



The following topics have been identified by the GAC as legislative items that influence the practice of landscape architecture in Florida or are topics that may interest. The schedule for the 2015 session is also posted below.

If you have questions or would like to get involved in assisting the Chapter with advocacy, licensure issues, and other legislative concerns, please contact Jonathan Haigh, Member at Large for Advocacy and Licensure at: memberatlargeAL@flalsa.org

POLITICAL ISSUES

MID-TERM ELECTION

Governor

After record spending and a massive campaign on both sides that included much negative messaging, Governor Rick Scott was re-elected by a narrow margin. Polls showed the two candidates, Governor Scott and former Governor Charlie Crist, within the margin of error for weeks.

Cabinet

Other cabinet races were much more predictable this election cycle. Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater, Attorney General Pam Bondi, and Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services Adam Putnam, all Republicans, were all re-elected by wide margins.

Congressional Delegation

There was little change in the Florida congressional delegation. Republican incumbents Daniel Webster, Bill Posey, John Mica, Ron DeSantis, Richard Nugent, and Ted Yoho have been reelected to Congress, as have Democratic incumbents Corrine Brown and Alan Grayson.

Democrat Gwen Graham, daughter of former Democratic Senator and Governor Bob Graham, defeated Republican Congressman Steve Southerland. Notably, Graham was the only Democratic challenger to defeat a Republican incumbent in a congressional

race. Republican Miami-Dade school board member Carlos Curbelo defeated Democratic Congressman Joe Garcia.

Five incumbents were uncontested. These include Republicans Gus Bilirakis, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, and Democrats Kathy Castor and Ted Deutch.

Florida House

House Republicans have regained a supermajority, picking up six seats. Republicans targeted seven seats and needed to win five of them. The only Democrat of the seven to win re-election was Dwight Dudley in Pinellas County. In the Tampa Bay area, Republican Shawn Harrison defeated Democrat Mark Danish and Republican Chris Sprowls defeated Carl Zimmerman. In Central Florida, Republican Scott Plakon defeated Democrat Mike Clelland, Republican Mike Miller defeated Democrat Linda Stewart, Republican Bob Cortes defeated Karen Castor-Dentel, and Republican Rene Plascencia defeated Democrat Joe Saunders. There are now 81 Republicans and 39 Democrats in the Florida House.

Florida Senate

The Florida Senate remained unchanged in its overall numbers, at 26 Republicans to 14 Democrats. This falls short of a supermajority. There were few hotly contested Senate races. However, Democrat Maria Sachs defeated Republican challenger Ellyn Bogdanoff and Republican Jeff Brandes defeated Democratic challenger Judithanne McLauchlan.

Constitutional Amendments

Amendment 1 - PASSED

The Florida Water and Land Conservation Initiative was a citizen initiated constitutional amendment. The measure will dedicate 33 percent of net revenues from the existing excise tax on documents to the Land Acquisition Trust Fund. This fund is designed to manage and restore natural systems and to enhance public access and recreational use of conservation lands. Funds will be expended to acquire and improve conservation easements, wildlife management areas, wetlands, forests, fish and wildlife habitats, beaches and shores, recreational trails and parks, urban open space, rural landscapes, working farms and ranches, historical and geological sites, lands protecting water and drinking water resources and lands in the Everglades Agricultural Area and Everglades Protection Area. The leading organization campaigning for the initiative was Florida's Water and Land Legacy, Inc.

Amendment 2 - FAILED

The Florida Right to Medical Marijuana Initiative was a citizen initiated constitutional amendment. The measure would have legalized the cultivation, purchase, possession, and use of marijuana to treat medical conditions when recommended by a licensed

physician. The measure would also have ordered the Florida Department of Health to register and regulate producers and distributors of medical marijuana and to issue identification cards to patients and caregivers utilizing marijuana. The measure was sponsored by People United for Medical Marijuana, a group primarily backed by attorney John Morgan.

Amendment 3 - FAILED

The Florida Prospective Judicial Vacancies amendment was a legislatively-referred constitutional amendment. The measure would have empowered the governor to prospectively fill judicial vacancies by appointing a justice or judge from among at least three, but not more than six, candidates selected by the judicial nominating commission, if those justices or judges were leaving office at the same time as the current sitting Governor. The amendment was introduced in the Florida Legislature by Senator Tom Lee as Senate Joint Resolution 1188.

OTHER ISSUES OF INTEREST TO FL|ASLA

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Green Industries Working Group

The Florida Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (FLASLA) Government Affairs Committee (GAC) has received several comments and concerns lately from members regarding contract issues related to the highway beautification program at FDOT. FDOT Secretary Ananth Prasad, a strong advocate for the program, has recommended the creation of a green industries working group to advise the Secretary on issues concerning the design and implementation of FDOT's landscapes. The Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) has volunteered to coordinate this working group. David Crawley PLA, ASLA, ISA (Tampa Section and GAC committee member), has agreed to serve as FLASLA's representative and will report monthly to the GAC. David's participation in the working group will enable the chapter to more actively engage in the highway beautification program. The GAC will continue to discuss this issue as it develops and will adjust its advocacy strategy accordingly.

Water Wars

On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court said it would consider a lawsuit that seeks to increase the amount freshwater flowing from Georgia through North Florida and into Apalachicola Bay. Florida has argued that the area's oyster industry has been damaged by Georgia siphoning too much water upstream from a river system that flows to the bay. The oyster industry is economically vital to Franklin County in Northwest Florida, but the area has been declared a fishery-resource disaster by the federal government since February 2013. Florida has asked for an "equitable apportionment" of water from the river system.

2015 SESSION DATES

November 18, 2014 Organizational Session
January 5, 2015 Interim Committee Week
January 20, 2015 Interim Committee Week
February 2, 2015 Interim Committee Week
February 9, 2015 Interim Committee Week
February 16, 2015 Interim Committee Week

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