those convicted of murder or felony sex offenses. Currently, ex-felons who complete their sentences must seek permission to vote from the Florida Cabinet, which rarely agrees.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 4 WOULD:

- * Grant ex-felons - excluding those convicted of murder or felony sex crimes - the right to vote after completing all the terms of their sentence.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 4 WOULD:

- * Continue the current requirement that ex-felons wait a minimum of five years before applying to have their voting rights restored, and then appear before the governor and Cabinet to appeal for those rights.
- * Continue allowing the governor and Cabinet sole authority to determine whether an ex-felon is ever allowed to vote again.



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Amendment 5

Supermajority Vote Required to Impose, Authorize, or Raise State Taxes or Fees

Source: Florida Legislature

Quick Summary: Requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature to approve any new or increased taxes or fees, rather than the current requirement of a simple majority. If the amendment passes, that would mean 80 of its 120 members of the Florida House would have to vote in favor of raising taxes or fees. In the Senate, it would take a vote of 27 of that body's 40 members.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 5 WOULD:

- * Require a two-thirds vote by the state House and Senate to increase existing taxes and fees or impose new ones.
- * Require that any new or increased taxes or fees be voted on in stand-alone bills.
- * Exclude local governments from any supermajority requirements if they choose to raise taxes or fees.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 5 WOULD:

- * Allow the Legislature to continue approving increased or new taxes and fees through a simple majority vote.
- * Allow the Legislature to continue bundling tax and fee increases with bills that include other measures.



Amendment 6

Rights of Crime Victims; Judges

Source: Constitution Revision Commission

Quick Summary: Vastly expands the scope of victims rights under the state Constitution; increases the mandatory retirement age for judges from 70 to 75; forces courts and judges to interpret laws and rules for themselves rather than rely on interpretations by government agencies.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 6 WOULD:

- * Enshrine in the state Constitution an array of victims rights, many of which are currently in state law.
- * Place new time limits on filing appeals.
- * Require that victims receive some type of written notification of their rights.
- * Eliminate an existing constitutional provision that ensures victims' rights don't infringe on the rights of accused criminals.
- * Raise the mandatory retirement age for Supreme Court justices and judges from 70 to 75.
- * Prohibit courts and judges from deferring to an administrative agency's interpretation of state laws or rules when deciding cases.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 6 WOULD:

- * Retain existing victims rights in the Constitution and in state law.
- * Keep the mandatory retirement ages for justices and judges at 70.
- * Continue allowing courts and judges to rely on state agencies' interpretation of state laws and rules when deciding cases.



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Amendment 7

First Responder and Military Member Survivor Benefits; Public Colleges and Universities

Source: Constitution Revision Commission

Quick Summary: Creates a supermajority requirement for universities to impose new or increase existing student fees; enshrines in the Constitution guidelines for the State College System; mandates that employers or the state pay a death benefit to first responders and members of the military killed in the line of duty.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 7 WOULD:

- Force universities' boards of trustees and the state Board of Governors to get supermajority approval from their members to increase student fees or impose new ones.
- Make the governing framework for state colleges a part of the Constitution.
- Create a constitutional requirement for state and local governments to pay death benefits to first responders.
- Expand the definition of first responders under state law to include paramedics and emergency medical technicians.
- Require the state to provide death benefits to members of the U.S. military who are either residents of Florida or who are stationed in the state.
- Create an undetermined financial burden on local and state government from paying death benefits to a larger group of first responders and members of the military. The amendment does not specify a funding source for those payments.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 7 WOULD:

- Continue allowing universities to increase student fees or impose new ones with a simple majority of votes from governing bodies.
- Exclude a governing framework for state colleges from the Constitution, while keeping it in state law.
- Continue providing death benefits for first responders through state law rather than making it part of the Constitution.
- Maintain the current definition of first responders eligible for death benefits, which excludes paramedics and emergency medical technicians.
- Continue providing death benefits to the families of National Guardsmen who are killed in the line of duty, but not extend those benefits to the families of U.S. service members who live in Florida.



Amendment 9

Prohibits Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling; Prohibits Vaping in Enclosed Indoor Workplaces

Source: Constitution Revision Commission

Quick Summary: Prohibits oil drilling beneath waters controlled by Florida, which is about nine miles off the western and southern coastlines and at least three miles off the eastern coastline. "State waters" also means bays, estuaries and other waters under Florida's jurisdiction. The amendment also prohibits the use of e-cigarettes, also known as vaping, at indoor workplaces.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 9 WOULD:

- Enshrine in the Constitution a ban on oil and gas drilling beneath Florida state waters.
- Exempt shipments of oil and gas on Florida's waters. Possibly signal to the federal government Floridians' opposition to offshore drilling.
- Apply constitutional restrictions to drilling only to waters under state control, not to waters under federal control.
- Add new restrictions to the Constitution on the use of electronic vaping devices, largely mirroring current constitutional restrictions on indoor workplace smoking.
- Create exceptions to the vaping restrictions in homes, bars, vaping retailers and hotel rooms designated for vaping.
- Allow local governments to pass stricter regulations on the use of vaping devices.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 9 WOULD:

- Keep a drilling ban out of the state Constitution but would not alter existing state laws that ban drilling.
- Allow Florida legislators to change the current law that bans offshore drilling in state-controlled waters.
- Possibly signal to the federal government Floridians' openness to offshore drilling.
- Keep restrictions on vaping and the use of vaping devices out of the state Constitution.
- Leave any such vaping restrictions to the discretion of the state Legislature.



Note: Amendment 8 removed from ballot



Amendment 10

State and Local Government Structure and Operation

Source: *Constitution Revision Commission*

Quick Summary: Forces all counties to elect a sheriff, tax collector, property appraiser, supervisor of elections and Clerk of Circuit Court. This part would apply to Florida's 20 "charter counties." Those are counties that have adopted a type of local level constitution. Some of those counties have done away with or changed the duties of constitutional officers. Other parts of this amendment require the Legislature to hold its session in early January on even-numbered years; create an Office of Domestic Security and Counterterrorism within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement; and mandate the existence of a state Department of Veterans' Affairs;

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 10 WOULD:

- Fix the date for state legislative sessions in even-numbered years as the second Tuesday in January.
- Create an Office of Domestic Security and Counterterrorism within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and establish it as the lead agency in terrorism investigations and responses.
- Force the Legislature to always have a Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- Force all of Florida's counties, even those with a charter, to hold elections for all five local constitutional offices found in the state Constitution - sheriff, property appraiser, supervisor of elections, tax collector and clerk of the circuit court.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 10 WOULD:

- Continue allowing the Legislature to set a start date for its lawmaking session in even-numbered years.
- Reject a constitutionally mandated Office of Security and Counterterrorism under the FDLE.
- Reject a constitutionally mandated Department of Veterans' Affairs, allowing the Legislature to determine if Florida should have such a department (which it currently does).
- Allow Florida's charter counties to continue determining the duties of five county offices identified in the state Constitution, and whether those offices should be elected posts.



Amendment 11

Property Rights; Removal of Obsolete Provision; Criminal Statutes

Source: *Constitution Revision Commission*

Quick Summary: Repeals the state's ability to prohibit non-citizens from buying, owning and selling property; deletes a provision that forces the state to prosecute criminal suspects under the law they were originally charged under, even if the Legislature changes that law; deletes obsolete language having to do with high-speed rail in Florida.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 11 WOULD:

- Repeal a nearly century-old provision that allows the Legislature to restrict the property rights of non-citizens.
- Deletes language that requires criminal suspects to be prosecuted under the provisions of the law they're accused of breaking, even if that law is changed by the Legislature. Keeps language that requires prosecution if the law is repealed.
- Deletes a section of the Constitution - concerning high-speed transportation - that was repealed by voters in 2004. The language, however, was not removed.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 11 WOULD:

- Continue to allow the Legislature to pass laws restricting the property rights of non-citizens.
- Continue to mandate that criminal suspects prosecuted under the law they're accused of breaking even if the state changes that law.
- Retain a section of the Constitution about high-speed transportation even though voters repealed that section in 2004.





Amendment 12

Lobbying and Abuse of Office by Public Officers

Source: Constitution Revision Commission

Quick Summary: Expands ethics rules for elected officials and government employees, notably by expanding from two to six years the time that many officials would have to wait before they could lobby state government. The proposed amendment also expands the range of governments that a sitting legislator may not lobby to include federal and local governments. The new prohibition would include statewide officeholders, such as Cabinet members. Amendment 12 also includes a new prohibition against officeholders and public employees using their positions to gain a “disproportionate benefit” for themselves or their families.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 12 WOULD:

- Extend the ban on state lobbying by legislators and statewide elected officials from two to six years.
- Prohibit legislators and statewide elected officials from lobbying federal and local government agencies while in office.
- Prohibit top state agency employees from any lobbying while working for the state and from lobbying state government for six years after leaving their job.
- Prohibit local elected officials from getting paid to lobby anyone while in office and from lobbying their own governing body for six years after leaving office.
- Prohibit judges from lobbying any branch of state government for six years after leaving the bench.
- Prohibit any elected official or public employee from using his or her position to gain a “disproportionate benefit,” a term to be defined by the state Ethics Commission.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 12 WOULD:

- Keep in place the current constitutional restrictions on lobbying by sitting and former government officials.



Amendment 13

Dog Racing

Source: Constitution Revision Commission

Quick Summary: Bans wagering on any type of dog racing, notably greyhounds, as of Dec. 31, 2020, while continuing to allow dog tracks to continue offering other types of gambling, including poker rooms.

A YES VOTE ON AMENDMENT 13 WOULD:

- Ban all dog racing in Florida by Dec. 31, 2020, while allowing tracks to continue operating card rooms and slot machines.
- Result in a loss of about \$1 million in taxes and fees.



A NO VOTE ON AMENDMENT 13 WOULD:

- Continue to allow wagering on dog racing in Florida.



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MORE ON AMENDMENTS

- Learn learn more about all 12 amendments on the General Election ballot.



GETTING TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES: U.S. SENATE

Bill Nelson, Democrat



Do you believe immigration policies, including the DACA program, should be reformed? If so, what reforms would you pursue?

Yes, we need to reform our nation's immigration system and protect our Dreamers, which is why I am a proud cosponsor of the DREAM Act. And we need to stop this inhumane policy of ripping families apart at the border.

Do you favor or oppose to a federal policy to ban assault-style semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines for civilian use and to implement universal background checks?

Yes. I have sponsored legislation to ban assault weapons and high-capacity magazines and require universal background checks for the transfer of any firearm.

What is your position on ensuring the protection of Florida's coastlines, water and other natural resources? What do you believe is the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency, and do you think it is meeting this objective?

Ever since I was elected, I have fought to protect our state's unique environment and keep oil rigs away from our coasts. Sen. Mel Martinez and I wrote the law that currently bans oil drilling off of Florida's coast. I've sponsored legislation to restore the Everglades and help prevent the toxic algae blooms plaguing South Florida's waterways.

What qualifications do you think make for competent and prepared candidates for the federal judicial bench?

They need to be fair and apply equal justice under the law for all.

What are your plans to support economic development? Specifically, what are your positions on tax cuts, infrastructure investment, and job training?

Support small businesses, make sure those who work can earn a living wage. And we need to increase funding for science, technology, engineering and math programs. We also need to keep college affordable so anyone who wants to can pursue higher education.

Rick Scott, Republican



Do you believe immigration policies, including the DACA program, should be reformed? If so, what reforms would you pursue?

No response

Do you favor or oppose to a federal policy to ban assault-style semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines for civilian use and to implement universal background checks?

No response

What is your position on ensuring the protection of Florida's coastlines, water and other natural resources? What do you believe is the mission of the Environmental Protection Agency, and do you think it is meeting this objective?

No response

What qualifications do you think make for competent and prepared candidates for the federal judicial bench?

No response

What are your plans to support economic development? Specifically, what are your positions on tax cuts, infrastructure investment, and job training?

No response

Important note

Representatives of the League of Women Voters contacted this candidate via emails sent to his or her campaign website and personnel. Several phone calls were also made to the campaign. The candidate had not submitted a response to the questionnaire at the time of publication. Please go to BeReadyToVote.org for any updates.



GETTING TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES: GOVERNOR

Andrew D. Gillum, Democrat



What will you do to provide affordable healthcare access for all Floridians including the uninsured?

Affordable health care must be a right for every Floridian, and I'm proud to be the only one who has advocated for Medicare-for-All as well as protections for women's no-cost contraception and people with pre-existing conditions. I'll fight the Legislature and the Trump White House to ensure that we can expand Medicaid and further protect Floridians' access to health care.

Do you believe Florida's public school system is adequately funded and if not what would you do to change it? Do you believe that public funds should be used for private schools?

Florida's public schools are woefully underfunded thanks to the for-profit charter school system that has been stealing public funds. As Governor, I'll put an end to our critical taxpayer dollars going to unaccountable, for-profit charter schools, and I've proposed a multi-billion investment in public schools, pay raises for our teachers and staff, and vocational training for our students.

Do you believe in home rule for local communities, or should decisions about their elections, environment, public policy be made by the state Legislature?

As Mayor of Tallahassee, I've led the fight against preemption — including beating the NRA in court twice to protect our common sense gun laws. Preemption saps local communities of control of their environment, gun safety laws, and a host of other issues. As Governor, I'll return local control to these governments and stop the Republican-led legislature from destroying Florida's cities and counties.

What is your position on ensuring the protection of Florida's coastlines, water and other natural resources?

Protecting our environment must be a top priority for our next Governor to restore the damage done to it under Rick Scott. I'll fight off-shore drilling, ban fracking, and ensure that our waterways are protected from overdevelopment. It's long past time for a Governor who has a true moral compass on protecting our environment.

Do you favor or oppose a ban on assault-style, semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines for civilian use and why? What about universal background checks?

I strongly favor a ban on these weapons of war, because they don't belong on our city streets. We cannot allow our citizens to die in schools, nightclubs, movie theaters, or concerts because we lack the political will to ban these weapons. We need to ban all military-style assault weapons and institute universal background checks so that suspected terrorists and domestic abusers can no longer access firearms so easily.

Ron DeSantis, Republican



What will you do to provide affordable healthcare access for all Floridians including the uninsured?

No response

Do you believe Florida's public school system is adequately funded and if not what would you do to change it? Do you believe that public funds should be used for private schools?

No response

Do you believe in home rule for local communities, or should decisions about their elections, environment, public policy be made by the state Legislature?

No response

What is your position on ensuring the protection of Florida's coastlines, water and other natural resources?

No response

Do you favor or oppose a ban on assault-style, semi-automatic weapons and high-capacity magazines for civilian use and why? What about universal background checks?

No response

Important note

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GETTING TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES: ATTORNEY GENERAL

Sean Michael Shaw, Democrat



What are the three main issues you would focus on as Attorney General?

- 1. Advocating for common sense gun safety laws like universal background check and banning assault weapons.
- 2. Holding the pharmaceutical industry accountable for their role in the opioid crisis.
- 3. Keeping Floridians safe by cracking down on scammers and predators seeking to hurt our children and elderly population.

How would you ensure that voting rights are enforced throughout the state and the integrity of our elections are safeguarded?

As Attorney General, I will be the state's top law enforcement officer and will defend the rule of law. Participating in the elections process is a constitutional right and should be executed with the utmost security and transparency to ensure fair elections. I will work with state elections officials to ensure our elections are democratic and free from tampering and intimidation.

Would you be willing to ferret out and prosecute the misconduct of other elected officials?

I plan to be the most active Attorney General in the country. The oath of office for an elected official is the commitment to represent constituents with integrity. The misconduct of any elected official is a clear dereliction of duty, and will be held accountable. Their actions are in direct violation of their oath to Floridians. From day one, when a Floridian is harmed, they will be able to count on me to act on their behalf. Floridians deserve an independent watchdog fighting for the people, not the powerful.

What role, if any, would you take in redistricting in 2020?

Any intention by the Florida Legislature to intentionally disenfranchise Floridians from the electoral process jeopardizes the very framework of the democracy of our country. The responsibility of drawing equitable and representative districts will be closely monitored. Should we find that there was a violation of these constitutional rights, I am going to hold this Legislature accountable.

Do you think it is economically feasible to keep in jail nonviolent offenders who cannot afford to post bail?

No, it is not. Incarcerating nonviolent offenders prior to trial is a grave misuse of taxpayer dollars and the inability to post-bail punishes lower-income and minority defendants to a greater degree as opposed to more affluent defendants.

Ashley B. Moody, Republican



What are the three main issues you would focus on as Attorney General?

No response

How would you ensure that voting rights are enforced throughout the state and the integrity of our elections are safeguarded?

No response

Would you be willing to ferret out and prosecute the misconduct of other elected officials?

No response

What role, if any, would you take in redistricting in 2020?

No response

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No response

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GETTING TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES: CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Jeremy Seth Ring, Democrat



The Chief Financial Officer plays a key role in helping regulate the financial and insurance industries and also functions as the state's treasurer. What specific skills and experience qualify you for the job?

I spent 10 years representing Broward County in the Florida Senate. As Chair of the Government Oversight Committee, I spent 8 years fighting to protect state workers retirement and successfully I led local pension reform efforts for the state. Prior to the Senate, I was an early executive with internet pioneer Yahoo! which I helped build from a startup to a \$120 billion company. At the end of the day, the CFO should be the person most qualified to handle being a trustee to the state's \$160 billion retirement system, or the state's \$85 billion budget—and on that, there is not another candidate from either party that can match my background or my qualifications.

What role does the Chief Financial Officer play in administering the general Revenue Fund, and how would you ensure no deficits occur?

A: The CFO plays two important functions as it relates to the general revenue fund -- it serves as the state's bill payer and it has the ability to audit contracts and clawback funds when those contracts weren't fulfilled appropriately. The problem we face now is that we have no idea if any fraud or cost savings can be had because the current CFO has not -- at least publicly -- said that he audits any of the state's \$85 billion budget. I intend to change that. Furthermore, the next CFO will be responsible for the build-out and smooth introduction of the new State Financial Management System (Palm), which will replace an increasingly antiquated system and will help to manage costs across the board.

Outline what you consider to be the appropriate level of risk for the state's investments.

I have a lot of confidence in the current team at SBA and the current level of risk assumed. It's a strong system and no rating agency in the world has sounded an alarm on it. I would be open to a slight reduction in the assumed rate of return if recommended by the FRS advisory board, but not do anything that would adversely affect its unfunded liabilities.

The current CFO has warned that if left unchecked, assignment of benefits will cripple the state of Florida. What is your opinion?

I agree that there is currently fraud in AOB and that is a problem. I support binding arbitration with both sides agreeing to the arbiter and I oppose the consumer entirely assigning the rights.

Did you support Governor Scott's decision to reject some \$18 billion in federal funds over 10 years to expand the pool of low-income Floridians eligible for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act?

No.

Jimmy Patronis Jr., Republican



The Chief Financial Officer plays a key role in helping regulate the financial and insurance industries and also functions as the state's treasurer. What specific skills and experience qualify you for the job?

No response

What role does the Chief Financial Officer play in administering the general Revenue Fund, and how would you ensure no deficits occur?

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No response

The current CFO has warned that if left unchecked, assignment of benefits will cripple the state of Florida. What is your opinion?

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Did you support Governor Scott's decision to reject some \$18 billion in federal funds over 10 years to expand the pool of low-income Floridians eligible for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act?

No response

Important note

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GETTING TO KNOW THE CANDIDATES: COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE

Nicole Fried, Democrat



What are the key challenges and areas of opportunity for Florida agriculture?

For the last decade, Citrus Greening has plagued our citrus farmers. Citrus Greening, with the devastation of Hurricane Irma, we are currently seeing the lowest citrus production since World War II. Another major issue facing our agriculture community is water. It's not just about the quantity of the water, it's also about the quality of the water being used on our crops. Those who are in good quality freshwater areas don't face the same issues that farmers in freshwater constrained areas are facing. But unfortunately, the agriculture community is also seeing an overall declining of the agriculture market. Exports are down and are facing a decline with President Trump's tariff's and trade war. Medical marijuana growth is a huge opportunity.

Do you believe steps should be taken to expand the markets for locally grown produce and products to support the efforts of Florida's small farmers?

Absolutely, as I have been traveling the state one of the cornerstones of my campaign is expanding the farm-to-school programs in ALL of our schools. Not only would this be extremely beneficial to all of our farmers, it would also be much healthier for our kids.

Do you believe that it is appropriate for your department to be the one issuing concealed weapons permits, and if so, why?

I believe we need to start the conversation of looking at whether or not concealed weapons permits should be handled by Florida Department of Law Enforcement instead of Department of Ag. All concealed weapons permit applications are run through the Florida Crime Information Center, which is run by the FDLE. Background checks are run to ensure that CWP's don't end up in the hands of the wrong people and to protect society. So, in my opinion it is completely reasonable to have the conversation of moving this responsibility over to the law enforcement professionals.

What are the key issues of concern for Florida consumers, and what ideas do you have to improve the Division of Consumer Services?

The number one consumer complaint in the State of Florida is unsolicited sales calls and scam telemarketing calls. To make it even worse, the overwhelming majority of these high-pressure sales and scam calls are intentionally aimed at our most vulnerable population - our seniors. As the Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, I will oversee the issuance of telemarketing licenses and will demand to know what the telemarketers are selling, who their target customers will be and if they violate the law I will use EVERY punitive measure at my disposal to weed out the bad actors. I will also fight those calls and scams coming from outside of Florida, from overdevelopment. It's long past time for a Governor who has a true moral compass on protecting our environment.

Matt Caldwell, Republican



What are the key challenges and areas of opportunity for Florida agriculture?

Agriculture is the backbone of this state — Florida farmers, and the industries that support them, put food on the table for 20 million Floridians, as well as millions of people across America and the world. Farming is no easy task: floods, diseases, and freezes are just some of the challenges they face. Yet, our farmers face these challenges day in and day out. This attitude of innovation and hard work has allowed Florida to be a world leader in agriculture, and my job is to support these resilient people who make Florida the great state it is today. Whether it is tackling the tough issues on trade, labor, or managing our precious natural resources, I've never backed down from standing up for what is right for Florida.

Do you believe steps should be taken to expand the markets for locally grown produce and products to support the efforts of Florida's small farmers?

Yes. The agricultural profile in Florida will continue to develop into two distinct groups: large agribusiness competing in global commodities and relatively small, locally relevant producers who meet the demands within 100 mile radius. Both groups deserve the support of research and extension, as well as Commissioner that will champion their property rights and ability to grow agricultural products in an ever evolving business climate.

Do you believe that it is appropriate for your department to be the one issuing concealed weapons permits, and if so, why?

Yes. It will be my priority as Commissioner of Agriculture to ensure concealed weapon permits are overseen by a professional who fully understands and upholds our 2nd Amendment rights guaranteed by the Constitution. As a candidate for Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture, I am the principled conservative in the race and have received the endorsement of the National Rifle Association Political Victory Fund (NRA-PVF) and Unified Sportsmen of Florida. During my time in the Florida Legislature, I helped the State improve the concealed weapon license program by partnering with the Tax Collectors and to expedite applications for active military and veterans. I will continue the legacy of protecting our 2nd Amendment rights.

What are the key issues of concern for Florida consumers, and what ideas do you have to improve the Division of Consumer Services?

Non-profit oversight, do not call list, gas pump skimmers; the list goes on and on. The Commissioner is responsible for the consumer protections in this state from ensuring the scale at the grocery store is accurate to making sure foreign pest and disease do not ravage our state. I will ensure that willful violators are prosecuted and that the Department is proactive in seeking out fraud and abuse of the public.