

# PASCO TIMES

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## Ballot has four capital projects

Pasco County voters face referendums totalling \$241 million.

BY C.T. BOWEN  
Times Staff Writer

Long-time Pasco County voters might get a sense of déjà vu this election season.

In 2004, voters approved a sales tax increase dubbed Penny for Pasco to finance school and road construction, preserve environmentally sensitive land and enhance public safety. The planned fire/rescue spending included \$2.9 million to build two new fire stations, one at State Road 52 near Majestic Boulevard in Hudson and one at SR 52 near Hays Road in central Pasco.

This year, Pasco voters are being asked to consider four separate bond issues, totaling \$241 million to be financed by property tax increases, to expand the jail, boost fire/rescue services, maintain parks and remodel libraries.

But the proposed project list looks a little familiar. The planned public safety spending includes building those same two fire stations on SR 52 that were supposed to be constructed with Penny for Pasco.

So what happened? And should voters feel they're being double-billed?

"That's a good question," said Pasco County Commissioner Jack Mariano.

Here's the answer: A bursting real estate bubble, voter-approved property tax exemptions and the Great Recession whacked local government budgets beginning a decade ago.

Amid that shrinking tax base and dwindling revenue, county leaders decided in 2010 to shelve the fire stations, saying they couldn't afford to hire the personnel to staff the ambulances and fire trucks. Instead, the county reallocated the money to rebuild an existing station, upgrade three engines and add data terminals in emergency vehicles.

Mariano is the only commissioner remaining in office from that 2010 decision.

"Sometimes you've got to take care of public safety," said Mariano. "Even though it changed the purpose, I'll stick by the staff recommendation and what we did."

Coincidentally, this year's ballot also includes a proposed state constitutional amendment to add another \$25,000 homestead property exemption. Voter approval of the amendment is expected to remove a combined \$10 million from the county's general and fire department budgets in 2019.

It leads to a familiar issue tied to this year's public safety referendums.

"We still have to figure out how to operate these after we build them," County Administrator Dan Biles volunteered previously.

Indeed. Two of the referen-

» See PROJECTS, 6

## Know Your Candidates

# Before you vote, take note



RON BORRESEN | Times

Tampa Bay has nearly 2 million registered voters who have much to consider this election. Voting has already begun by mail. Starting in 10 days, early voting begins for some. By the time "Election Day" arrives Nov. 6, probably more than half of the electorate will have already voted.

To help make sense of the upcoming general election, today's *Pasco Times* includes information about all the races and issues on this year's ballot. **Pages 10-18**

If you want to read more, visit the *Tampa Bay Times'* online searchable database at <http://bit.ly/TBVote18>.

### Vote by mail

Vote-by-mail ballots have already been sent out for those who have requested them. To request a mail ballot contact your Elections Supervisor at the top of this webpage: [bit.ly/pascomailvote](http://bit.ly/pascomailvote).

### Early Voting

Wednesday, Oct. 24 to Saturday, Nov. 3, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

## Constitutional amendments

# Voters to consider 12 revisions

BY ELIZABETH KOH  
Miami Herald

TALLAHASSEE — The 12 constitutional amendments on this year's ballot are the most since 1998, when the state's Constitution Revision Commission — which meets once every 20 years — put nine of 13 amendments on the ballot. The Constitution Revision Commission convened this year and placed eight amendments on the ballot.

In some cases, measures have been grouped together, meaning voters will

have to choose to approve or reject disparate proposals that have been linked in one amendment. To be approved, any constitutional amendment requires 60 percent of the vote. Here's what this year's amendments do:

### Amendment 1

Increased Homestead Property Tax Exemption would raise the portion of a home's value that can be exempted from non-school property taxes. The Legislature voted to refer the exemption to the

ballot in 2017, and the proposed changes would apply to the assessed value of a homestead property between \$100,000 and \$125,000, raising the maximum exemption to \$75,000.

The shift could save homeowners a couple hundred dollars, but a legislative staff analysis estimated local governments — which rely on property taxes for revenue — would lose about \$645 million in the first year if the exemption, effective Jan. 1, is approved.

» See CHANGES, 7

## Teacher, parent vie for board

Two new candidates want to replace school board member.

BY JEFFREY S. SOLOCHEK  
Times Staff Writer

In the race for Pasco County School Board District 5, candidate Megan Harding wants voters to know she's a teacher.

Harding contends that, in and of itself, that makes her the better qualified candidate.

"I know what goes on every single day in our classrooms, because I am in the trenches," she said at a recent forum and repeated in an interview.

To which candidate Tara O'Connor scoffed. She is a lawyer whose interactions with schools have come as a parent and volunteer. The board that oversees public education in Pasco needs other perspectives, she argued.

"I am running on a platform. I'm not running on my profes-

» See BOARD, 19



Megan Harding



Tara O'Connor

## Simpson runs real campaign

Goliath candidate takes first-time opponent seriously.

BY JEFFREY S. SOLOCHEK  
Times Staff Writer

The contest for Florida Senate District 10 almost didn't happen.

Until the final hours of qualifying in June, incumbent Sen. Wilton Simpson, R-Trilby, appeared on track to his fourth and final unchallenged election, no Democrats having stepped forward in the heavily Republican region he serves.

Then came Michael Cottrell, a Defense Department history teacher on medical leave for chemotherapy treatment. His wife, Dana, already had announced her bid for a congressional seat, and she convinced him to seek the legislative post.

"We did not like that people were running unopposed," Michael Cottrell explained. "All citizens should have the right to choose."

Since then, his campaign has consisted of a nearly blank Face-

» See SENATE, 19

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# Know your candidates

## U.S. Senate

It is one of the most expensive races in the country and the outcome could determine which party controls the U.S. Senate. Sen. Bill Nelson, a moderate Democrat, faces the toughest political challenge of his career against two-term Republican Gov. Rick Scott.

By Steve Contorno, National Political Correspondent

	Bill Nelson	Rick Scott
<b>Party</b>	Democrat	Republican
<b>Profession</b>	U.S. Senator	Florida Governor
<b>About the candidate</b>	 Bill Nelson has served three terms in the U.S. Senate. A centrist Democrat, he was first elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 1972 and later served in Congress for 12 years before an unsuccessful run for governor.	 Rick Scott has served two terms as Florida's governor, a job he first won in 2010 on the backs of a tea party wave. Scott previously served as CEO of Hospital Corporation of America and is independently wealthy.
<b>Education</b>	J.D., University of Virginia; Yale University	J.D., Southern Methodist University; University of Missouri, Kansas City
<b>Do you support any measures that address gun violence?</b>	I have cosponsored legislation to ban assault weapons and expand universal background checks to include the transfer of any firearm.	Three weeks after the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, (I) signed significant reforms to make Florida schools safer while keeping firearms out of the hands of mentally ill and dangerous individuals.
<b>Explain your position on the tariffs President Trump has imposed on Canada, Europe and Mexico.</b>	These tariffs imposed by the Trump administration have sparked a trade war with some of our closest allies. It's causing the price of goods to go up and, if it's not resolved soon, some American companies are going to be forced to start laying people off. I have called on the Trump administration to take the steps necessary to end this trade war immediately.	I have heard directly from Florida companies who are worried that the administration's proposal regarding tariffs is not fair and consistent between countries and this is an issue I will continue discussing with the Administration to ensure Florida companies are treated fairly. I support free and open trade with the world because it is good for Florida and our economy.
<b>Should oil drilling off the Florida coast be banned or allowed?</b>	(Former) U.S. Sen. Mel Martinez and I wrote the 2006 law that currently bans oil drilling as far out as 235 miles off of Florida's Gulf Coast until 2022. I have filed new legislation to make that ban permanent.	I have opposed offshore drilling. As soon as (Interior) Secretary (Ryan) Zinke was confirmed, I met with him, I talked to him about that we didn't want it off our coast, and then when they came out with their plan right around Christmas, I immediately called and asked if we could meet, and he was gracious enough to come down, and the right thing happened. There's not going to be offshore drilling.
<b>Do you support Trump's approach to immigration?</b>	We need a comprehensive immigration reform plan and we need to end this administration's policy of ripping families apart at the border with no plan to reunify.	The chaos at our border will continue until we secure the border. Washington's failure to secure our border has been a bipartisan failure for many decades. ... I've long been an outspoken opponent of illegal immigration and I remain so. But I refuse to watch these children be punished for the actions of their parents.
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: \$1,459,041 - \$6,498,000 Liabilities: \$850,000 - \$1,750,000 Income: \$57,074	Assets: Reported net worth of \$232.6 million; \$215 million, is in a qualified blind trust. Liabilities: None listed
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Orlando Marital status: Married to Grace Nelson Children: Two adult children	Home: Naples Marital status: Married to Ann Scott Children: Two adult children
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$18.7 million Expenditures: \$6.3 million	Contributions: \$31 million Expenditures: \$28 million
<b>On the web</b>	Website: www.nelsonforsenate.com Twitter: @NelsonforSenate	Website: rickscottforflorida.com Twitter: @ScottforFlorida

**ABOUT THE JOB:** A U.S. senator holds a statewide office and serves a six-year term. The salary is \$174,000.

## School Board | District 5

Candidates Megan Harding and Tara O'Connor received nearly identical vote totals in the August primary and now square off to replace retiring board member Steve Luikart.

By Jeffrey S. Solochek, Times Staff Writer

	Megan Harding	Tara O'Connor
<b>Profession</b>	Teacher	Attorney
<b>About the candidate</b>	 Megan Harding, 28, is a lifelong Pasco County resident. She interned at Pasco County schools while earning her degree and has worked as a teacher in area charter and traditional schools since 2012. This is her first run for public office.	 Tara O'Connor, 46, moved to Pasco County as a child and has remained since. She has been an active school volunteer as a parent, while also working as a lawyer and participating in local civic organizations. This is her first attempt to seek elected office.
<b>Education</b>	Harding has a bachelor's degree in education from the University of South Florida-St. Petersburg.	O'Connor has a bachelor's degree from Eckerd College and a law degree from Stetson University College of Law.
<b>What are your views on school rezoning and crowding?</b>	Harding said the board's recent actions were justifiable. However, she added, "people felt their voice wasn't being heard, and all the groundwork they laid was brushed aside. ... We may not always get our way, but we at least need to be heard." She added, "The students who are newly enrolled [as in just moved] should be rezoned."	"The district has to be fully transparent throughout the process, including meetings with the parents and students in affected areas. The process isn't an easy one, but parties want the opportunity to be heard."
<b>Should the district seek a tax referendum to support daily operations?</b>	"We need to look closer at our budget, dissect it with a fine-tooth comb, and then if we really cannot eliminate unnecessary items, we need to not be afraid and fight for what we need."	"I believe it is worth exploring the option as the budget is extremely lean, given the mandates for school safety and mental health."
<b>Should the district elect its superintendent?</b>	"If we made changes, it would help eliminate the career politicians and those who are a part of the 'good ole boys.' This in my opinion would help better our school system."	"I want to maintain my right to vote and elect a superintendent."
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: Home, pension fund, automobile, checking account Liabilities: Car loan, home mortgage, student loan Income: Teacher salary	Assets: Home, investments, bank account Liabilities: Student loans, car loan Income: Law firm salary and shares
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Port Richey Marital status: Married Children: None	Home: Hudson Marital status: Married Children: Two
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$28,721 Expenditures: \$19,901	Contributions: \$39,050 Expenditures: \$30,972
<b>On the web</b>	Website: www.mrsharding.com Twitter: @meganhardingsc1	taraconnorforschoolboard.com Twitter: @taraconnor2018

**ABOUT THE JOB:** The five-member Pasco County School Board adopts policies and budgets for the school system, its 75,000 students and 10,000 employees. The board member salary is \$41,329.

## Governor

Andrew Gillum and Ron DeSantis are running to be Florida's chief executive. If Gillum wins, he would be the first Democrat to be elected to the governor's mansion since Lawton Chiles in 1994. If DeSantis wins, he would be the fourth straight Republican to occupy the post, which is currently held by Rick Scott. This is the first run at a statewide office for both Gillum and DeSantis. Editor's note: Because the DeSantis campaign declined to answer the Times' candidate questionnaire, some of the candidate answers below were pulled from public statements to ensure issue parity.

By Kirby Wilson and Emily L. Mahoney, Times Staff Writers

	Ron DeSantis	Andrew Gillum
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	Former U.S. representative	Mayor of Tallahassee
<b>About the candidate</b>	 Desantis, 40, was a U.S. congressman representing northeast Florida until he resigned the post in 2018 to run for governor. The conservative Republican and Freedom Caucus member was endorsed by U.S. President Donald Trump. DeSantis graduated from Yale University and Harvard University before serving as a prosecutor with the U.S. Navy.	 Gillum, 39, has been the mayor of Tallahassee since 2014. Before that, the liberal Democrat, a graduate of FAMU, served on the Tallahassee city commission for over a decade after getting elected in 2003 at the age of 23, the youngest to get elected to the commission in city history. His longshot bid for governor was given a boost when he was endorsed by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, becoming an instant favorite with progressives.
<b>Education</b>	B.A. from Yale University, J.D. from Harvard Law School	Florida A&M University, B.A., Political Science
<b>What is your position on Medicaid expansion in Florida?</b>	Currently, Medicaid in Florida covers the most vulnerable in our society, serving as a much-needed safety net. Expanding Medicaid, however, would extend to able-bodied adults. That's not what Medicaid was designed for, that's not what taxpayers pay for, and that's not how health care or government should work. We've got to increase access and drive down costs on health care. The best way we can do that is to make sure we are creating an environment where everyone has a great education that leads to a job where they are covered or they have the ability to buy their own insurance in the market.	I believe that access to quality, affordable health care is a fundamental right, not a privilege. But Rick Scott, Donald Trump, and Republican lawmakers have threatened that access for more than 1 million Floridians with ACA coverage — and blocked it for 1 million more who need Medicaid expansion. While I believe that Medicare For All should be our goal as a nation, I'm also the only candidate to propose a comprehensive set of health care policies that will protect Floridians' care. As Governor, we'll work to pass the nation's strongest protections for those with pre-existing conditions, ensure that women aren't charged more for coverage than men, and protect access to no-cost contraception for women. No Floridian should face the inhumane choice between bankruptcy and health care.
<b>How would you solve the toxic green algae crisis surrounding Lake Okeechobee?</b>	The cornerstone of a comprehensive solution to Lake Okeechobee is restoring the Everglades, with the centerpiece being the completion of a southern reservoir to store water. Beginning day one, I will work with the Trump administration and Congress to ensure the federal government honors its 20-year old funding promise to CERP (Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan) by appropriating its \$200 million in matching federal dollars to build the Southern Reservoir and complete the entire suite of projects. The 120-billion-gallon reservoir will be built primarily on state land and will serve as a dynamic storage system discharging clean water into Everglades National Park and then into the Florida Bay	Our environment belongs to all of us and it's time we put scientists back in charge — not the corporate polluters. I'm ready to fight and protect our precious environment on day one by re-establishing several programs that should never have been cut, like the Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force to combat the effects of red tide and toxic algae. I would also put some environmental protection back into the Department of Environmental Protection and finally hold corporate polluters accountable for the pollution and runoff they dump into our groundwater.
<b>How would you approach funding of public schools?</b>	To maximize Florida taxpayers' investment in our students, I will implement the 80% Classroom Spending Plan, which ensures that 80% of public K-12 education spending goes directly into the classroom. This will cut bureaucratic waste and administrative inefficiency and ensure that money is being spent where it matters most. To determine where wasteful spending occurs, I will direct the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education to oversee a complete operational and financial audit of the Florida Department of Education to identify funding that can be put back into the classroom.	As a product of Florida's public schools, I know how a quality public education can interrupt intergenerational poverty. That's why as Governor, I'm committed to investing \$1 billion into our public schools — and I'm the only candidate with a plan to pay for it. As Governor, I'll adjust our state's corporate income tax rate and recoup \$1 billion from Donald Trump's tax giveaway. I'll use those funds to pay new teachers a \$50,000 starting salary, raise pay for veteran school teachers and staff to the national average, invest in SHOP 2.0 and vocational training, and rebuild our crumbling public schools.
<b>What's a specific example of an economic goal you would have for your administration?</b>	Reduce the Corporate Income Tax. I know that for business to flourish and job growth to continue, we must be as competitive as possible. As Governor, I will work to lower this business tax to encourage businesses to move to Florida and help Florida-based businesses continue to grow. Lowering this tax will help spur the creation of more high wage jobs.	Our state's devastating income inequality forces families to live paycheck to paycheck, because our economy isn't built for everyone to succeed. As Mayor, I've presided over Florida's fastest-growing local economy, President Obama named Tallahassee a TechHire city for our commitment to training workers, and we eliminated our local business tax, saving businesses \$2 million annually. I believe the way forward for Florida's economy starts with ensuring workers get the vocational and technical training they need for good jobs, attracting those good jobs by investing in our state's schools and infrastructure, and embracing technology — from ride-sharing and home-sharing to renewable energy production — that will remake Florida into an innovation economy that works for all.
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: \$819,545 Liabilities: \$527,350 Income: \$201,500	Assets: \$878,230 Liabilities: \$535,530 Income: \$176,926
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Palm Coast Marital status: Married Children: 2	Home: Tallahassee Marital status: Married Children: 3
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$30,446,348 Expenditures: : \$25,128,988	Contributions: \$23,514,949.29 Expenditures: \$15,021,150.43
<b>On the web</b>	Website: www.rondesantis.com Twitter: @RonDeSantisFL	Website: www.andrewgillum.com Twitter: @AndrewGillum

**ABOUT THE JOB:** Florida's governor is the state's highest ranking executive. He or she oversees the state's regulatory agencies under the executive branch and has the power to sign or veto laws passed by the Legislature. He or she also fills open judicial vacancies by appointing jurists across the state.

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# Know your candidates

## Attorney General

The race for attorney general matches state Rep. Sean Shaw, D-Tampa, and former judge Ashley Moody, a Tampa Republican. Moody is a former circuit judge, federal prosecutor and civil lawyer. Current Attorney General Pam Bondi is term-limited.

By William March, Times Correspondent

	Ashley Moody	Sean Shaw
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	Lawyer, former judge and federal prosecutor	Lawyer
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>Ashley Moody, 43, a Plant City native now living in Tampa, is a former federal prosecutor and civil lawyer who was elected to a Hillsborough circuit judgeship in 2006 and re-elected in 2012. She left the office to run for attorney general, and defeated state Rep. Frank White, R-Pensacola, in a primary. She has been active in civic and legal charitable causes and is a former president of the University of Florida Blue Key honorary society. She contends that her experience in law enforcement makes her best qualified for the office.</p>	 <p>Sean Shaw, 40, of Tampa, grew up in Tallahassee and works with a law firm that represents policyholders in insurance disputes. He previously was appointed by former Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink as state insurance consumer advocate. He was elected to the state House in 2016 and defeated Ryan Torrens of Tampa in the attorney general primary. He promises that as attorney general he will act against corrupt business practices and predatory corporations, will investigate President Donald Trump's business practices in Florida, and withdraw the state from in a lawsuit challenging the Affordable Care Act.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Plant City High School; bachelors and masters degrees in accounting and law degree, University of Florida; Masters in international law, Stetson University	Leon High School; BA, Princeton University, 2000, JD, University of Florida 2003
<b>Do you support Florida's lawsuit against the</b>	"Yes. As a judge and prosecutor, I saw first-hand those that sought to profit from the opioid epidemic and the lives destroyed as a result. Those responsible must be held accountable. ... a doctor wrongfully prescribing drugs or some of the largest companies in the world engaged in the conduct described in the complaint. However, the lawsuit, by itself, is not an end to this crisis. ... We will move forward with a targeted, data-backed approach, focusing on law enforcement, addiction, and education."	"It is highly disappointing that it took (Bondi) until the end of her term to file this lawsuit. The role of the pharmaceutical companies in prolonging and exacerbating this crisis has been well known for years. As ground zero for pill mills, Florida should have been leading on this issue. ... I worry that Floridians will not see the damages they deserve because we were not out in front. I will vigorously pursue this case."
<b>What are your thoughts on the gun legislation that was passed this year (SB 7026) by Florida lawmakers?</b>	"While many aspects of SB 7026 are commendable and will make a difference in preventing another Parkland tragedy. ... I do not support making it illegal for competent law-abiding adults to purchase firearms. ... Those without parents are on their own at 18. The law would leave them defenseless. We will work ... to deal with the mentally ill who have firearms and provide the necessary resources to protect schools. ... We must improve our justice system to effectively address mental illness in society."	"I agree with the three-day waiting period (but) voted against this legislation because arming teachers was a poison pill I could not swallow. ... My approach: challenging the constitutionality of the gun lobby's preemption of local governments' ability to pass firearms safety laws ... enforcing the firearms laws already in statute and advocating for a ban on assault weapons and high capacity magazines; closing loopholes that allow violent individuals to purchase guns; challenging (laws that give) gun manufacturers immunity in court for their role."
<b>Please explain what your top priority would be as attorney general and how you would address it.</b>	"As a conservative, I will vigorously enforce the law and defend the Constitution. ... Florida's next Attorney General must be a strong supporter of the men and women within law enforcement. I will be a partner that pushes for training and resources that will keep them safe as they protect us. The strength of our judicial system stems from a legal process that is fair and perceived as fair. I will lead on ... how we can foster a trust between law enforcement and all the communities they serve."	"My top priority is cutting down on the senseless gun violence plaguing our state by pushing for common sense gun safety reforms and enacting the principles I laid out above as Attorney General. When a child is shot every seventeen hours in your state, it is clear there is an epidemic. We need to ban assault weapons and high capacity magazines, institute universal background checks, and work with our local communities to find solutions to keep our citizens safer."
<b>Please explain how campaign contributions don't (or do) influence how Florida's top law enforcement official subsequently addresses issues involving donors to their campaign.</b>	"As a conservative, I will vigorously enforce the law and defend the Constitution. ... Florida's next Attorney General must be a strong supporter of the men and women within law enforcement. I will be a partner that pushes for training and resources that will keep them safe as they protect us. The strength of our judicial system stems from a legal process that is fair and perceived as fair. I will lead on ... how we can foster a trust between law enforcement and all the communities they serve."	"The simple answer is they shouldn't. Unfortunately, we do not live in a world in which we don't have to raise money to get our message out. However, those contributions should never influence how you prosecute or pursue a case. ... Under our current Attorney General, it is clear that she was motivated in some cases by the donations she was receiving."
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: \$3,488,267 Liabilities: \$469,243 Income: \$183,969	Assets: \$180,702 Liabilities: \$170,000 Income: \$159,697
<b>Personal</b>	Moody comes from a family that has been in Plant City for five generations. She is married to a Drug Enforcement Administration agent, Justin Duralia, and they have two sons.	Shaw is single. He's the son of the late Leander Shaw, Florida's first black Supreme Court chief justice.
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$2,913,400 Expenditures: \$2,837,022	Contributions: \$1,072,906 Expenditures: \$580,539
<b>On the web</b>	Website: electashleymoody.com Twitter: @VoteAshleyMoody	Website: seanshaw.com Twitter: @SShawFL

**ABOUT THE JOB:** The winner will serve a four-year term as attorney general, the state's lawyer and chief law enforcement officer. The attorney general is also one of four members of the state Cabinet, along with the governor, chief financial officer and agriculture commissioner. The salary is \$128,972.

## Chief Financial Officer

Jimmy Patronis seeks to win the job he was appointed to by Gov. Rick Scott after Jeff Atwater left to become CFO at Florida Atlantic University in 2017. To do, he'll have to beat a well-financed Democrat in Jeremy Ring, who served eight years in the Florida Senate as a fiscal conservative. The race has become a particularly nasty one, with both accusing the other of being financed by criminals.

By Samantha Gross, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

	Jimmy Patronis	Jeremy Ring
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	Chief Financial Officer	Investor
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>It's been a while, but Jimmy Patronis, 46, has thrust himself into campaign heat once again. After three years of working in plum positions Gov. Rick Scott appointed him to, he's fighting to hold onto his current cabinet-level job as the state's chief financial officer. The incumbent candidate for CFO was born to the well-known Panama City family behind Captain Anderson's restaurant and has remained involved with the restaurant — and politics — for most of his adult life. er has to remain blank. interned in the Senate while attending Florida State University and was appointed to the Florida Elections Commission upon graduating. In 1998, he was re-appointed by then-Gov. Jeb Bush. In the years that followed, Patronis represented Northwest Florida in the statehouse.</p>	 <p>Ring, 48, was born in Canton, Mass. — an affluent suburb southwest of Boston — to a garment salesman father and homemaker mother. In 1994, Ring started work at a boutique ad agency. Ring befriended an ad scheduler (Yahoo! co-founder, Jerry Yang) and was hired soon after. While an employee of Yahoo, Ring enjoyed a life in the circle of tech socialites, taking work trips to places like Monterey, Calif., and throwing lavish hotel parties that prompted "not-so-subtle requests" for the guests to leave. In 2001, Ring left Yahoo! for an opportunity in Florida. He won a seat in the Florida Senate in 2006, where he served for eight years. While in the Senate, he was chair of the Oversight Committee. He often had his hands on pension reform bills, and said if the CFO had a hand in a bill, it was run through his committee.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Associate's degree in restaurant management from Gulf Coast Community College and his bachelor's degree in political science from Florida State University..	Bachelor's degree in advertising from Syracuse University.
<b>Insurance consumer service is managed by the CFO. How would you rate Florida's insurance market and what are ways you would work to improve it?</b>	I believe we must root out insurance fraud and waste. Insurance fraud is not a victimless crime and is the main cause that drives up insurance rates. I am proud of the work that's been done since I've taken office. So far, we've arrested 885 people for insurance fraud since I took office, resulting in 767 successful prosecutions. We have to look for new ways to stay ahead of the criminals that commit insurance fraud. After Hurricane Irma, I created the Disaster Fraud Action Strike Team to put boots on the ground to help attack insurance fraud head on. We go after fraud, but we also alert Floridians of how to spot and prevent fraud.	Florida's insurance market is a "house of cards". Rates are artificially low, which results in potential destabilized market and massive risk to the residents of the state. The legislature suppresses insurance rates for political expediency without regard to the back-end risk post a catastrophic event. I'd shift the focus from rates first to risk first. I believe that allowing the Florida Catastrophic Fund to sell catastrophic financial securities (Cat Bonds, Insurance Linked Securities) in an open market will move risk away from Floridians. Citizens Insurance needs significant reform. While weight needs to be given to families who have lived in smaller dwellings for lengthy periods of time, new expensive homebuilding should have to pay a more fair rate so others outside of flood zones or away from the coast are not bearing all the risk. Other insurers must be allowed an incentive to write policies
<b>More than two-thirds of Florida's budget is spent on contracts with vendors. What is the role of Florida's CFO to properly audit these contracts — such as SunPass and prisons — to make sure vendors are held accountable?</b>	As CFO, I'm the state's business manager and I know that strong asset management at a state level is critical. My office performs state contract reviews, audits payments over \$35,000, and audits vendor contracts that are more than \$750,000. We're charged with being the watchdogs over the state's finances and ensuring there are checks and balances in place. I am proud of the incredible team we have in the Division of Accounting and Auditing. This capable and talented staff look at elements that make a good contract and review agreements that provide goods and services to the state. My office protects taxpayers by making sure that we are getting the highest impact for Floridians' tax dollars. We also are quick to look at contracts that are executed. For instance, audits for all contracts over \$750,000 are completed within 30 days after being signed and placed into the Florida Accountability Contract Tracking System.	Currently the CFO is somewhat handcuffed because they do not have the ability to review contracts with vendors prior to execution. I intend to work with the legislature to change this, thus allowing for pre-auditing of agreements. It is impossible without massive appropriations and hiring dozens if not hundreds of auditors for the Department of Financial Affairs to audit every agreement in the state as the system is set up currently. The FLAIR system has no auditing capabilities. The new PALM system must include auditing functionality, perhaps even using blockchain technology which creates a technological solution allowing the state to more thoroughly audit all of its agreements. Clearly payment should be withheld until the agreements have provided the services contracted for.
<b>What are pressing issues facing the state that you could address with being one of four votes in Florida's Cabinet as CFO?</b>	The role of Florida's Chief Financial Officer is incredibly important. On the Cabinet, we oversee the Office of Insurance Regulation and the Office of Financial Regulation, working to ensure they are looking out for Florida consumers. My role also includes making sure Citizens Property Insurance is operating at their most efficient and with the highest ethical standards. We are constantly looking for new ways to guarantee insurance rates are low. I believe Floridians deserve to keep more of their hard-earned money. One of the most important roles I have as a member of our Cabinet is to look after the fiscal health of the state, including our pension. We must ensure our pension plan is as strong as possible for both current and future retirees. After a lifetime of service, workers deserve to have peace of mind regarding their retirement. Approximately \$2 out of every \$3 paid to a retiree today comes from investment gains, not from taxpayers. As a result, we are one of the lowest "all-in" cost providers among our peers. I'm proud that last year Florida's pension fund showed a positive gain for the ninth straight year in a row.	Reforming the state Clemency program, allowing for non-violent ex-offenders to receive their rights back through a very seamless process. Purchasing land (through existing agreements such as the contract negotiated in the Crist administration with US Sugar or voting on land leases south of the Lake Okeechobee) that would provide the state much needed land to build a reservoir to hold and treat water. Having a much more serious role than current administration with regards to being a Trustee to the State Board of Administration (Florida Retirement System). The legislature is constantly trying to attack the Retirement system and its beneficiaries with entirely unfounded claims of the weakness of the system, when in fact by all financial rating accounts is one of the strongest retirement systems in America..
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: \$6.8 million (real estate, investments, partnerships) Liabilities: \$398,882 (mortgage, loan) Income: \$504,954 (CFO salary, restaurant, investments)	Assets: \$5.1 million (investments) Liabilities: \$2.2 million (mortgage, line of credit, auto) Income: \$329,470 (investments, consulting)
<b>Personal</b>	Patronis lives in Panama City with his wife, Katie, and sons Theo and Johnny.	Divorced; engaged to Rachel Friedland; four children.
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$2.1 million Expenditures: \$793,548	Contributions: \$413,151 Expenditures: \$387,157
<b>On the web</b>	Website: joinjimmy.com Twitter: @JimmyPatronis	Website: jeremyring.com Twitter: @JeremyRingFL

**ABOUT THE JOB:** The CFO, considered the business manager for the state, oversees a variety of offices, mainly handling the state's finances, retirement fund and both the state's financial regulation and insurance commissioners. The cabinet officers, including the CFO, work with the governor on matters such as the purchase of land, clemency and law enforcement. The CFO makes about \$128,972 annually.

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# Know your candidates

## State Senate | District 20

This race pits incumbent Tom Lee, Republican and former Florida Senate president, against Democratic newcomer Kathy Lewis, a writer and motivational speaker. They're competing for a district that leans Republican and covers the corner where Hillsborough, Pasco and Polk counties meet and includes much of the University of South Florida area.

By Philip Morgan, Times Staff Writer

	Tom Lee	Kathy Lewis
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	Home builder, executive with Sabal Homes of Florida, Inc.	Writer and motivational speaker. Now cares for grown autistic daughter full time..
<b>About the candidate</b>	 Tom Lee, 56, a veteran of 16 years in the Florida Senate, took 85 percent of the vote in the primary race against little-known challenger John Houman. Lee ran for state Chief Financial Officer in 2006 but lost.	 Kathy Lewis, 57, won the Democratic primary with 60 percent of the vote over Joy Gibson, a 40-year-old labor union official. Lewis said she was inspired to run by her struggle with the state bureaucracy over government aid and services for her autistic, adult daughter.
<b>Education</b>	Hillsborough Community College, AA Degree; University of Tampa, B.S. Business	Johns Hopkins University, bachelor's in Liberal Arts
<b>The Florida Senate proposed rules that would address sexual harassment earlier this year, but didn't pass them. What should, if anything, state lawmakers do to address sexual misconduct in the Capitol?</b>	In February, the Legislature understandably shifted its focus to addressing the tragedy in Parkland. As #metoo moved off the front page, sexual harassment legislation moved to the back burner. A lot of this is common sense. Most people in the Capitol were raised with manners and know right from wrong. The Senate did amend its rules to require that Senators complete workplace decorum training, but they should pass the bill that was left pending in 2018.	Earlier this year, the Florida Senate changed its employment policy, but did not change its formal rules. The Florida Senate should incorporate sexual harassment policy into its formal rules, just like the Florida House did. If a senator is found guilty of sexual harassment, the taxpayers should be reimbursed for the cost of the investigation. Additionally, Senators should not be able to use political committees to finance their defense during an investigation ... Sexual harassment is entirely inappropriate in any workplace, and the Florida Senate is no exception.
<b>Please describe your top three legislative priorities.</b>	Reduce the micro-management of public education from Tallahassee (this includes excessive testing), Increase access and efficiency in health care (the current path we are on is not sustainable) and improve workforce development programs and funding in K-12, Community Colleges and Apprenticeship Programs (too many people coming out of the state university system with more student loan debt than employable skills).	1) My top priority is improving our health care system in Florida ... My adult daughter has autism, and ensuring that she has the care she needs and that she is entitled to is a full-time job. .... (2) Increasing public funding for schools is another priority. This is an issue that I am very passionate about because I know first-hand how a quality education can help lift people out of poverty. I grew up incredibly poor, but because I had teachers who cared about me, access to after-school programs, and resources available to me both inside and outside the classroom, I was able to succeed and make a better life for myself and my family. ...3) Raising the minimum wage is also one of my priorities. Right now, over 50 percent of Floridians are working in jobs that pay less than \$15 an hour. If we raise the minimum wage, millions of families will be able to lift themselves out of poverty.
<b>Would you support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion money? Please explain how you would make health care more affordable and accessible to low-income Floridians.</b>	As Senate Appropriations Chairman, I supported a plan in 2015 to draw down federal funding to provide health insurance for low-income Floridians with a job. Ironically, under the Trump administration, CMS has recently approved similar plans for other states. The office of Economic and Demographic Research testified that the Senate plan would have created tens of thousands of health care jobs in Florida and saved the state \$500-million over 10 years. Medicaid has its problems... access is poor, reimbursement rates are low and outcomes need improvement, but the current system of funding low-income care in Florida is inefficient and the program continues to grow at an unsustainable rate, while Floridians watch their health care tax dollars go to support other states.	I would support accepting federal Medicaid expansion money. Accepting Medicaid expansion money would make health care more affordable and accessible for low-income Floridians. Florida is consistently ranked as having one of the worst health care systems in the country, and we're doomed to continue on this path if we don't accept Medicaid expansion funds.
<b>Would you support or oppose closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun buyers? Banning assault weapons? Limiting the size of magazines?</b>	I support evidence-based legislation that keeps guns out of the hands of criminals and the mentally ill. All licensed firearm dealers in Florida are required to conduct background checks regardless of where a transaction takes place. Only private firearm sales are unregulated. I do not support a ban on semi-automatic weapons. I don't know a lot about magazines.	I support closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun buyers, banning assault weapons, and limiting the size of magazines. I was extremely disappointed when the Legislature did not pass more common-sense gun control measures to protect Floridians, and I will be fighting for this issue when I'm elected.
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: \$5,117,415 (home, stocks) Liabilities: \$865,905 Income: \$368,255	Assets: \$97,000 Liabilities: \$42,021 Income: \$465,024 (jointly with husband)
<b>Personal</b>	Married to Hillsborough Circuit Judge Laurel Lee. They live in Thonotosassa and have three children: Ryan, Brandon and Faith Lee	Married to physician Betram Austin Lewis Jr. They have two children, Katherine Josephine Lewis, 24, and Remington Chloe Lewis, 21.
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$382,432 Expenditures: \$162,991	Contributions: \$18,374 Expenditures: \$17,440
<b>On the web</b>	Facebook: @TomLeeFlorida Twitter: @TomLeeFL	Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/KathyLewisfor2018 Twitter: https://twitter.com/KathyLewis2018

**About the job:** The winner of the race will serve a four-year term representing Florida Senate District 20, which covers parts of Hillsborough, Pasco and Polk counties. The job pays \$29,697 annually.

## State Senate | District 16

Republican Ed Hooper and Democrat Amanda Murphy are vying for the District 16 seat, which has been vacant since December, when Republican Jack Latvala resigned amid a public corruption and sexual harassment investigation.

By Tracey McManus, Times Staff Writer

	Ed Hooper	Amanda Murphy
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	Partner at Consus Group Consulting	Vice president of investments at Wealth Management Group of Raymond James
<b>About the candidate</b>	 Hooper, 70, has been a longtime presence in Tampa Bay politics, serving on Clearwater City Council from 1996 to 2000 and in the Florida House of Representatives from 2006 to 2014. He was a firefighter for 28 years before politics and has spent the past 20 years consulting clients on government approvals and permitting, primarily in Pinellas County. After an unsuccessful bid for Pinellas County Commission in 2014, Hooper said he's running for office again to make an impact on critical issues in Tampa Bay, like transportation, flooding and ending the assignment of benefits.	 Murphy, 48, has been backed by Democratic groups who see her as a candidate who can flip this longtime Republican seat. Murphy, a financial adviser, won a 2013 special election to represent Pasco County's state House District 36 and served until 2016 when then-21-year-old Republican Amber Mariano defeated her by 679 votes. Murphy's priorities are to protect consumers against rising insurance and utility rates, strengthen public education and address a growing water crisis. She considers herself a fiscal conservative and agrees on various views from the right, like fiscal constraint.
<b>Education</b>	Statesville (NC) High School, diploma	Florida State University, B.S. political science
<b>Would you support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion money? Explain how you would make health care more affordable and accessible to low-income Floridians</b>	Opposes Medicaid expansion. "The senate had a plan four years ago that had a low income insurance component with managed care. It beat straight Medicaid expansion. I think Medicaid is the worst delivery of health care on the planet. Doctors don't want to deal with it. Dentists don't take it. Part of that's got to be a federal solution . . . Let's start over at the federal level and come up with something better."	"Support. We are not only leaving billions of dollars on the table each year, we are actually costing ourselves unnecessary expenses in not insuring millions of working Floridians. This simple and available means will expand health access for low-income Floridians, improve workplace health and save us millions each year in uncompensated care to our public hospitals."
<b>Would you support or oppose criminal justice reforms such as raising the threshold amounts that qualify as felony thefts and giving judges more sentencing discretion for nonviolent drug trafficking convictions?</b>	"Support. It's either that or we've got to start building more prisons. I'm a big believer in, especially younger people, are more prone to make stupid mistakes that could follow them for the rest of their lives and ruin a potential career based on one dumb thing that happened when they were a teenager. It's easier to rehabilitate than keep putting people in jail."	"I would not be for raising threshold amounts on felony thefts. I have seen too many people not prosecuted who should be because of where the limit is currently set. I do support more discretion for nonviolent drug and drug related offenses except trafficking. It is one thing for someone to be a user (we need to have programs to get them clean) but when someone enters into trafficking, I support strong sentencing guidelines and strict punishment."
<b>Would you support or oppose closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun buyers? Banning assault weapons? Limiting the size of magazines?</b>	Yes. If you're going to buy a weapon, you ought to have to be able to prove you're not wanted, not a felon, not a risk, not mentally ill. I don't think they have anybody at the entrance to gun shows that can confirm that." No on banning assault weapons: "It's not the gun that's the problem it's the person that's the problem." Yes on limiting capacity: "Thirty rounds ought to be sufficient for any clip."	"I support our 2nd Amendment and feel that the law is the law - we have laws to require background checks, waiting periods and the like. We should make sure those laws are uniformly applied regardless of where you purchase a weapon. We should ban military-style assault weapons and limit the size of magazines."
<b>Would you support or oppose changing state law to allow cities to hold voter referendums to raise the sales tax for transit projects instead of continuing to require those referendums to be held countywide?</b>	"Yes if the voters of any political body, city, county, if they want to impose upon themselves additional ways to solve their problems, in the big picture it doesn't do a damn thing. But in the day to day traffic they have to deal with, if that's what their voters want, good for them. I think you have to look at every option, even the ones we don't know about yet."	Yes. As Florida lawmakers pass more unfunded mandates, local governments need more flexibility. We need to reevaluate the gas tax which is a declining source of revenue. We need to fund our roads based on usage and not gas consumption or at least some combination of the two. I am leery of managed toll lanes especially in areas where local commuters cannot access them. I am also fearful FDOT is re-engineering roadways simply to add more managed lanes.
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: two properties, three checking accounts and cash, six investment accounts Liabilities: none Income: \$7,898 monthly from business, pension, retirements	Assets: home, bank accounts, time-share, stocks, mutual funds Liabilities: three mortgages Income: Raymond James & Associates salary \$125,612
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Clearwater Marital status: wife, Lee Ellen Hooper Children: Brian Hooper, Ann Hall	Home: New Port Richey Marital status: declined to disclose Children: declined to disclose
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$603,044 Expenditures: \$364,851	Contributions: \$195,018 Expenditures: \$74,281
<b>On the web</b>	Website: hooper4senate.com Twitter: @EdHooper4FLSen	Website: amandamurphyfl.com Twitter: @AmandaMurphyFL

**ABOUT THE JOB:** State senators serve four-year terms and are paid \$29,697 annually. District 16 covers northern Pinellas and western portions of Pasco counties.

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# Know your candidates

## Commissioner of Agriculture

XyDemocrats don't typically compete for this Florida Cabinet position, but the minority party hopes they can surprise with Nikki Fried, a Broward County attorney who is an ardent support of expanding access to medical marijuana. She faces the conservative Caldwell, who became a champion of Big Sugar interests while pushing legislation in the Florida House that delayed improving water quality in the Everglades for another decade.

By Emily L. Mahoney, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

	Matt Caldwell	Nikki Fried
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	State lawmaker, real estate appraiser	Lawyer
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>A seventh-generation Floridian, Caldwell, 37, has served in the Florida House since 2010, representing the North Fort Myers area. While in the Legislature, he sponsored bills to further support and permanently fund restoration of the Everglades, and worked to steer the state toward acquiring more land for conservation. Caldwell was the first statewide candidate to be endorsed by the National Rifle Association.</p>	 <p>Fried, 40, is a prominent advocate for increasing access to medical marijuana and lobbied extensively for the passage of a 2016 bill that expanded marijuana use for the terminally ill. She has also worked to ensure passage of a bill in 2014 that granted millions for disabled dependent children to have access to lawyers. As an attorney, she defended homeowners facing foreclosure during the Great Recession.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Florida Gulf Coast University, B.A., history; Edison Community College, A.A University of Florida, bachelors, masters, law degree	University of Florida, bachelors, masters, law degree
<b>What are your top three priorities?</b>	1. Ensure concealed weapon permits are overseen by a professional who fully understands and upholds our 2nd Amendment rights. 2. Continue to advocate for the removal of barriers to economic growth, most particularly in nonsensical regulation and burdensome tax policy. The Commissioner should advocate for well-rounded economic opportunities in our rural areas, not just for farming land but (also) for packaging, processing, and manufacturing. 3. Water is our most important resource. Balance the demands of growing cities with the needs of our farmers and our environment.	1. Perform an audit of the entire department. Recent revelations of failures to properly oversee permitting of concealed carry potentially indicate broader mismanagement. Reorient the Department to focus more on consumer advocacy and services. 2. Advocate for access to medical marijuana. Ensure there is oversight of pesticides used in growing medical marijuana. 3. Ensure that the Department considers the environmental and community impacts of its decision-making, rather than acting as a rubber stamp for big corporate actors.
<b>Are you satisfied with how the Department of Agriculture currently handles the state's concealed weapons program? Could it be improved, and if so, how? Should the Dept. of Agriculture oversee the program? Why?</b>	The Dept. of Agriculture should continue to manage and oversee the concealed weapons program. As with all programs in the public or private sector, program management requires ongoing performance measures, performance reviews, and implementation of best practices. . . . It is critical that we screen & process CWL applicants efficiently and thoroughly.	Of course I am not satisfied with the Department's handling of concealed carry. As a single woman who lives alone, I became a gun owner and concealed carry permit-holder. Uncovering the full nature of the failures would be one of my first priorities. It's probably wiser to house concealed carry permits at FDLE, but that seems unlikely. I will lobby for more communication with law enforcement. I'd also add a continuing education requirement to concealed carry renewals.
<b>How do you see the role of the office in overseeing the state's agribusinesses?</b>	I will lead the Department by maintaining the level of responsive services to the industries overseen, seeking solutions in partnership with UF-IFAS and our growers; enforcing our laws against consumer fraud; as well as leading energy policy toward a common-sense future. This includes speaking out and leading solutions in critical areas such as immigration, labor, and trade.	Tourism and agriculture are the two biggest economic drivers in our state. There has to be a clearer balance between the concerns of Big Ag, and how their actions potentially affect our land, water, beaches and coasts. But the Commissioner must be an advocate for the industry as well. That means fighting Trump on this unprovoked trade war, combatting citrus greening and other crop threats and doing more to help struggling small farmers and nurserymen.
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: Two homes, savings Liabilities: Mortgages, car loans Income: \$81,034	Assets: Savings, investments Liabilities: Student loan Income: \$84,000
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Fort Myers Marital status: Married. Children: one child	Home: Fort Lauderdale Marital status: Single
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$1.2 million Expenditures: \$866,182	Contributions: \$272,739 Expenditures: \$184,421
<b>On the web</b>	Website: <a href="http://VoteCaldwell.org">VoteCaldwell.org</a> Twitter: @mattcaldwell_fl	Website: <a href="http://nikkifried.com">nikkifried.com</a> Twitter: @nikkifried

**ABOUT THE JOB:** Commissioner of Agriculture is a statewide position with four-year terms and a current salary of \$128,972. The Commissioner is a member of the governor's cabinet and oversees the state's farming industry practices in addition to food safety, pesticides, state land and water

## State Senate | District 10

This race pits incumbent Republican businessman Wilton Simpson, who never has faced a challenger in the heavily conservative district spanning Pasco, Hernando and Citrus counties, against Democrat Michael Cottrell, a teacher who never has run for office. Simpson, the Senate's majority leader, is in line to become Senate president in 2020. Cottrell filed his candidacy on the last day of qualifying, saying no one should have a free pass into public office.

By Jeffrey S. Solocheck, Times Staff Writer

	Michael Cottrell	Wilton Simpson
<b>Party</b>	Democrat	Republican
<b>Profession</b>	Teacher	Business owner
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>Michael Cottrell, 51, is a teacher who has worked in Hernando County schools as well as Department of Defense schools. He was working in Japan until April, when he returned to Hernando County for cancer treatment. His wife, Dana, is running as a Democrat against U.S. Rep. Daniel Webster.</p>	 <p>Wilton Simpson, 52, was first elected to the Florida Senate in 2012. One of the Senate's wealthiest members, he owns a large egg farm and an environmental cleanup firm, among other ventures. He has served on the Pasco-Hernando State College board of trustees, led the Pasco County Fair Association and chaired the Pasco Economic Development Council.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor's degree in education, University of South Florida	Associate's degree, Pasco-Hernando Community College
<b>What should, if anything, state lawmakers do to address sexual misconduct in the Capitol?</b>	"The government and its employees should be held to the same, if not higher standard, that all other organizations are held to. If, once investigated, a teacher, police officer, business employee, etc. ... were found to have sexually harassed someone in any way, they would be fired immediately; our elected officials deserve NO SPECIAL treatment!!!"	Simpson said he will work with Senate leadership to ensure it has new rules implementing the highest standards against sexual misconduct. "I have a zero policy on that stuff. There is zero room for harassment."
<b>Please describe your top three legislative priorities.</b>	"Affordable Health Care for all citizens, Education, Our Environment, including investing in renewable energies."	Improving the state's foster care and adoption process, focusing on water policy and springs restoration, improving the state's education system with choice and competition.
<b>What gun legislation is needed in Florida?</b>	Cottrell said he supports gun ownership, but called for "responsible" conversation about guns and the Second Amendment. "Every poll I can find shows that roughly 90 percent of Americans support tougher background checks, so as a public servant/representative, with these numbers it should be irrelevant as to what I want; the people want tougher background checks, and I do support that."	Simpson said he supports making it easier to get a concealed-carry permit. "Having more concealed carry in the state of Florida will make us safer." He backed the new program requiring armed guards in schools, and said the state has taken positive steps to remove weapons from people with mental health problems. "We have to do more in this area."
<b>Should Florida's public schools receive more funding from the state?</b>	"Yes, schools should receive more funding, however, we should also look at ways to more effectively utilize the monies that the schools already get."	Simpson stressed that the state's funding for education has increased, with improved academic outcomes as a result. If accounting for the cost of living across the nation, he said, Florida's education funding is "in very good shape." "It is very important the Legislature be sure we are being very frugal with tax dollars," he added. Simpson called for a more stable funding source for education construction projects.
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: Home, savings Liabilities: Car loan, equity line of credit Income: Teacher salary Net worth: \$519,290	Assets: Businesses, savings, property Liabilities: Mortgage, business loans Income: Business income, salaries, investment income Net worth: \$25.3 million
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Spring Hill Marital status: Married Children: One son	Home: Tribby Marital status: Married Children: One son, one daughter
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$2,290 Expenditures: \$2,019	Contributions: \$459,725 Expenditures: \$144,570
<b>On the web</b>	NA	Twitter: @WiltonSimpson

**ABOUT THE JOB:** Each of Florida's 40 senators is responsible for helping to pass legislation for the state, including annual appropriations. Senators are paid \$29,697 annually.

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## Know your candidates

### State House | District 37

The race to succeed state House Speaker Rep. Richard Corcoran, R-Land O' Lakes, who cannot seek re-election because of term limits, features two first-time candidates. District 37 includes portions of west and central Pasco and is bordered approximately by Little Road on the west and Ehren Cutoff on the east.

By C.T. Bowen, Times Staff Writer



	Tammy Garcia	Ardian Zika
<b>Party</b>	Democrat	Republican
<b>Profession</b>	Billing manager for eye-care business	Business consultant
<b>About the candidate</b>	 Tammy Garcia is a Tampa native who moved back to the region from North Carolina to be closer to family after her husband was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. They reside in Land O' Lakes.	 Ardian Zika, 38, immigrated from Kosovo, the former Yugoslavia, 21 years ago. A former banker, he is president of his own business-advisory company. He has received three gubernatorial appointments to sit on Pasco-Hernando State College Board of Trustees, CareerSource Florida Board of Directors and the Florida Council on Homelessness.
<b>Education</b>	Blake High School for the Performing Arts; University of South Florida, bachelor's degree in psychology; Nova Southeastern University, master's degree and additional graduate studies in conflict analysis and resolution.	Louisiana Tech University, bachelor's degree in marketing; Saint Leo University, master's of business administration.
<b>Should public schools receive more state funding?</b>	"Absolutely. With the school safety bill, the legislators created mandates that are costing counties hundreds of thousands of dollars and up, but provided no way for them to pay for it. ... The further reduction of the budget does a disservice to our students. ... If we're not providing our students with better educational opportunities, we're failing to provide them with the skills needed for life."	"Growing our state's economy will generate additional revenue and resources for K-12 and higher education."
<b>Support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion dollars?</b>	"Between 730,000 and 900,000 people in Florida fall in the insurance gap — make too much for Medicaid and not enough to qualify for subsidies. Expanding Medicaid would help those caught in the gap and would decrease the amount of uninsured individuals by half."	"We need Medicaid reform that is consumer-focused and incorporates health-care innovation. We need price transparency in all areas of health care to create a more competitive environment and lower cost."
<b>Support or oppose closing gun show loophole?</b>	"I am a Moms Demand Action Gun Sense candidate because I believe that we are long overdue for having real conversations about common sense reforms. A law-abiding citizen would not be prevented from obtaining a gun because of a background check or a waiting period. These mass shootings have been committed by individuals with legally obtained guns. Our system is failing to protect citizens, and it needs to change. I'm open to any and all discussions as to what we can do to prevent as much gun violence as possible."	"The gun show loophole is a misnomer. What you're referring to is 'private sale.' Any federally licensed dealer at a gun show must run a background check like any other gun store. ... We must work together to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and those with mental illness."
<b>Top three legislative priorities?</b>	"Improve our education system to properly fund education, properly paying teachers and eliminating high-stakes testing environment. Protect the environment by preserving our wetlands, improve water quality and invest in renewable energy. Entice new businesses to bring high-paying jobs to the area by making it an environment that businesses crave."	"Higher education and workforce and vocational training; health-care innovation; banking and insurance."
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: Home, vehicle, bank accounts Liabilities: Mortgage, student loan Income: \$50,000	Assets: Home, bank account, 401(k), IRA Liabilities: Credit card Income: \$197,891
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Land O' Lakes Marital status: Married to Dennis Children: One son	Home: Land O' Lakes Marital status: Married to Tasha Children: Two daughters, three sons
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$13,379 Expenditures: \$6,732	Contributions: \$242,216 Expenditures: \$158,034
<b>On the web</b>	Website: votetammygarcia.com Twitter: @VoteTammyGarcia	Website: voteardianzika.com Twitter: @ArdianZika

**ABOUT THE JOB:** House members serve two-year terms and are paid \$29,697 annually.

### State House | District 36

State Rep. Amber Mariano, R-Hudson, faces her first re-election since her stunning defeat of a popular incumbent two years ago. The district covers coastal west Pasco including the U.S. 19 corridor.

By C.T. Bowen, Times Staff Writer

	Linda Jack	Amber Mariano
<b>Party</b>	Democrat	Republican
<b>Profession</b>	Veterinarian	Nonprofit fundraising coordinator; real estate agent
<b>About the candidate</b>	 Linda Jack, 57, a former professional musician and music teacher, who switched careers in 2006 to become a veterinarian. A Florida native, she moved to Pasco County in 2015.	 Since winning office two years ago, Amber Mariano, who turns 23 on Oct. 18, graduated college and began careers at the nonprofit Community Aging and Retirement Services, CARES, and as a real estate agent.
<b>Education</b>	Manhattanville College (N.Y.) bachelor of arts in music; North Carolina State University, doctorate of veterinary medicine	University of Central Florida, bachelor's degree in political science
<b>Should public schools receive more state funding?</b>	"Absolutely yes. Here in Pasco County, in particular, our K-12 teachers are underpaid, our classrooms are overcrowded and our students don't have the learning environment or the supplies and support they need to succeed."	"I have yet to see those numbers on paper regarding the shortfall they (Democrats and school superintendents) are speaking of. However, when I looked at the numbers when we voted on the budget, students had a \$100 increase in the FEFP (funding formula). We are committed to making record investments into education that continue to pay off as Florida is seeking record results."
<b>Support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion money?</b>	"I strongly support accepting federal Medicaid expansion money, which could potentially bring affordable health care to 700,000 Floridians. We need to do all we can to lower prescription drugs costs and premiums, which I believe should be addressed legislatively at both the federal and state levels."	"I oppose it because there is no guarantee that Congress will continue to fund Florida's share of Medicaid dollars in the future. Considering Florida is on solid financial footing and rated number one in fiscal health, it would be reckless to bind Florida's fiscal future to Congress. ... If we were left on the hook or shortchanged promises, we'd have to either cut programs or raise taxes, which is not what Floridians want."
<b>Support or oppose closing gun show loophole?</b>	"I support universal background checks for all gun purchases, which includes closing the gun show loophole."	"I believe ensuring that guns are not getting in the wrong hands is critical. Ensuring that all levels of government are communicating is crucial to this process. At gun shows, every federally licensed firearms dealer is required to run a background check."
<b>Top three legislative priorities?</b>	"Increasing funding and support for public education K-12. Addressing the growing poverty in our county and all the challenges it contributes to, including homelessness, hunger, sickness (and overworked health-care providers), substance abuse and a cycle of despair. Obtaining funds to alleviate flooding and drainage problems in our coastal district, which are a public health concern and repeatedly damage our homes and businesses."	"Sponsoring a local bill to generate funds for dredging up and down the coast of my district to help raise the property values and quality of life for residents. Continuing to advocate to improve the storm water infrastructure in west Pasco to mitigate flooding ... Continue to work on preventing our students from paying double tuition from excess credit hour surcharges."
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: House, bank account, IRAs Liabilities: Mortgage, student loan, car loan Income: \$86,370	Assets: Retirement account Liabilities: Student loan, car lease Income: \$29,697
<b>Personal</b>	Home: New Port Richey Marital status: Domestic partner Children: None	Home: Hudson Marital status: Single Children: None
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$54,550 Expenditures: \$29,059	Contributions: \$226,346 Expenditures: \$113,617
<b>On the web</b>	Website: ElectLindaJack.com Twitter: @electlindajack	Website: ambermariano.com Twitter: @ambermariano

**ABOUT THE JOB:** House members serve two-year terms and are paid \$29,697 annually.



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# Know your candidates

## County Commission | District 2

The District 2 Pasco County Commission race pits first-term Republican incumbent Mike Moore against Democrat Kelly Smith, who is making her first run for public office. Commissioners must reside within their districts, but are elected by voters countywide. District 2 is based in central Pasco and includes Land O' Lakes and Wesley Chapel.

By C.T. Bowen, Times Staff Writer


	Mike Moore	Kelly Smith
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	Business consultant	Operations manager for engineering and design firm
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>Mike Moore, 47, a first-term commissioner is seeking re-election to the District 2 seat based in central Pasco. He currently chairs the Tourism Development Council and the Homeless Advisory Board and is ex-officio member of the North Tampa Bay Chamber.</p>	 <p>Kelly Smith, who turns 44 on Oct. 22, moved to Pasco nine years ago after previously serving as the Federal Emergency Management Agency coordinator for Collier County and zoning administrator for the city of Marco Island. This is her first run for public office.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Polk Community College, associate's degree; University of Central Florida, bachelor of arts	Southern Connecticut State University, bachelor of science in liberal studies
<b>Top issue facing Pasco County?</b>	"I'm proud of all we have accomplished over the last four years. ... However, we still have much to do. Keeping Pasco County a great place to live, work, worship and raise a family is my top priority over the next four years. My plans to accomplish that include ensuring our county is fiscally responsible so we can remain a low-tax county, improving our infrastructure to reduce traffic congestion and flooding, helping local businesses grow and bringing new companies and jobs to Pasco, protecting our natural resources and making our parks more accessible for all residents and ensuring our law enforcement and first responders have the resources they need to keep our community and schools safe and secure."	"The top issue facing Pasco County is poverty. So many of the challenges facing Pasco County's residents are rooted in poverty—affordable housing, homelessness, income inequality, drug use, mental health and education. Currently, 42 percent of Pasco County residents struggle to afford basic needs and approximately 2,700 people are homeless." Smith said she wants to encourage companies paying more than \$15 per hour to expand or relocate to Pasco. She wants to increase starting wages of county employees; increase availability of affordable and workforce housing and increase homeless services.
<b>Do you support the Ridge Road Extension?</b>	"Pasco County needs additional east/west connectivity. I'm open to considering any options that meet the increasing transportation needs of our county in the way the people of Pasco County support and see fit."	"I do not support the construction of the Ridge Road Extension, and I believe the county should immediately cease all funding for the pursuit of the permit. The county claims the Ridge Road Extension is needed as an additional hurricane evacuation route. This was proven to be incorrect last year during the evacuation period for Hurricane Irma. There were no east-west back-ups during the evacuation process. Constructing the Ridge Road Extension would significantly disturb the Serenova Tract, which was dedicated to Pasco County as mitigation for over 200 acres of wetlands destroyed in construction of the Suncoast Parkway. Pasco County is not in the position to continue to waste millions of dollars pursuing a permit to build a road that we can't afford financially or environmentally."
<b>How will you vote on the four bond referendums on the November ballot?</b>	"Voters deserve the opportunity to determine how their hard-earned tax dollars are spent. I've supported these referendums appearing on the November ballot, so that Pasco voters get the opportunity to make their voices heard and their votes count on these priority items."	"I intend to vote yes on the referendums except the referendum to expand the Land O' Lakes jail. It is unfortunate the current county commissioners chose to take on new debt to fund these necessary improvements rather than re-prioritizing the budget. This is especially disappointing given the results of the Clearview Research polling which indicated a majority of Pasco County property owners were willing to pay higher taxes to maintain and improve our current parks and library systems. Why did the Board of County Commissioners hire the consultant to conduct the study if there weren't willing to make a decision based on the results of the study?"
<b>What is the key, unfinished part of the Harbors master plan to redevelop west Pasco and how do you complete it?</b>	"We are tackling the challenges in west Pasco by passing the commercial blight ordinance, getting rid of run-down buildings, enhancing roadways, supporting our small businesses, bringing in major employers, adding the gateway beautification plan for landscaping on U.S. 19 and supporting the Leisure Lane and Van Doren Avenue redevelopment plans. These are but a few of the initiatives we already have underway to help west Pasco. We are continuing to work closely with the cities in west Pasco and the business community so that even more public and private resources are efficiently utilized to enhance the west Pasco community. This county commission takes redevelopment of west Pasco seriously and we are actively working on many fronts to see that redevelopment continues to occur as rapidly as possible."	"The Harbors plan is a very thorough, long-term redevelopment plan. While improvements from the plan have been implemented, the feedback I have received from residents is that the implementation seems to have stalled. One of the unfinished elements that I believe is a high priority is C12—the development of a rental inspection program. It is critical that we make sure rental housing in Pasco County is safe, appropriate and affordable. Conducting inspections of rental properties will help to ensure that our residents are not living in substandard housing. Further, implementing the inspection program may also improve blighted areas, help renters feel pride in their community and other plan neighborhood revitalization elements."
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: Home, bank accounts, personal business, retirement accounts, vehicles, boat Liabilities: Mortgage, recreational vehicle loan Income: \$169,429	Assets: Home, 401(k), vehicles Liabilities: Mortgage, loans Income: \$60,722
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Wesley Chapel Marital status: Married to Lauren Children: Two daughters, one son	Home: Wesley Chapel Marital status: Married to Patrick Children: Daughter, two sons adopted from foster care
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$230,869 Expenditures: \$69,429	Contributions: \$19,627 Expenditures: \$15,146
<b>On the web</b>	Website: VoteMikeMoore.com Twitter: @mikemoore2014	Website: kellyforpasco.com Twitter: @smith4pasco2

**ABOUT THE JOB:** County commissioners serve four-year terms and are paid \$82,910 annually. They decide land-use and zoning issues, adopt local ordinances and oversee a budget of more than \$1.3 billion. They set the annual property tax rate and other assessments to fund it.


## County Commission | District 4

The District 4 Pasco County Commission race pits first-term Republican incumbent Mike Wells Jr. against Democrat Brandi Geoit who is making her first run for public office. Commissioners must reside within their districts, but are elected by voters countywide. District 4 is based in west Pasco.

By C.T. Bowen, Times Staff Writer

	Brandi Geoit	Mike Wells
<b>Party</b>	Democrat	Republican
<b>Profession</b>	Social worker	Real estate agent
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>Brandi Geoit turns 43 in November. She is a social worker and former executive director of West Coast AIDS Foundation. A native of Michigan, she moved to Pasco County nine years ago.</p>	 <p>Mike Wells Jr., 47, spent most of his life in Pasco County where his father served as a commissioner and property appraiser. A former long-time manager at Enterprise Rent A Car, Wells won his commission seat in 2014.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Central Michigan University, bachelor's degree	Graduated Ridgewood High School, attended Pasco Hernando Community College.
<b>Top issue facing Pasco County?</b>	"Poverty is the top issue facing Pasco. We need to start bringing in different types of employment. Restaurants and retail are great but they do not pay enough for people to pay all of their bills here in Pasco. We also need to start working on different types of affordable housing programs. If we want to improve the issues of crime, substance abuse issues, food insecurity, homelessness, health disparities, you need to work on the root cause and that is poverty. We need to find ways to improve the quality of life for all of the citizens of Pasco County. I want to start looking into different grant programs and finding ways to fund the programs that this county needs."	"It is my view that the top issue facing our county is public safety. Without public safety, none of the other issues count. I'll continue to fight hard to make sure Sheriff Chris Nocco, law enforcement professionals and our first responders have the tools and resources they need to keep our community safe and secure."
<b>Do you support the Ridge Road Extension?</b>	"I do not support the Ridge Road extension. We need to stop pursuing this road to nowhere. We continue to hear that it is about hurricane evacuation when it goes east and west and during a hurricane everyone heads north. We need to stop wasting the taxpayers' money on a pursuit that has gone on too long. We can use that money for other things like infrastructure improvements and fixing water quality issues that the people of Pasco really need."	"One thing is certain: We must improve east-west roadway capacity and this project will provide additional capacity, as well as improved routing away from coastal hazard areas to improve hurricane evacuation. I'll continue to look for solutions that meet our residents needs in a way that they support."
<b>How will you vote on the four bond referendums on the November ballot?</b>	"I will be voting yes on three of the four referendums. We need to build fire stations and maintain the parks and libraries. The parks are millions behind in maintenance ... The libraries are an essential part of all of the communities and are used by a lot of the citizens. They need to be funded and taken care of ... The fire stations are needed because our community is growing ... we need to build more and pay the employees at the fire stations more than what they are making now. The jail expansion issue is really an issue with court backlog and people who cannot afford to bond themselves out. ... If the court system started setting the bonds at a rate that people could afford, there would not be an issue with overcrowding. We also need to start a jail diversion program in Pasco County. They have been beneficial in other counties and would also help with the issue of the overcrowding that we experience here."	"I support these four issues being placed on the ballot for Pasco voters to decide. It is important to me that the voters of Pasco County make the decision on these four referendums. This is their county and they are best able to tell us what their expectations are for the future of our county."
<b>What is the key, unfinished part of the Harbors master plan to redevelop west Pasco and how do you complete it?</b>	"The key unfinished element is that we have not even started the plan. The first issue we should tackle before we start work on the Harbors project is to clean up the issues that we have with fecal coliform bacteria in our waters. We want tourists to come here, but we do not clean up the waterways that we want them to come and visit. If we want to make the Harbors happen, we need to work on cleaning up the water so people can swim at the beaches. We get economic development dollars from the Penny for Pasco and this could tie into that. ... We can start by helping out the citizens that have leaking septic and ... putting people onto the county sewer system. When this starts happening, our beaches will actually remain open more often. We can then start by improving the drainage along the coast and bringing in the parking that we need for people to come and enjoy what the coastline here has to offer."	"We have many accomplishments since I've taken office almost four years ago. We reduced or waived transportation mobility fees for redevelopment ... We have a landscape redevelopment program where the county will match costs... for improving the landscaping at a local business. We have hugely streamlined approval process to speed up land use approvals and building permit issuance time lines. We funded (Pasco Economic Development Council's) west side incubator/training center, which has been very successful. ... We have been working on the (land development code) rewrite. (We are) proactively working with property owners in the Harbors area to update their future land use and zoning to make their properties build ready. And we are also using recommendation by the (Urban Land Institute) report, which is very important."
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: Home, real estate, vehicle, bank account Liabilities: Mortgages, credit cards Income: \$37,546	Assets: Home, boat, pre-paid college plan Liabilities: Mortgage, home equity loan, car loan Income: \$87,664
<b>Personal</b>	Home: New Port Richey Marital status: Divorced Children: One daughter	Home: New Port Richey Marital status: Married to Tiffany Children: One son
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$17,194 Expenditures: \$6,978	Contributions: \$198,911 Expenditures: \$70,849
<b>On the web</b>	Website: brandicampaign.com Twitter: @GeoitforPasco	Website: votemikewells.com Twitter: @mikewellspasco

**ABOUT THE JOB:** County commissioners serve four-year terms and are paid \$82,910 annually. They decide land-use and zoning issues, adopt local ordinances and oversee a budget of more than \$1.3 billion. They set the annual property tax rate and other assessments to fund it.



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# Know your candidates


## U.S. House | District 12

U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Palm Harbor, is running for a seventh term in the seat his father held for 24 years. Democratic challenger Chris Hunter, a former FBI agent and federal prosecutor, was cited as a reason the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee thinks District 12 can flip blue in 2018. Angelika Purkis, a nurse practitioner with no party affiliation.

By Tracey McManus, Times Staff Writer

	Gus Bilirakis	Christopher Hunter	Angelika Purkis
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat	NPA
<b>Profession</b>	United States Representative; St. Petersburg College adjunct professor	Former FBI agent and state and federal prosecutor; current University of Tampa adjunct professor	Nurse practitioner; owner Angie's Art Glass and Signature Building Products
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>Bilirakis, 55, is running for a seventh term in Congress and serves on committees for energy and commerce, veterans affairs, health and other issues. Bilirakis has made bipartisanship a central message. But he has also voted in line with President Donald Trump's positions 97.8 percent of the time, according to an analysis by FiveThirtyEight. Bilirakis said he prioritizes protecting Medicare and Social Security, ensuring benefits for veterans, and protecting schools with school resource officers. Bilirakis was scrutinized this term for being one of six House co-sponsors of a 2016 law that made it harder for the Drug Enforcement Administration to halt suspicious quantities of drugs amid the opioid crisis</p>	 <p>Hunter, 45, left his career as a prosecutor with the U.S. Department of Justice in Tampa in December to run for Congress. He said he saw American values under attack by the Trump administration and Congress failing to uphold its Constitutional duty as a check and balance. His priorities are to restore good governance, promote an innovation economy, and strengthen national security. Hunter applied to the FBI two weeks after 9/11 while working as a state prosecutor in Boston. He later worked as assistant U.S. attorney in Miami in 2007 prosecuting economic crimes before joining the DOJ in Tampa in 2013, prosecuting health care fraud</p>	 <p>In her first bid for public office, Purkis, 58, is the no party affiliation candidate running a campaign based on anti-corruption, addressing disparities in communities and largely word of mouth campaigning. A career nurse practitioner, Purkis has also made health care reform a center of her platform. Purkis said she has been a Democrat and a Republican at different points in her life but believes neither party is serving the public. She said she has self-financed her campaign because she fears retaliation for those who support her speaking out against corruption. Owner of an art glass and window repair business, Purkis said economic justice and helping small businesses is a priority.</p>
<b>Education</b>	University of Florida, B.A., political science Stetson College of Law, J.D.	Boston College, B.A., political science Boston College Law School, J.D.	St. Petersburg College, B.S., nursing; University of Tampa, MSN
<b>Do you support the Mueller investigation? Do you support an investigation into Obama/Clinton officials for their conduct during the 2016 election?</b>	Yes, I have supported each of the investigations into whether or not Russia interfered with our elections process, and if there was any wrongdoing on behalf of any campaign. I do think the independent process of both House and Senate Oversight Committees and the Special Counsel is important in order to provide appropriate accountability.	I support Special Counsel Mueller's investigation. An ODNI report issued January 2017 documented Russia's attack on the United States during the 2016 election for the purposes of destabilizing our democracy, supporting Trump's election, and undermining American global leadership. Propaganda and disinformation techniques of the Russian intelligence services have been adopted by partisan politicians in the United States intent on retaining power and deflecting attention from the extent to which our democracy has been compromised.	Any activity that is questionable should be investigated to the fullest extent
<b>Would you support or oppose changes to immigration policy that would include a path to permanent legal status or citizenship for undocumented immigrants? Please explain stance on strengthening the border and Dreamers</b>	There's no doubt our immigration system needs reform. We must enforce current immigration laws, strengthen our borders, and ensure all visas are enforced properly. I recently voted for two different immigration bills that greatly improved our immigration policy, strengthened border security and provided legal status for those who were brought here illegally as children through no fault of their own. I was disappointed my colleagues opposed these because they did not contain everything they wanted.	I support comprehensive immigration reform including a pathway to permanent legal status and protection of Dreamers. The so-called "border wall" is a gimmick—an ill-advised, expensive waste of taxpayer money that will not make us more secure. The long-term solution to securing our borders lies in promoting safe, democratic societies and market-based economies in developing nations to eliminate desperate conditions that drive mass migration while global population levels rise.	We need many more work visas. Frequently workers come here to earn, they pay taxes and lift our economy, then they would like to return home for a season. Large corporations and well to do individuals have used them for years...Those who brought them in on their jets and in their companies to work cheap... should be rooted out and prosecuted...A path to citizenship should be made for those who work hard to achieve it.
<b>Would you support or oppose repealing the Affordable Care Act? Please explain how you would strengthen it or replace it?</b>	I support honoring the commitment I made to my constituents to repeal the Affordable Care Act and replace it with policies that increase access to affordable, quality health care and patient protections. There were elements of the ACA which I continue to support, including protections for those with pre-existing conditions, coverage for preventative care, mental health and substance abuse treatment and allowing children to stay on their parents' insurance until age 26.	We all need affordable health care we can count on. I support the Affordable Care Act and continuously improving our health care system so that everyone has access to quality care at affordable prices. The "Solutions Over Politics" proposal that has bipartisan support from the Problem Solvers Caucus is a great place to start. For example, creating a permanent reinsurance program to mitigate risk from excessively high medical claims will help stabilize and reduce premiums.	Medicare should be available for all to purchase immediately while we look for other answers. I work with Medicare daily and this year it is changing day by day. Less is covered. More is traded away for secondary programs...Insurance should not have a handbook of different ways to get out of paying. Everyone who needs health care should have it. Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary... We need to license Nurse Practitioners Federally so that they can work independently across the nation.
<b>Do you support or oppose closing the gun-show loophole on background checks, banning assault weapons or restricting the capacity of magazines?</b>	I support thorough background checks to keep weapons away from criminals and the mentally ill. I don't believe we should restrict the rights of law-abiding citizens to own firearms. We must address the root cause of the violence, including mental health issues. I was proud to co-sponsor the STOP School Violence Act, help secure \$2 billion for school safety, and help improve crime reporting systems to ensure criminals don't obtain guns. Also, I sponsored legislation to help fund School Resource Officers.	A safer society is within reach if we promote common sense policies, free our government from the grip of special interests, and reject a culture of violence. I support universal background checks and closing the gun-show loophole. I support banning military-style assault weapons, bump-stocks, and high capacity magazines. As a federal prosecutor and FBI agent, I dealt with the consequences of violence, and I believe in having more guidance counselors, not guns, in our schools.	We have rules that impede our right to free travel if we use a vehicle. Different vehicles have different rules. You can ride a bike without a registration. Driving an 18 wheeler is different and requires a different way of treatment. I do not believe everyone has the right to an assault weapon or other means to do harm without some sane sort of rules. A musket might have bicycle type rules.
<b>Assets/liabilities/ income</b>	Assets: property, two prepaid college plans, bank accounts, stocks Liabilities: mortgage, student loans Income: teaching *as of 2017, most recent disclosure available	Assets: two bank accounts, four prepaid college plans Liabilities: a mortgage, loan, credit card Income: Teaching and project work	Assets: art glass business, equipment, bank account, real estate Liabilities: home and business loans, credit card Income: Pinnacle Home Care
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Palm Harbor Marital status: married to Eva Bilirakis Children: Michael, Teddy, Manuel, Nicholas	Home: Trinity Marital status: married to Celeste Hunter Children: Luke, Claire, Grace, Brooke	Home: New Port Richey Marital status: married to Ross Purkis Children: Ross III, Monika, Benno
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$1.4 million Expenditures: \$894,332	Contributions: \$465,626 Expenditures: \$211,441	Contributions: \$7,164 Expenditures: \$9,194
<b>On the web</b>	Website: bilirakisforcongress.com Twitter: @RepGusBilirakis	Website: chrishunterforcongress.com Twitter: @ChrisHunterFL	Website: angelikapurkisforcongress.com Twitter: @itsnotokayfl

**ABOUT THE JOB:** District 12 covers northern Pinellas, all of Pasco and a sliver of northwest Hillsborough counties. U.S. Representatives are elected to two-year terms and are paid \$174,000 annually.



HCA and the PHM Group, Inc. are requesting proposals from qualified **Subcontractors** and **Suppliers** for the Blake Medical Center expansion project. Bradenton, Florida and surrounding area businesses are invited to attend a preconstruction Meet & Greet to learn more about opportunities associated with this upcoming project.

The project consists of a 3,000 sf addition to the Emergency Department, over 6,000 sf of major renovation, and approximately 9,000 sf of minor renovations. The project will be completed in 5 phases with a duration of approximately 20 months.

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- Resilient/Hard Tile Flooring • Painting & Wall Covering • Miscellaneous Specialties • Interior Signage
- Fire Sprinklers • Plumbing/HVAC • Test & Balance • Electrical • Structured Cabling

**What:** Preconstruction Meet & Greet

**When:** Wednesday, October 17, 2018 @ 10:00 am

**Where:** Blake Medical Center  
MAB 1000 (Medical Arts Building)  
2020 59th Street West  
Bradenton, FL 34209

The PHM Group, Inc. and HCA/Blake Medical Center are strongly committed to the development and implementation of initiatives that promote the inclusion of all local construction-related businesses, with an emphasis on minority- and women-owned enterprise firms. Please join us at the Preconstruction Meet & Greet to explore more opportunities.

For information regarding plans, bid packages or other documents for this project, please contact:  
**Robert Krawczyk, Senior Project Manager at (941) 750-9333**  
or via email at [rkrawczyk@phmgroupinc.com](mailto:rkrawczyk@phmgroupinc.com)

To RSVP for the upcoming Meet & Greet, please contact:  
**Rhea Kinnard, Diversity Business Consultant at (615) 941-8396**  
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# Know your candidates

## State Senate | District 24

Incumbent Republican Jeff Brandes and Democrat Lindsay Cross are running for Florida's Senate District 24 seat. Brandes, an Iraq War veteran, was first elected to the Legislature 2010 as a House representative for St. Petersburg. Cross is a political newcomer who most recently served as the executive director of an environmental advocacy group.

By Kirby Wilson, Times Staff Writer



	Jeff Brandes	Lindsay Cross
<b>Party</b>	Republican	Democrat
<b>Profession</b>	Real estate investor	Political activist
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>Brandes, 42, was first elected to the Florida Senate in 2012. He serves on more than half a dozen committees in the Senate, most notably the appropriations committee. During his time in the Legislature, he has made transportation and criminal justice issues top priorities.</p>	 <p>Cross, 40, is running for her first political office. Before she resigned the post to run for office, Cross served as the executive director of the Florida Wildlife Corridor, an environmental advocacy group.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Carson Newman College, B.S., Business Administration.	Colorado State University, B.S., Environmental Health. University of South Florida, M.S., Environmental Science and Policy
<b>Should Florida's public schools receive more funding from the state?</b>	With Florida's 3.7 percent unemployment rate, the market for high quality teachers is becoming increasingly competitive. Florida will need to prioritize raises to incentivize our dedicated and passionate teachers to remain in our state. I hope to continue the momentum from previous sessions in which we have raised spending on education to historic levels.	Absolutely. A better public education system will improve the future of our children and the families living in the state of Florida. To prepare all students for their workforce or college, we must increase education funding, pay teachers competitive and livable wages and ensure that textbooks and technology are up to date.
<b>What, if anything, should state lawmakers do to address sexual harassment in the Capitol?</b>	The Florida Legislature must have a zero-tolerance policy for sexual misconduct that protects victims that come forward. We need to hold legislatures, lobbyists and staff accountable to the same standard and take swift action when inappropriate conduct takes place.	I believe there should be a zero tolerance policy when it comes to sexual harassment. Sexual misconduct training should be mandatory for all elected officials and staff. We need to send a clear message that sexual misconduct, in any form, will not be tolerated.
<b>Would you support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion money?</b>	The federal government is already \$21 trillion in debt. I oppose the expansion of Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, as I do not believe we can trust the politicians in Washington, D.C. to keep up their end of the bargain and fund it long term. I support block grants to the state for the medically needy. I also believe in increasing competition through the use of surgery centers and creating/enhancing mid-levels for nursing.	Rising health care costs are a serious concern for the families of District 24, and throughout the state. Expansion of the Medicaid program is the first step. Applying for and selecting the most suitable insurance through the Affordable Care Act is unnecessarily complex and can deter applications. I would encourage assistance programs through public health clinics that guide people through the process and minimize confusion.
<b>Would you support or oppose closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun buyers?</b>	There is little evidence to suggest that banning private sales actually prevents or lowers crime. Furthermore, the majority of gun crimes are committed using handguns, not rifles. We should not infringe on the rights of law-abiding gun owners.	I would support the closing of the gun show loophole. Those purchasing guns should always have a background check. The safety of children and families in District 24 and around the state is of the utmost importance and having the gun show loophole does not keep our communities safe. This is the same reason I would support a ban on assault weapons and limiting the size of magazines for firearms.
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: \$15,679,131 Liabilities: \$1,002,370 Income: \$1,460,450	Assets: \$502,953 Liabilities: \$125,497.54 Income: \$83,016
<b>Personal</b>	Home: St. Petersburg Marital status: Married Children: 4	Home: St. Petersburg Marital status: Divorced Children: None
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$866,205 Expenditures: \$407,933.03	Contributions: \$82,945 Expenditures: \$11,891.29
<b>On the web</b>	Website: electjeffbrandes.com Twitter: @JeffreyBrandes	Website: lindsaycrossforsenate.com Twitter: @LindsayCrossFL

**ABOUT THE JOB:** Cross and Brandes are running for one of Florida's 40 state Senate seats. Senators are paid \$29,697 per year to serve in the state's part-time Legislature. Senators serve four-year terms, but they can serve no more than two consecutive terms in a row. Senate District 24 contains parts of Pinellas County, including much of St. Petersburg, Largo, Pinellas Park and Seminole.

## State House | District 38

After gaining re-election two years ago with no opposition, state Rep. Danny Burgess, R-Zephyrhills, is being challenged in his bid for a third term by David TK Hayes, who is running with no party affiliation. District 38 encompasses all of Pasco County east of Ehren Cutoff in Land O' Lakes and includes Wesley Chapel and the cities of Zephyrhills, Dade City, San Antonio and St. Leo.

By C.T. Bowen, Times Staff Writer

	Danny Burgess	David Hayes
<b>Party</b>	Republican	NPA
<b>Profession</b>	Manager, Pasco Sheriff's Office	Self-employed real estate investor
<b>About the candidate</b>	 <p>Burgess, 32, first won elected office at age 18 when voters put him on the Zephyrhills City Council. He later served as the city's mayor and was elected to the Legislature in 2014. A lawyer, he recently joined the Pasco County Sheriff's Office as future operations manager.</p>	 <p>Hayes, 57, goes by the nickname "TK." A native of the Canadian province of Newfoundland, he moved to Zephyrhills in 1995 to manage the parachute-jumping business, Skydive City. He later became part owner before selling his interest this year. He became a U.S. citizen in 2008.</p>
<b>Education</b>	Bachelor's degree in political science from University of South Florida, juris doctorate from Barry University	Associate's degree from the then-Pasco-Hernando Community College
<b>Should Florida's public schools receive more state funding?</b>	"The pre-K-12 education state budget totals \$15.7 billion, which is a \$621.5 million (or 4 percent) increase over the base budget and a \$438.9 million (or 2.9 percent) increase over the prior year.... I believe that this stated increase does not warrant a special session."	"Absolutely. Unfunded mandates like school SRO (school resource officer) bills are classic legislative negligence on the part of the House and Senate. Education needs to be better funded, including property tax increases if needed. We are short on teachers, short on resources and short on facilities/infrastructure."
<b>Support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion money?</b>	"...I voted against and continue to oppose Medicaid expansions for two critical reasons. First, even without the proposed expansion, Medicaid is continuing to grow and consume a larger portion of the state budget than it already does. ... Any changes to the Medicaid system have to be approved by Washington in a tedious, time-consuming process. Secondly, Medicaid does not provide the quality insurance that is most fervent advocates claim. ... I would like to see the federal government block grant the dollars to the states, like they did with Rhode Island, so that we as the Legislature can craft health care policies that are tailored to meet the unique needs of Florida."	"Yes, but I do not think that the ACA is the final solution for health care. I am an advocate for Medicare for all. Forcing people to buy insurance that they already cannot afford is not a solution. Health care needs to be a right in the country, and the country will be far better off if we accept the working models around the world."
<b>Support or oppose closing gun show loophole?</b>	"I do not believe that more gun laws will solve the systemic problems and senseless tragic acts of violence we have witnessed far too often in our society."	"Close gun show loopholes, yes. Background checks on all gun sales. Escrow all gun sales through (law enforcement) to achieve the background check, and waiting period might be an option."
<b>What are your top three legislative priorities?</b>	Fixing Florida's Workers' Compensation systems, child welfare issues and addressing the transportation needs of Pasco County.	"Education reform/funding. Criminal justice reform. Legalization and taxation of marijuana ... also, protecting women's rights through and through."
<b>Assets/liabilities/income</b>	Assets: Home, bank account, IRA Liabilities: Mortgage, student loans, auto loan, line of credit Income: \$137,292	Assets: Home, bank account, mutual funds Liabilities: Auto loans Income: \$106,103
<b>Personal</b>	Home: Zephyrhills Marital status: Married to Courtney Children: Daughter, son, expecting third child on Oct. 26.	Home: Zephyrhills Marital status: Divorced Children: One adult son
<b>Campaign fundraising</b>	Contributions: \$209,471 Expenditures: \$132,963	Contributions: \$12,190 Expenditures: \$9,567
<b>On the web</b>	Website: dannyburgessfl.com Twitter: @DannyBurgessFL	Website: tkforflorida.com Twitter: @davidtkhayes

**ABOUT THE JOB:** House members serve two-year terms and are paid \$29,697 annually.



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