

ST. PETE TIMES

Published Fridays for the neighborhoods of St. Petersburg

tampabay.com

Published weekly by the Tampa Bay Times

Friday, October 12, 2018 | NSP

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Future of seafood festival in doubt

Madeira Beach and John's Pass Seafood Festival organizers have differing views.

BY SHEILA MULLANE ESTRADA
 Times Correspondent

MADEIRA BEACH — Over the past week it became clear the future of the award-winning John's Pass Seafood Festival is in doubt.

Upset residents and business owners alike flooded City Hall with phone calls and emails asking why the award-winning annual event might end after a 37-year run.

"We got a ton of calls," said City Manager Jonathan Evans. "People were very upset."

After nearly a week of growing controversy it seems the festival may have a future, but only if the city and the community "steps up" to support the biggest tourism draw in the entire county, according to officials of the current host, the John's Pass Village Association.

The tiff between the city and the association started Oct. 4 when the association sent out a news release announcing that this year's festival, to be held Oct. 25-28, would be the last.

"The overall cost of hosting the event has multiplied over five times the cost from just five years ago," said Sonny Flynn, the association's president and festival chair.

The festival "cannot continue without the support of the city" she said, adding that for the first time, the City Commission wanted the association to pay an estimated \$42,000 in fees in order to get a permit for the event.

The formal announcement that the festival would be ending followed an association meeting in August when the group decided that this would be the last year it sponsored the event. The group never told the city.

"I didn't want to get into a fight with the city," Flynn said this week, "but it seems like they don't care, they don't want tourism."

Last year, the Seafood Festival attracted 256,000 people, and generates more than \$2 million in hotel revenue along, according to organizers.

Visit Florida has awarded the festival its prestigious Flagler Award for its outstanding marketing for Florida tourism.

Attendance at the event is free to the public who enjoy sampling locally caught seafood, as well as craft booths and shopping in John's Pass Village.

The association says it donates much of its revenue to local charities — an amount that totaled \$34,000 last.

The current City Commission is on record for wanting to recoup "hard costs" incurred by the city for all special events at city facilities.

"The current administration and commission delayed approval of the event to the point of this year nearly not occurring. We can't risk that loss in the

» See **FESTIVAL, 8**

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 *St. Pete Times* includes information about all the races and issues on this year's ballot. **Pages 9-15**

If you want to read more, visit the *Tampa Bay Times'* online searchable database at <http://bit.ly/TBTvote18>.

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: pinellasmailvote; 727-464-VOTE(8683)

Early Voting

Pinellas: Monday, Oct. 22 to Sunday, Nov. 4, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily.

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 dis-

parate 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 **REVISIONS, 4**

Epilogue

Stephen Goldman

He was dedicated to Holocaust Museum



Courtesy of the Goldman family

Stephen Goldman

BY WAVENEY ANN MOORE
 Times Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — Friends and colleagues remember Stephen Goldman as dedicated to the Florida Holocaust Museum and its lessons of tolerance.

He was the museum's first director and helped it grow and move from cramped quarters in Madeira Beach, where one of its most powerful artifacts — a 15-ton railroad boxcar from Gdania, Poland — had to be kept outside, to a three-story, renovated former bank building in downtown St. Petersburg.

In 2004, he received the Loebenberg Humanitarian Award for "his strong moral convictions." The Award is named for Walter and the late Edie Loebenberg, founders of the museum.

Goldman would go on to become executive director of the Sherwin Miller Museum of Jewish Art in Tulsa, Okla., before taking a similar position at the Holocaust Memorial Center on the Zekelman Family Campus in Farmington Hills, Mich.

But he kept his connections with the Florida Holocaust Museum. Erin Blankenship, curator of exhibitions and collections at the museum, said

» See **GOLDMAN, 2**

Indian Rocks Beach

Study calls for more crosswalks

Gulf Boulevard could get eight crosswalks to improve safety.

BY DIVYA KUMAR
 Times Staff Writer

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH — The city could see eight new crosswalks installed in a county-led effort to improve safety.

The results of the county's Gulf Boulevard Bicycle Pedestrian Safety Study were recently presented at a Forward Pinellas meeting. Pinellas County traffic engineer Joan Rice said the recommendations were made after the county decided to recheck the placement of the crosswalks to make it more consistent with the part of the city that falls under the Florida Department of Transportation's responsibility.

Based on the study conducted by ICON Consultant Group that took into account bicycle and pedestrian accidents, the report

» See **SAFETY, 2**

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SPORTS

QB gamble pays off for Boca Ciega coach

BY RODNEY PAGE
Times Staff Writer

GULFPORT — Boca Ciega High football coach Max Smith had a bit of a problem. His three-year starting quarterback, Osby Green, graduated. Spring practices didn't do much to determine a replacement.

As the school year wound down, Smith decided he was going with sophomore Taffrey Peterman. To say Peterman was raw would be an understatement. He was the third-string quarterback on the junior varsity as a freshman. He hadn't played football since elementary school, and back then he wasn't even a quarterback.

But at 6-foot-1,173 pounds, Smith saw something.

"He was like a lump of clay," Smith said. "We had to mold him into a quarterback."

Peterman was realistic about his quarterbacking abilities as a freshman.

"To be honest I wasn't that great so I can see why I wasn't getting playing time," he said.

But Peterman was all in. So was Smith. The two would spend three to four days a week in the scorching summer sun working on drills.

They would meet at Boca Ciega's field and go through throwing motions, footwork and agility for up to three hours per day.

Peterman was determined to become a quarterback, and Smith was determined to make him one.

Smith also had another motivation. His top receiver, Deven Foster, was entering his senior



Photos by DIRK SHADD | Times

Taffrey Peterman worked hard all summer to become the starting QB that the

season. Foster is a Division I-A talent who has interest from North Dakota State, Purdue, Army, Navy and Air Force.

Foster was seriously thinking about transferring if the Pirates didn't have a quarterback who could get him the ball. Smith kept telling Foster that things would work out.

"I talked to Coach Smith and he just kept telling me to keep my head up, everything will be fine," Foster said. "I'm trying to get somewhere as a receiver. So I had to check it out myself, see if Taff was dedicated enough. Coach

Smith worked with him every day. I trusted Coach Smith to get him right."

Foster stayed. Then came the preseason game against Pinellas Park.

The Pirates lost 67-6, and that was in just three quarters with the varsity.

Nothing went right, and Peterman wasn't exactly comfortable.

"I was scared, I'm not going to lie," he said. "I was playing timid."

A 1-point loss to Lakewood opened the season. Then came a second-half collapse and a 50-33 loss to Countryside. The Pirates

were 0-2 and would perhaps repeat last season's 3-7 record.

Then the switch flipped.

Boca Ciega beat rival St. Petersburg and followed that up with lopsided wins over Osceola and Seminole. In perhaps the biggest upset in Pinellas County this season, the Pirates routed Class 6A, District 9 opponent Largo 40-14 two weeks ago. Peterman threw four touchdown passes and ran for another.

After last Friday night's win over Gibbs, the Pirates are 5-2 and have won five straight. Peterman has thrown for 1,447 yards and 14

touchdowns.

"I knew we had the talent to beat teams," Peterman said. "It was more of a mindset thing. The skill was there so I never got discouraged. We just needed a push."

Foster has been Peterman's main target. He has caught 31 passes for 612 yards and four touchdowns.

And the ground game has also helped out. Senior Alfonso Franklin has 878 yards and eight touchdowns to lead all rushers. Franklin was ineligible in his sophomore and junior year because of grades.

"I felt blessed to be back on that green grass," Franklin said. "When I got back on that field for my first game it felt great."

With Northeast up next, the Pirates have a real chance of being 6-2 prior to a key district game against Clearwater next week. A win against the Tornados would all but lock down a district championship.

With each week, the Pirates have become more and more fearless.

"I don't get scared anymore," Peterman said. "Each game I get more comfortable."

» REVISIONS
continued from 1

AMENDMENT 2: Limitations on Property Tax Assessments, another property tax proposal referred by the Legislature, would cement an existing cap on non-homestead property assessments. Such property tax assessment increases have been limited to 10 percent of the previous year's assessed value since 2008, when another constitutional amendment that capped the increases passed.

AMENDMENT 3: Voter Control of Gambling in Florida, a citizen-initiated amendment, would give voters the exclusive right to decide to authorize expansions of casino gambling in Florida. That authority currently rests with both the Legislature and voters, through constitutional amendment.

Card games, casino games and slot machines are limited to tribal facilities in most of Florida, though some slot machines are allowed at certain pari-mutuel facilities in Broward and Miami-Dade counties.

AMENDMENT 4: Voting Restoration Amendment, another petition-drive amendment, would restore voting rights to former felons if they have served their time, with the exception of those who have committed crimes like murder or sex offenses. For the past seven years, the state has required that felons wait at least five years after their sentences are complete to apply to regain voting rights. The current process can take a decade or more under the Scott administration's requirement that a state clemency board consider each request during its four meetings a year. If passed, about 1.5 million people in Florida could be affected.

AMENDMENT 5: Super-majority Vote Required to Impose, Authorize, or Raise State Taxes or Fees, another proposal from lawmakers this year, would require a two-thirds super-majority vote in the Legislature to impose, approve or raise state taxes and fees. The higher threshold means it would take only a third of members in either the state House or Senate to block any future tax increases or

repeal existing exemptions. The idea, floated by Gov. Rick Scott last year, would also stop any provisions to raise taxes or fees from being tacked onto other state bills, and does not apply to any fees or taxes that would be levied by local governments or agencies, such as school districts.

AMENDMENT 6: Rights of Crime Victims; Judges, links three proposals that would create a bill of rights for crime victims and set new requirements for judges. The bill of rights, modeled after Marsy's Law in California, has the support of major Republican and Democratic lawmakers but has drawn criticism that the way victims' rights are drawn might flood the justice system with additional responsibilities.

The latter two proposals increase the mandatory retirement age for judges to 75 from 70, effective July 1, 2019, and would bar judges from deferring to administrative agencies' interpretations of a rule or statute when ruling in cases involving those laws.

AMENDMENT 7: First Responder and Military Mem-

ber Survivor Benefits; Public Colleges and Universities, would pull together three proposals, providing college tuition for the survivors of first responders and military members killed on duty, requiring university trustees to agree by a two-thirds super-majority to raise college fees (not including tuition) and establishing the state college system in the Florida Constitution. Universities are in the state Constitution, but state colleges (also known as community colleges) are not. (A Leon County circuit court judge ruled in early September that this amendment and 9 and 11 be struck from the ballot because of its bundled status — that decision is currently being appealed by the state.)

AMENDMENT 9: Prohibits Offshore Oil and Gas Drilling; Prohibits Vaping in Enclosed Indoor Workplaces, would tether a ban on oil and gas drilling in state-owned waters with a proposal to add vaping to the ban on smoking indoors.

AMENDMENT 10: State and Local Government Structure and Operation, would link four proposals: one to have the state's

legislative session start in January rather than March in even-numbered years (the Legislature currently changes its dates by statute), two that would create a counter-terrorism office and make the state veterans affairs department constitutionally required, and a proposal that would require five county-level offices to be elected.

All of the county positions — including tax collectors, property appraisers, supervisors of elections and clerks of circuit court — are already elected in many counties. (A case seeking to remove this amendment — including affected counties like Miami-Dade, Broward and Volusia — was taken up by the state Supreme Court, which ruled Sept. 7 that the amendment remain on the ballot.)

AMENDMENT 11: Property Rights; Removal of Obsolete Provision; Criminal Statutes, would revise the Constitution to remove some language, including a provision that stops "aliens ineligible for citizenship" from owning property and wording approving a high-speed rail system. It would also remove the

state's Savings Clause, which prohibits retroactively applying the amendment of a criminal statute to sentencing for a crime committed before the change, and clarify that repealing a criminal statute would not necessarily affect the prosecution of that crime committed previously.

AMENDMENT 12: Lobbying and Abuse of Office by Public Officers, a stand-alone proposal, would bar public officials from lobbying both during their terms and for six years following, and restrict current public officers from using their office for personal gain.

AMENDMENT 13: Ends Dog Racing, is also a single proposal. It would end commercial dog racing involving wagering by 2020. There are about a dozen tracks in Florida, and the practice has drawn criticism from animal rights advocates who assert that the practice is inhumane. The Florida Greyhound Association has sued seeking to remove the amendment from the ballot. For more information, visit the state Division of Elections website at <https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/>

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Know Your Candidates 2018

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
Party	Democrat	Republican
Profession	U.S. Senator	Florida Governor
About the candidate	 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.
Education	J.D., University of Virginia; Yale University	J.D., Southern Methodist University; University of Missouri, Kansas City
Do you support any measures that address gun violence?	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.
Explain your position on the tariffs President Trump has imposed on Canada, Europe and Mexico.	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.
Should oil drilling off the Florida coast be banned or allowed?	(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.
Do you support Trump's approach to immigration? Do you support a wall along Mexico's border?	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.
Assets/liabilities/income	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
Personal	Home: Orlando Marital status: Married to Grace Nelson Children: Two adult children	Home: Naples Marital status: Married to Ann Scott Children: Two adult children
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$18.7 million Expenditures: \$6.3 million	Contributions: \$31 million Expenditures: \$28 million
On the web	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 a year.

Governor

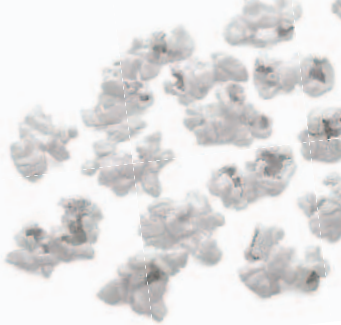
Andrew Gillum and Ron DeSantis are running to be Florida's chief executive. If Gillum wins, he would be the first Democrat to be elected to the governor's mansion since Lawton Chiles in 1994. If DeSantis wins, he would be the fourth straight Republican to occupy the post, which is currently held by Rick 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
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	Former U.S. representative	Mayor of Tallahassee
About the candidate	 Desantis, 40, was a U.S. congressman representing north-east 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.
Education	B.A. from Yale University, J.D. from Harvard Law School	Florida A&M University, B.A., Political Science
What is your position on Medicaid expansion in Florida?	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.
How would you solve the toxic green algae crisis surrounding Lake Okeechobee?	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.
How would you approach funding of public schools?	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.
What's a specific example of an economic goal you would have for your administration?	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 ridesharing and home-sharing to renewable energy production — that will remake Florida into an innovation economy that works for all.
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$819,545 Liabilities: \$527,350 Income: \$201,500	Assets: \$878,230 Liabilities: \$535,530 Income: \$176,926
Personal	Home: Palm Coast Marital status: Married Children: 2	Home: Tallahassee Marital status: Married Children: 3
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$30,446,348 Expenditures: : \$25,128,988	Contributions: \$23,514,949.29 Expenditures: \$15,021,150.43
On the web	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 2018

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
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	Lawyer, former judge and federal prosecutor	Lawyer
About the candidate	 <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 a lawsuit challenging the Affordable Care Act.</p>
Education	Plant City High School; bachelor's and master's degrees in accounting, and law degree, University of Florida; master's in international law, Stetson University	Leon High School; BA, Princeton University, 2000, JD, University of Florida 2003
Do you support Florida's lawsuit against the manufacturers and distributors of opioids that was filed earlier this year by current Attorney General Pam Bondi? Please explain.	"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."
What are your thoughts on the gun legislation that was passed this year (SB 7026) by Florida lawmakers?	"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."
Please explain what your top priority would be as attorney general and how you would address it.	"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."
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.	"My focus as Attorney General will be to enforce the rule of law. Just as I have done throughout my career as a prosecutor and judge, I will follow the facts and make reasoned decisions regardless of parties involved or prior support for my campaign."	"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."
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$3,488,267 Liabilities: \$469,243 Income: \$183,969	Assets: \$180,702 Liabilities: \$170,000 Income: \$159,697
Personal	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.
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$2,913,400 Expenditures: \$2,837,022	Contributions: \$1,072,906 Expenditures: \$580,539
On the web	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 so, he'll have to beat a well-financed Democrat in Jeremy Ring, a fiscal conservative who served eight years in the Florida Senate. 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
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	Chief Financial Officer	Investor
About the candidate	 <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. He 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 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>
Education	Associate's degree in restaurant management from Gulf Coast Community College and bachelor's degree in political science from Florida State University.	Bachelor's degree in advertising from Syracuse University.
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?	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 a 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.
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?	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.
What are pressing issues facing the state that you could address with being one of four votes in Florida's Cabinet as CFO?	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.
Assets/liabilities/income	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)
Personal	Patronis lives in Panama City with his wife, Katie, and sons Theo and Johnny.	Divorced; engaged to Rachel Friedland; four children.
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$2.1 million Expenditures: \$793,548	Contributions: \$413,151 Expenditures: \$387,157
On the web	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 2018

Commissioner of Agriculture

Democrats 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 supporter 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
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	State lawmaker, real estate appraiser	Lawyer
About the candidate	 <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>
Education	Florida Gulf Coast University, B.A., history; Edison Community College, A.A. University of Florida, bachelor's, master's, law degree	University of Florida, bachelor's, master's, law degree
What are your top three priorities?	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 economic opportunities in our rural areas, not just for farming land but for packaging, processing, and manufacturing. 3. Water is our most important resource. Balance the demands of growing cities with the needs of 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.
Are you satisfied with how the Department of Agriculture handles the state's concealed weapons program?	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 am 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 permit renewals.
How do you see the role of the office in overseeing the state's agribusinesses?	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 farmers and nurserymen.
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: Two homes, savings Liabilities: Mortgages, car loans Income: \$81,034	Assets: Savings, investments Liabilities: Student loan Income: \$84,000
Personal	Married, lives in Fort Myers. One child.	Single, lives in Fort Lauderdale
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$1.2 million Expenditures: \$866,182	Contributions: \$272,739 Expenditures: \$184,421
On the web	Website: Votecaldwell.org Twitter: @mattcaldwell_fl	Website: nikkifried.com 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.

U.S. House | District 13

Incumbent Charlie Crist is facing off against political newcomer George Buck, who won the Republican primary in August with 56 percent of the vote. Crist, a career politician, is seeking his second term in the House.

By Caitlin Johnston, Times Staff Writer


	George William Buck	Charlie Crist
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	Consultant, self-employed	Congressman, lawyer
About the candidate	 <p>Buck, 62, is an Army veteran-turned academic and a first time candidate. He has taught emergency management at Florida colleges and previously worked as a firefighter. He has put veterans' issues at the front of his campaign and wants to put a 13th Congressional District office on the campus at Bay Pines.</p>	 <p>The former governor and attorney general of Florida was elected to his first term in the U.S. House of Representatives in 2016. Crist, 62, has a long history of political campaigns in state and nationally, dating back to 1986. Crist has switched his party affiliation from Republican to independent to Democrat.</p>
Education	University of Hawaii, associate's degree in fire science, 1981. University of North Texas, bachelor's degree, 1990. LaSalle University, master's degree and doctorate in public administration, 1996.	Wake Forest University, 1974-1976. Florida State University, bachelor's degree in government, 1978. Samford University Cumberland School of Law, juris doctor, 1981.
Describe your top three priorities.	Sustainable jobs and economy for Pinellas and Tampa Bay, veterans, national security.	(1) Provide world-class constituent service, helping our veterans, seniors, and anyone having an issue with the federal bureaucracy. (2) Bring civility back to Washington. (3) Protect our environment from offshore oil drilling and climate change.
Do you support or oppose closing the gun-show loophole on background checks, banning assault weapons or restricting the capacity on magazines?	Opposes closing the gun-show loophole, banning assault weapons and restricting magazine sales. "I oppose the restriction of high capacity magazines. It's already illegal to kill people using a gun. (Videos demonstrated that the Parkland shooter used a 5-round magazine and still injured and killed a large number of victims.) Restricting large capacity magazines has no impact."	"I strongly support closing the gun-show loophole, strengthening the background check system, restricting magazine capacity and banning assault weapons. These are long overdue, commonsense steps to keep the public safe that do not infringe on the 2nd Amendment. The Parkland tragedy has woken people up finally on these issues. The kids powering the campaign to bring sanity to our gun laws are going to make a big difference in November."
Would you support or oppose changes to Social Security?	"I would support a change that protects this program that all Americans invest in, so that it is properly used as intended and not as a government slush fund."	Supports preserving Social Security. Opposes cutting earned benefits. Proposed legislation that would lift the cap on payroll taxes and make the program solvent for another 30 years. "(The legislation) would also end the double taxation of benefits, so that seniors, who already paid into the system for their benefits, don't get taxed again when they receive their Social Security checks."
Would you support or oppose reducing greenhouse gas emissions by placing a tax on carbon?	"Putting a tax on carbon does not automatically reduce it. Instead of punishing with a tax, how about a tax break for industries developing and implementing carbon or waste reduction policies and outcomes."	"It makes no sense to me why the concept of 'polluter pays' still doesn't apply to carbon pollution...Done right, a carbon tax that targets polluters and not working families...would lower greenhouse gas emissions and harness the energy of the free market to fight climate change."
Assets/liabilities/income	Did not file as of press time.	Assets: Stocks, capital gains, dividends, brokerage accounts Liabilities: Mortgage, \$500,000- \$1 mil. Income: State pension, \$51,179.82
Personal	Home: St. Petersburg Marital status: Divorced Children: One 39-year-old son and one 21-year-old daughter.	Home: St. Petersburg Marital status: Divorced Children: None
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$19,391.23 Expenditures: \$17,716.70	Contributions: \$3,033,744.57 Expenditures: \$982,723.21
On the web	Website: www.georgebuckjr.com Twitter: gbuck_jr	Website: www.charliecrist.com Twitter: CharlieCrist

ABOUT THE JOB: U.S. House District 13 stretches from St. Petersburg to Clearwater. United States representatives earn \$174,000 a year and are elected to two-year terms.

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 in 2010 as a 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
Party/profession	Republican; Real estate investor	Democrat; Political activist
About the candidate	 <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>
Education	Carson Newman College, B.S., Business Administration	Colorado State University, B.S., Environmental Health. University of South Florida, M.S., Environmental Science and Policy
Should Florida's public schools receive more funding from the state?	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 the workforce or college, we must increase education funding, pay teachers competitive and livable wages and ensure that textbooks and technology are up to date.
What should state lawmakers do to address sexual harassment?	The 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.
Would you support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion money?	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.
Would you support closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun buyers?	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. This is the same reason I would support a ban on assault weapons and limiting the size of magazines for firearms.
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$15,679,131 Liabilities: \$1,002,370 Income: \$1,460,450	Assets: \$502,953 Liabilities: \$125,497.54 Income: \$83,016
Personal	Married, lives in St. Petersburg. Four children.	Divorced, lives in St. Petersburg
Fundraising	Contributions: \$866,205 Expenditures: \$407,933.03	Contributions: \$82,945 Expenditures: \$11,891.29
On the web	electjeffbrandes.com Twitter: @JeffreyBrandes	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. Senate District 24 contains parts of Pinellas County, including much of St. Petersburg, Largo, Pinellas Park and Seminole.

Know Your Candidates 2018

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 before him. 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, is running a no party affiliation campaign

By Tracey McManus, Times Staff Writer

	Gus Bilirakis	Christopher Hunter	Angelika Purkis
Party	Republican	Democrat	NPA
Profession	United States Representative; St. Petersburg College adjunct professor	Former FBI agent and state and federal prosecutor; University of Tampa adjunct professor	Nurse practitioner; owner Angie's Art Glass and Signature Building Products
About the candidate	 <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>
Education	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
Do you support the Mueller investigation? Do you support an investigation into Obama/Clinton officials for their conduct during the 2016 election?	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.
Would you support 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.	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.
Would you support or oppose repealing the Affordable Care Act? Please explain how you would strengthen it or replace it.	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.
Do you support closing the gun-show loophole on background checks, banning assault weapons or restricting the capacity of magazines?	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.
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: property, two prepaid college plans, bank accounts, stocks Liabilities: mortgage, student loans Income: teaching <small>*as of 2017, most recent disclosure available</small>	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
Personal	Lives in Palm Harbor. Married to Eva Bilirakis. Children: Michael, Teddy, Manuel, Nicholas	Lives in Trinity. Married to Celeste Hunter. Children: Luke, Claire, Grace, Brooke	Lives in New Port Richey. Married to Ross Purkis. Children: Ross III, Monika, Benno
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$1.4 million Expenditures: \$894,332	Contributions: \$465,626 Expenditures: \$211,441	Contributions: \$7,164 Expenditures: \$9,194
On the web	bilirakisforcongress.com Twitter: @RepGusBilirakis	chrishunterforcongress.com Twitter: @ChrisHunterFL	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.

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
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	Partner at Consus Group Consulting	Vice president of investments at Wealth Management Group of Raymond James
About the candidate	 <p>Hooper, 70, has been a longtime presence in Tampa Bay politics, serving on the 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.</p>	 <p>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.</p>
Education	Statesville (NC) High School, diploma	Florida State University, B.S., political Science
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	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."
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?	"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."
Would you support or oppose closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun buyers? Banning assault weapons? Limiting the size of magazines?	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."
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 requiring they be held countywide?	"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.
Assets/liabilities/income	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, timeshare, stocks, mutual funds Liabilities: three mortgages Income: Raymond James & Associates salary \$125,612
Personal	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
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$603,044 Expenditures: \$364,851	Contributions: \$195,018 Expenditures: \$74,281
On the web	hooper4senate.com Twitter: @EdHooper4FLSen	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.

Know Your Candidates 2018

State House | District 65

Democrat and retired nurse Sally Laufer is making her first run for office against State Rep. Chris Sprowls, the incumbent Republican who is one of Pinellas' most influential legislators. He is considered to be a contender to become the Speaker of the Florida House in 2021-22, a position no Pinellas legislator has held since 1995.

By McKenna Oxenden, Times Staff Writer

	Sally Laufer	Chris Sprowls
Party	Democrat	Republican
Profession	Retired nurse, community activist	Legislator, attorney
About the candidate	 <p>Laufer, 65, is a political newcomer who is hoping to oust one of Pinellas County's fast-rising politicians. She has lived in Palm Harbor for 34 years and is a retired nurse-turned-community activist. Her legislative priorities include protecting the environment, boosting public education, raising teacher's salaries and increasing access to affordable healthcare.</p>	 <p>Sprowls, 34, is running for his third term in the Florida House. He won the seat in 2014 and works for a private law firm in Tampa following a seven-year stint as a prosecutor at the Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney's Office. He says his top legislative issues are maintaining low taxes, growing the economy and making government more transparent. He is considered a future contender for Speaker of the Florida House.</p>
Education	University of Bridgeport, B.S. nursing	University of South Florida, B.A.; Stetson University Law, J.D.
What should lawmakers do to address sexual misconduct in the Capitol?	"We need an independent agency that can properly investigate accusations and possible charges against lawmakers and recommend ethics violations and criminal charges if necessary."	"In November 2016, before the scandals that plagued the Florida Senate, the Florida House strengthened our rules on sexual harassment. We also passed HB 7007, which went far beyond the Senate proposal by providing a comprehensive approach to addressing sexual harassment in public agencies."
Views on guns	"We have to close the gun show loop hole, ban assault weapons and high capacity magazines."	"We need to continue to crack down on felons who possess firearms ... what I do not support are laws that take away the right of law-abiding individuals to own a firearm."
Should cities hold their own voter referendums to raise sales tax?	"I would allow cities to hold their own referendums. Our Tampa Bay area has to be more willing to fund mass transit."	"Limiting referendums to one municipality does not help us get ... on the same common sense approach to transportation solutions. It's not how much more can we spend but whether we are obtaining maximum value from the dollar we spend."
How would you make healthcare more affordable?	"We need to accept funds for Medicaid expansion. Establish health care exchange system with the Affordable Care Act. Florida needs to be able to negotiate drug prices with insurance companies. The cost of prescription drugs is a heavy burden to too many people."	"Medicaid expansion would have required the State to expand this Federal entitlement program while not spending a single dollar more on our most vulnerable population ... which is why I voted against it. I have supported initiatives to expand healthcare throughout the State ..."
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: Home, medical office building, condominiums, savings, IRAs. Liabilities: None listed. Income: \$102,720	Assets: Home, savings, investments, time share. Liabilities: Mortgage, student loan, credit cards. Income: \$181,011
Personal	Home: Palm Harbor. Marital status: Separated. Children: Three children	Home: Palm Harbor. Marital status: Married, Shannon. Children: Two children
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$19,884. Expenditures: \$15,377	Contributions: \$207,326. Expenditures: \$65,205
On the web	Website: sallyforflorida.com. Twitter: @SallyForFL	Website: chrissprowls.com. Twitter: @ChrisSprowls

ABOUT THE JOB: House District 65 covers parts of Dunedin, East Lake, Palm Harbor and Tarpon Springs. State representatives serve two-year terms and are paid \$29,697 a year.

State House | District 66

Two first-time candidates are battling it out for the seat formerly held by Larry Ahern, a Seminole Republican who hit his maximum four terms this year.

By Kathryn Varn, Times Staff Writer

	Nick DiCeglie	Alex Heeren
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	Owner, Solar Sanitation, Inc.	Technology Integration Coordinator, Pinellas County Schools
About the candidate	 <p>DiCeglie, 44, grew up on Long Island and moved to Florida in 1996 to help his parents run the family business he now owns. He is the current chairman of the Pinellas County Republican Party and is a member of the Pinellas County Economic Development Council. He previously served twice as the chairman of the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce. He defeated Berym Jacques, a former prosecutor, in the Aug. 28 Republican primary.</p>	 <p>Heeren, 31, was born in Seminole and has lived there most of his life. Before taking on his current job helping teachers use technology in the classroom, Heeren worked as a math teacher at Meadowlawn Middle School and ran an after-school coding program designed to increase the number of women working in computer science. He also coaches the school's volleyball team and is an Eagle Scout. His wife, Teal, is an English teacher.</p>
Education	Lawrence High School, Cedarhurst, N.Y., 1991	Lakewood High School Center for Advanced Technologies, St. Petersburg, 2005; B.S. in Telecommunication, University of Florida, 2009
Please describe your top three legislative priorities.	"As the owner of a family-run business that's made payroll in Pinellas County since 1980, jobs will always be my top priority: Improving workforce training and vocational opportunities (and) protecting consumers by eliminating fraud like we have seen in the assignment-of-benefits issue ... I (also) plan on continuing the work that Senator (Jeff) Brandes has done to create a private insurance market for flood insurance in Florida."	"My top legislative priority will be increasing funding for our public schools ... We also need to stop diverting money from our public schools to for-profit charter schools." Second, "to bring back local control to our local governments." Third, "protecting our environment ... Pollution of our waterways is out of control, and we need to hold the polluters accountable ... We also need to make progress on issues like clean energy policy and preparing for rising sea levels."
Would you support accepting federal Medicaid expansion money? Please explain how you would make health care more affordable and accessible to low-income Floridians.	"No, I do not support. Florida's Medicaid budget is already the single largest expense in the state's budget at \$22 billion. I support block granting Medicaid funds from the federal government so Florida can have more flexibility to decide how these funds are spent. This will enable us to increase access ... to healthcare. We should aggressively continue Attorney General Bondi's efforts to crack down on fraud and abuse."	"I support accepting federal Medicaid expansion money. Accepting this funding will make health care more affordable and accessible to low-income Floridians. Expanding Medicaid will also create jobs and stimulate economic growth in Florida. "
Would you support or oppose closing the gun show loophole on background checks? Banning assault weapons? Limiting the size of magazines?	"I oppose. I'm an unapologetic 100 percent supporter of the Constitution. I support the First Amendment with the same vigor as the Second Amendment."	"I support closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun buyers, banning the sale of assault weapons, and limiting the size of magazines available for purchase. Everyone who wishes to purchase a gun should have to pass a background check with no exceptions - we need to stop guns from getting into the wrong hands. As a country, we ... need to do everything we can to stop school shootings."
What other measures would you support to make schools safer? Would you support increasing funding to school districts to pay for school resource officers in every school?	"I support increased security features like bulletproof glass and doors, enhanced communication ... between the school and law enforcement agencies, (and) cameras along with additional mental health counseling and marketing of mental health services. As a father of two children I take school safety very seriously and will ensure Florida's education system is adequately funded and will always look for ways to cut wasteful spending."	"I support increased funding for support staff and mental health services at schools ... Forcing school districts to shoulder the burden of paying for state-mandated School Resource Officers forces them to take money away from their primary job: providing students with an excellent education. Only properly trained personnel should be hired for school security positions, and we should increase the amount of money the state provides to pay for them."
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$3,833,852. Liabilities: \$376,752. Income: \$208,000	Assets: \$278,854. Liabilities: \$167,076. Income: \$87,877
Personal	Home: Indian Rocks Beach. Marital status: Married to wife, Erica. Children: Livia, Carlo	Home: Seminole. Marital status: Married to wife, Teal. Children: none
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$311,081. Expenditures: \$271,203	Contributions: \$41,381. Expenditures: \$25,350
On the web	Website: nickdiceglie.com. Twitter: @NickDiCeglie	Website: alexheeren.com. Twitter: @AlexHeerenFL

ABOUT THE JOB: District 66 covers parts of Seminole, Largo and Clearwater as well as beach communities from Indian Shores to Belleair Beach. State representatives serve two-year terms and are paid \$29,697 a year.

State House | District 67

A teacher is challenging a two-term Republican incumbent for the seat, which covers parts of Largo and Clearwater. While both said they'd prioritize education and the environment, they diverge on public transportation and workforce development.

By Kathryn Varn, Times Staff Writer

	Dawn Douglas	Chris Latvala
Party	Democrat	Republican
Profession	Teacher	Consultant, Realtor
About the candidate	 <p>Dawn Douglas, 66, has worked for Pinellas County Schools since 2002. It's her first time running for elected office. Douglas, of Largo, has lobbied and vetted political candidates as a representative for her school in the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association, the local chapter of the state teachers union. Her legislative priorities center on the environment, education and public transportation. She defeated Tom Ryan in the Aug. 28 Democratic primary.</p>	 <p>Chris Latvala, 36, has served two terms as a state representative. He currently chairs the PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee. If elected, he would focus on education, workforce development and the environment. He plans to sponsor Erin's Law, a national effort to mandate public schools to implement child sex abuse prevention programs; a bill that would extend health coverage for firefighters with certain kinds of cancer; and a bill that would increase funding for child welfare caseworkers.</p>
Education	Largo High School, 1969; A.A., St. Petersburg Junior College; Bachelor's degree in English Literature, University of South Florida, 1979	Terry Parker High School, 2000; A.A., Valencia Community College, 2002; B.A. in history, University of Central Florida, 2004
Should Florida's public schools receive more funding from the state?	"Florida's public schools need more funding for many objectives. Safety, vocational programs, counselors, mental health workers, nurses and the arts in schools are underfunded, to list only a few. Far too much is being spent on meaningless testing and funding private schools. Charter school owners are becoming wealthy at the expense of our educational system."	"Yes, but the Legislature also allocated \$400 million last year as part of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas School Safety Bill that districts do not consider. There are also additional education dollars that are not part of the FEFP (Florida Education Finance Program)."
Would you support or oppose accepting federal Medicaid expansion money?	I support. "Full-time nurses in schools would help children on a daily basis. They could receive medical attention on site or referrals to a higher level of care as necessary ... Using schools on a community basis, clinics could be provided on school campuses after school hours to other family and community members. Also, doctors should be provided incentives to provide free medical care ... Health care should be a right not a privilege."	"Oppose."
Do you support closing the gun show loophole on background checks? Banning assault weapons? Limiting the size of magazines?	"I would support closing the gun show loophole on background checks for gun purchases. Anyone who purchases any gun should be subject to background checks. If a ban on assault weapons does not occur, I would strongly support deeper background checks and longer waiting periods. I would strongly support limiting the size of magazines."	"I am the lowest rated Republican by the NRA in the Legislature. I voted for amendments in the Marjory Stoneman Douglas School Safety Act that dealt with two of those issues (magazines and assault weapons)."
Would you support allowing cities to hold voter referendums to raise the sales tax for transit projects?	"Referendums for transportation should be done at the county level. (By city) could create a patchwork of transit projects that don't connect .. In Pinellas it would be very problematic as we have so many small municipalities ... I don't support more toll lanes, as this becomes a matter of dividing people by economic standards ... The state could share lottery funds (not those designated for education), gambling revenues and taxing legalized sports betting in the state."	"I probably would not support that because I generally try to support the will of the voters. I would support more managed toll lanes and also more funding."
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$277,000. Liabilities: \$3,700. Income: \$59,935	Assets: \$633,227. Liabilities: \$334,000. Income: \$62,528
Personal	Home: Largo. Marital status: Divorced. Children: Two adult children	Home: Clearwater. Marital status: Single. Children: None
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$3,050. Expenditures: \$1,782	Contributions: \$165,375. Expenditures: \$75,794
On the web	Website: electdawn Douglas.com. Twitter: N/A	Website: electchrislatvala.org. Twitter: @chrislatvala

ABOUT THE JOB: District 67 covers parts of Largo and Clearwater. State representatives serve two-year terms and are paid \$29,697 a year.

Know Your Candidates 2018

State House | District 69

Republican Raymond Blackledge and Democrat Jennifer Webb are vying for the Florida House of Representatives seat being vacated by Kathleen Peters, R-Treasure Island, who is running for the Pinellas County Commission. Blackledge previously held political office in Illinois, while Webb is a second-time candidate, running unsuccessfully in 2016 against Peters.

By Waveney Ann Moore, Times Staff Writer

	Raymond Blackledge	Jennifer Webb
Party	Republican	Democrat
Profession	Insurance company executive and lawyer	Founding partner and small business owner
About the candidate	 <p>Blackledge, 58, served a four-year term on a school board in Illinois, was a two-term alderman, and was elected a Republican precinct committeeman. If elected, the Madeira Beach resident says he will be the only insurance company executive in the state legislature.</p>	 <p>Webb, 38, lives in Gulfport and has never held political office. She faced no opposition in the August primary. She has public policy experience as a former director of community partnerships for the University of South Florida.</p>
Education	Southern Illinois University, B.A., Political Science; The John Marshall Law School, J.D.	Louisiana State University, B.A. in history and in anthropology; University of South Florida, master's, applied anthropology.
Top three legislative priorities	"First we need to close the Assignment Benefit legal loophole that allows 20 law firms to add unnecessary costs to our homeowner insurance claims process. Continue to eliminate onerous regulation and taxes. I recommend to continue expanding more choices of schools for the children of Florida. Provide good, safe schools for all the children in Florida. I also recommend making additional efforts to provide high quality childcare."	"Invest in infrastructure. We need infusion of investment in transit/mobility and broadband infrastructure, along with other infrastructure projects that would promote coastal community resiliency. Create a more just system for investing in capital improvements for schools, while ensuring our students and young adults have access to vocation and technical education. Increase access to mental health and substance use treatment."
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.	"I oppose Medicaid expansion. I support setting up a framework for telehealth providers and technology guidelines. I believe online medical assistance will help save costs and make health care more available."	"Support. Also, we must take into account that in the Tampa Bay area when it comes to dental and behavioral health services, it is not that we lack medical professionals. We lack medical professionals willing to take Medicaid. So, we must pair Medicaid expansion with programs that increase access. One way in which we can ensure access to medical, dental, and behavioral health services by all Floridians would be to bring back and expand programs that helped pay down dental, medical, and graduate school for providers willing to dedicate a specific amount of time to providing care to low-income Floridians."
The Florida Senate proposed rules addressing sexual harassment last session, but didn't pass them. What should lawmakers do to address sexual misconduct in the Capitol?	"Sexual harassment should not be tolerated. That being said, there are plenty of laws on the books to punish those who commit it. What we need are readily available resources and training to help those threatened by or subject to sexual misconduct."	"The best way to address this problem is to have an open and honest conversation that starts with acknowledging the problem exists. It's a cultural problem and creating an environment in which victims no longer fear coming forward is important. People get away with abusive behavior because they assume their victims won't say anything. Change that, and you make progress. There should be an independent ombudsman to oversee complaints."
Would you support or oppose repealing the no-fault insurance system, and how would you replace it?	"No-fault auto insurance never really worked in Florida because we only adopted portions of no-fault and never really went all in like Canada did. We need to replace it with bodily injury, with policy limits high enough to provide adequate coverage, but not so high that people don't buy it. However, in doing so, we need to make sure we don't open up new loopholes for a small group of attorneys that may abuse the new system for their own benefit and not the consumers' benefit."	"Support. I believe that Florida should join the other 38 states by repealing the no-fault insurance system. Rather than paying for the PIP requirement, I believe that Florida law should require drivers to buy property damage and bodily injury coverage. Studies show that if the PIP requirement is repealed, the average driver's insurance premium will decrease. I believe this is a fairer and more consumer friendly approach to insuring drivers than our current system."
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$1,370,096 Liabilities: \$488,640.42 Income: \$220,424	Assets: \$219,063 Liabilities: \$204,886 Income: \$44,435
Personal	Home: Own home. Marital status: Married to Lisa Blackledge Children: Five adult children	Home: Own home Marital status: Married to Cynthia Wurmer Children: none
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$250,530 (9/14/2018) Expenditures: \$179,295	Contributions: \$205,205 (9/14/2018) Expenditures: \$108,020
On the web	Website: rayblackledge.com Facebook: RayBlackledgeforStateRepresentative Twitter: @rayblackledge	Website: electjenniferwebb.com Facebook: ElectJenniferWebb Twitter: @JenniferWebbFL

ABOUT THE JOB: State House District 69 includes Gulfport, Madeira Beach, Pinellas Park, South Pasadena, St. Pete Beach, Treasure Island and parts of St. Petersburg. State representatives serve two-year terms and earn \$29,697 a year.

County Commission | District 6

Three Pinellas County Commission seats were up for election this year, but incumbents Dave Eggers and Pat Gerard drew no challengers. That leaves District 6, which pits Republican state Rep. Kathleen Peters against Democrat and political newcomer Amy Kedron. District 6 generally includes Pinellas Park, Seminole, northeast St. Petersburg and the south beaches.

By Mark Puente, Times Staff Writer

	Amy Kedron	Kathleen Peters
Party	Democrat	Republican
Profession	Unemployed	State representative
About the candidate	 <p>Kedron, 42, a Buffalo native, moved here in 2010 to work as an instructor at USF St. Petersburg and Ringling College of Art and Design. During her time in Florida, she has faced two cancer battles. The political newcomer, who holds a law degree, has never taken the bar exam in Florida to work as an attorney. She had spent years working on social, economic, and environmental issues in the Buffalo business community. She owns a consulting company but declined to elaborate.</p>	 <p>Peters, 57, a former South Pasadena commissioner, also served as that city's mayor from 2009 to 2012. She was elected to the Florida House in 2012 and re-elected. In 2014, she ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. House of Representatives. Peters has described herself as a "compassionate conservative" who wants to empower churches and nonprofits to solve social problems. Peters and her husband bought a house in Pinellas County more than 30 years ago.</p>
Education	University of Buffalo, B.A.; State University of New York at Buffalo, J.D.; Columbia University, M.A.; University of Buffalo, doctor of philosophy.	St. Petersburg College, associate of arts; Eckerd College, B.A., human development.
Please describe your top three priorities.	Kedron did not respond.	1. Ensuring there is access to care and a coordinated system of care for mental health. 2. Improve and streamline the emergency management system. 3. Maintain coastline and water quality.
What should be the county's next step to create a more robust transit system?	Kedron did not respond.	The future of transit should focus on utilizing advances in technology and traffic innovation. Better traffic timing and a more coordinated multimodal system would improve traffic. Autonomous cars will play an important role in the future, as well as ride-sharing technologies.
How would you work to expand affordable housing options in the county?	Kedron did not respond.	I would consider many models for affordable housing that are being implemented around the country. The Miami model is an effective public-private partnership, where 80 percent of the condo buildings were for private sale and 20 percent affordable housing. This could require local governments to increase height and density; however, it wouldn't be mandatory.
Pinellas could lose more than \$20 million in property tax revenue if the homestead exemption is raised. How would you make up for that loss?	Kedron did not respond.	The Pinellas County property appraiser has said the average loss to the cities and county was actually no loss, but a 3 percent gain in ad valorem tax if it were to be in this next fiscal year. As such, the real issue will be when property values level off or if we slip into a recession again. At that time, the county will have to do what it always has to do when the economy struggles. I voted for the bill in the Legislature for this to be on the ballot because I felt it was important for the people to have a say on this issue. I believe it will give a small amount of relief to the middle class.
Financials	Assets: Savings. Liabilities: Student loans, car loans. Income: Unemployment compensation	Assets: Home, commercial property, retirement fund. Liabilities: mortgage. Income: Lawmaker salary, real estate
Personal	Single, lives in Madeira Beach	Lives in St. Petersburg, is married to Michael Peters, with four adult children
Fundraising	Contributions: \$31,341 Expenditures: \$20,421	Contributions: \$168,639 Expenditures: \$137,417
On the web	amykedron.com Twitter: @amykedron	kathleenpeters.com Twitter: @KathleenMPeters

ABOUT THE JOB: County commissioners set a countywide property tax rate, make land-use decisions, oversee departments that provide a variety of government services, and set budgets for the sheriff, property appraiser, tax collector and supervisor of elections. The term is four years and the current salary is about \$93,000.

School Board | District 2

This at-large School Board seat, open to voters across Pinellas County, pits two newcomers that beat out incumbent Terry Krassner in the primary election. Jeff Larson, a middle school reading teacher who believes in "learning, not testing," captured 46 percent of the vote compared to performing arts professional Lisa Cane, who is frustrated with a lack of humanities curriculum in area schools and took 37 percent.

By Megan Reeves, Times Staff Writer

	Lisa Nicole Cane	Jeff Larsen
Profession	Performing arts professional	Middle school teacher and coach
About the candidate	 <p>Cane, 31, is the creative director and founder of the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Academy. She is a vocalist, has directed music theater at Calvary Christian High School and has directed more than two dozen musicals.</p>	 <p>Larsen, 41, has taught reading and coached basketball at Gulf Middle School in New Port Richey for 14 years. He served as a city commissioner in Tarpon Springs from 2010 to 2016, also serving as vice mayor for the last two years.</p>
Education	St. Petersburg College, A.A.; Eckerd College, B.A.	Florida Southern College, bachelor's.
What are your top three priorities?	1. "Increasing curriculum standards for humanities, social studies and arts education, especially in elementary schools." 2. "Providing more technical and certification programs for high schools so students are career- or college-ready." 3. "Re-prioritizing how standardized tests are used in evaluating student and teacher performance."	1. "I will push for a focus on learning, not testing. I will also push to expand trade school and pre-apprenticeship opportunities to help prepare our students for a lifetime of success." 2. "For parents, I am interested in improving communication and transparency." 3. "We need to allow teachers to teach without incessant fear of inappropriate and arbitrary evaluation systems. We need improved annual comprehensive climate surveys and implementation of exit interviews for educators in order to determine what is working and what isn't."
What steps would you take to help close the achievement gap?	Partner with groups such as TurnAroundArts to integrate performing arts, which create cultural connections, offer an emotional outlet and are shown to boost achievement.	Reduce the alarmingly high turnover rate for teachers at our most struggling schools. Push to make sure all teachers get all the resources they need. Improve mentor program and enhance training for new teachers. Develop and enhance strategic relationships with community groups also working to close the achievement gap.
What security measures would you support for schools?	Increase funding for school resource officers and infrastructure such as bulletproof doors and better lock systems. Train teachers and students to respond to tornadoes, hurricanes, human trafficking and active shooters.	Ensure classroom doors can lock from the inside and that schools have one secure entry. Enforce consistent procedures for school visitors. Ensure that guidance counselors and teachers can focus on students, not on testing, in order to address mental health needs.
How would you rate superintendent Mike Grego's performance?	He has seen "much success from his Summer Bridge program and a huge increase in graduation rates. ... He has done a fine job leading the district to bridge the achievement gap that we continue to face by providing real solutions to large-scale problems."	"Superintendent Grego is a capable administrator. However, School Board members should set policy and the superintendent should implement it. I am interested in providing the leadership necessary to ensure that policy does, in fact, come from the board."
Financials	Assets: \$498,277 Liabilities: \$224,371 Income: \$24,660	Assets: \$417,783 Liabilities: \$182,948 Income: \$47,928
Personal	Lives in Palm Harbor. Married to Casey L. Cane with four young children.	Lives in Tarpon Springs. Married to Dory Larsen with two young sons.
Fundraising	Contributions: \$13,257 Expenditures: \$3,697	Contributions: \$36,780 Expenditures: \$30,015
On the web	votelisa.org or facebook.com/votelisa2018	votejefflarsen.com or facebook.com/JeffLarsenFL

ABOUT THE JOB: Pinellas County School Board members oversee a \$1.5 billion budget and a system with about 102,000 students and more than 12,500 full-time employees. They serve four-year terms and are paid \$44,163 a year.

Know Your Candidates 2018

School Board | District 3

A three-term incumbent and an educational specialist with a doctorate in school counseling compete for this at-large seat on the Pinellas School Board, open to voters across the county. Both have clear ideas on the district's biggest challenges and how to address them, but have different takes on the specifics.

By Megan Reeves, Times Staff Writer

	Nicole Carr	Peggy O'Shea
Profession	Retired educational specialist	Retired commercial arbitration, mediation manager
About the candidate	 Carr, 47, worked for Pinellas County Schools for 13 years as an assistant principal at Lakewood Elementary, a senior coordinator of accountability, a research specialist, and a school counselor. She was an assessment coordinator at St. Petersburg College, a research assistant at the University of Florida, and taught English on the Zuni Indian Reservation in New Mexico.	 O'Shea, 68, was elected to the Pinellas County School Board in 2006 and won re-election in 2010 and 2014. She serves on several boards, including the Council of Great City Schools and the Pinellas Education Foundation. She is a former chair of the Early Learning Council of Pinellas County and was a member of the Florida Early Learning Advisory Council.
Education	Rhode Island College, B.A., English; University of Florida, M.Ed. and Ed.S., counselor education; University of Florida College of Education, Ph.D.	Muskingum College in New Concord, Ohio, B.A.; Attended Fordham University in New York.
What are your top three priorities?	1. "Increasing student success by recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers." 2. Eliminating wasteful district spending. 3. Improving school safety.	1. Student and staff safety. 2. Narrowing the achievement gap and increasing overall student achievement. 3. Expansion of college and career readiness programs.
What additional steps would you take to help close the achievement gap?	"I support continuing programs aimed at increasing family involvement and implementing positive behavior plans. When there are a lot of high-need students in a school, it is difficult to make progress even with the additional expenses of more personnel, consultants, materials and an extended day. The additional steps I would take to help close the achievement gap would be to increase choice options at the elementary level through additional magnet programs at all elementary schools and increasing community partnerships to support close-to-home schools."	"The Bridging the Gap Plan ... is designed to close the (achievement) gap between black and non-black students. It is a multi-year commitment that addresses graduation rates, grade level proficiency, participation and performance in higher-level courses, disciplinary issues and minority hiring. ... The emphasis is on implementing this plan districtwide with fidelity, and planning and action at every school will provide sustainable results. Professional development for our teachers is a necessary part of the plan."
What types of additional security measures would you support for schools?	I support implementing security measures in a way that makes our schools safe while still providing a welcoming environment. These include training school threat assessment teams, implementing a system of anonymous reporting of potential threats, and working with community organizations. In addition, schools need secure entrances, internally locking doors, working cameras, and monitoring of who is on campus. The district needs to also provide training to adults and age-appropriate training to students.	As of August, there are armed school security officers stationed at every elementary school. Our larger campuses have an additional school resource officer. Each campus has a new safety plan developed in cooperation with local law enforcement and training for all staff has begun. There will be increased monitoring of campuses throughout the day. Active assailant drills will be performed monthly. We are increasing communication efforts for parents to get information to them as quickly as possible.
How would you rate superintendent Mike Grego's performance?	Dr. Grego has implemented beneficial programs to extend learning beyond the school day including increased access to technology and the expansion of Summer Bridge. However, I think there is room for improvement. The district would benefit from a more accurate picture of the climate and a tracking of teacher retention so problems that impede recruitment and retention can be addressed.	"Dr. Grego's tenure ... has provided an era of stability and consistent leadership. Since his arrival, we have seen an increase in graduation rates and achievement. He has taken an innovative approach in providing options for students and more efficient operations in the district. While there will always be new challenges, he faces them and looks for relevant solutions. ... Dr. Grego has worked with principals to provide leadership training and to ensure each school has the right leader."
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$650,000 Liabilities: None listed Income: None listed	Assets: \$508,884 Liabilities: None listed Income: \$53,523
Personal	Lives in St. Petersburg. Married to Steven Cohen. Has two children.	Lives in Oldsmar. Married to Dan O'Shea. Has two adult children
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$83,676 Expenditures: \$56,758	Contributions: \$15,422 Expenditures: \$5,570
On the web	nicolecarr.com @NicoleCarr4SB	No campaign website

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School Board | District 6

Two longtime Pinellas County residents compete for this seat, which spans parts of Largo, Pinellas Park, Seminole and the south Gulf Beaches. Both lost bids for the School Board in 2016. Now they hope to strengthen school security, address a lingering achievement gap and tackle excessive testing in a board seat left vacant by Linda Lerner, who is stepping down after nearly three decades.

By Megan Reeves, Times Staff Writer

	Bill Dudley	Matt Stewart
Profession	Former City Council member, retired high school teacher/coach	Hillsborough County human resources professional
About the candidate	 Many know Dudley, 74, as "Coach" after spending most of his 38-year teaching career at Northeast High. There, he coached wrestling, cross country and football. Since being term-limited out of the St. Petersburg City Council, he set his sights on the School Board as a way to get back to his roots in education.	 Matt Stewart, 38, is a human resources manager for Hillsborough County government. He also teaches ethics at St. Petersburg College as an adjunct and has worked in classrooms with Eckerd Youth Alternatives. As a foster parent and educator, he wants to "ensure success for every student."
Education	St. Petersburg Junior College, A.A.; University of South Florida, B.A., education; Stetson University, M.A., administration and supervision	St. John Vianney, B.A., philosophy; St. Vincent de Paul, M.A., theology; University of South Florida, M.A., religious studies; USF, Ph.D., education
What are your top three priorities?	1. School safety. Increase security officers, random searches and drills. Facilitate stronger relationships between students, teachers and the school. 2. Continue to close the achievement gap through current approaches. Increase vocational and technical training for students and training in cultural diversity for teachers. 3. Increase accountability through an attendance policy. We can't teach students if they aren't there. Extended learning programs, such as virtual schools, are too often used to make up credit. Businesses don't tolerate absences and we shouldn't either.	1. "Ensure student success for every student ... through building early learning opportunities, involving parents and building community support." Push to raise graduation rates. 2. "Build an 'economic pipeline' for our community by increasing career academies, offering internships and apprenticeships and providing a strong workforce for our local businesses." 3. "Ensure that we are recruiting and retaining top talent in our schools through competitive wages, strong benefits and a good work culture." Work with the Legislature to increase school funding for higher wages.
What additional steps would you take to help close the achievement gap?	Enhance current district achievement plan and college-readiness programs with more resources and faculty. Create or redesign school magnet programs. Increase vocational and technical opportunities. Implement mandatory attendance policy. "We are failing our students and subliminally sending the message that school is not important because we have devalued attendance and learning in exchange for increasing graduation rates."	Lengthen the school day and use the additional time on core subject areas. Provide individual mentors to each student. Expand after-school clubs, career academies and free after-school tutoring. Recruit top talent in the classroom, including minority teachers, and focus on retention. Track cohorts of students to monitor progress. Maintain a discipline matrix to eliminate the discipline disparity. Increase family and community engagement.
What types of additional security measures would you support for schools?	Continue current approach to security staffing. Perform random searches using dogs trained to find weapons. Encourage "See something, say something" approach. Provide badge-entry system, text alerts and more security hardware for points of entry. Address the disconnect between the school system, teachers, and students, such as through study halls.	Ensure single points of access, install security cameras and require identification badges. Ensure that classroom doors lock from the inside. Address the underlying causes of violence within our schools, such as through student mental health services and training for teachers and staff to identify struggling students. Implement restorative justice practices and build character development programs.
How would you rate superintendent Mike Grego's performance?	Dr. Grego has done a credible job. He inherited a system that was not in great shape. Our former failing schools are improving. "We need to continue to be vigilant and moving forward so that improvement will be steady and continue to rise. We cannot be complacent and neither should our leader. He works for us and should continue to be held accountable."	Dr. Grego has made positive changes. The district offers more school choice programs, has expanded career academies, increased graduation rates and added industry certifications. But there should be fewer local assessments in our schools. We need greater transparency, such as through dashboards for parents. The superintendent needs to have a sense of urgency when problems arise and be able to build support to address them. The board should be setting the priorities.
Assets/liabilities/income	Assets: \$1,055,000 Liabilities: \$163,000 Income: \$132,256	Assets: \$458,609 Liabilities: \$339,138 Income: \$81,139
Personal	Lives in St. Petersburg. Married to Michelle Dudley with two adult children	Lives in St. Petersburg. Married to Tim Stoney. Foster parents, no children currently.
Campaign fundraising	Contributions: \$18,980 Expenditures: \$10,329	Contributions: \$16,516 Expenditures: \$11,913
On the web	dudley4schools.net	matt4pinellas.com facebook.com/matt4pinellas

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