



# Advocacy in Florida

An insider's guide and what they won't tell you.

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# Basics about the Florida Legislature

- ▶ Florida is a part time legislature. Session is 60 days. By the time the Legislative Session begins, months of work has been completed.
- ▶ There are 40 Senators and 120 State Representatives. Their only constitutional requirement is to pass a budget. We have a balanced budget in Florida. The Governor does have line-item veto power.
- ▶ The Speaker over the House presides over the Florida House of Representatives and the Senate President over the Florida Senate.
- ▶ House members serve for 2 year terms not to exceed 8 years and the Senators are elected to 4 years terms, not to exceed 8 years.
- ▶ All House members run in every general election. Senators rotate by district number.
- ▶ Your civics teacher was correct! The Senate is the more deliberative body. The Senate is, generally speaking, more moderate and experienced.
- ▶ Despite being a “swing” state in national elections, the Florida House and Senate are solidly Republican.



## Florida House of Representatives Party Control: 1992-2018

Year	'92	'94	'96	'98	'00	'02	'04	'06	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18
Democrats	71	63	59	48	43	39	36	41	44	39	46	37	41	47
Republicans	49	57	61	72	77	81	84	79	76	81	74	82	79	73

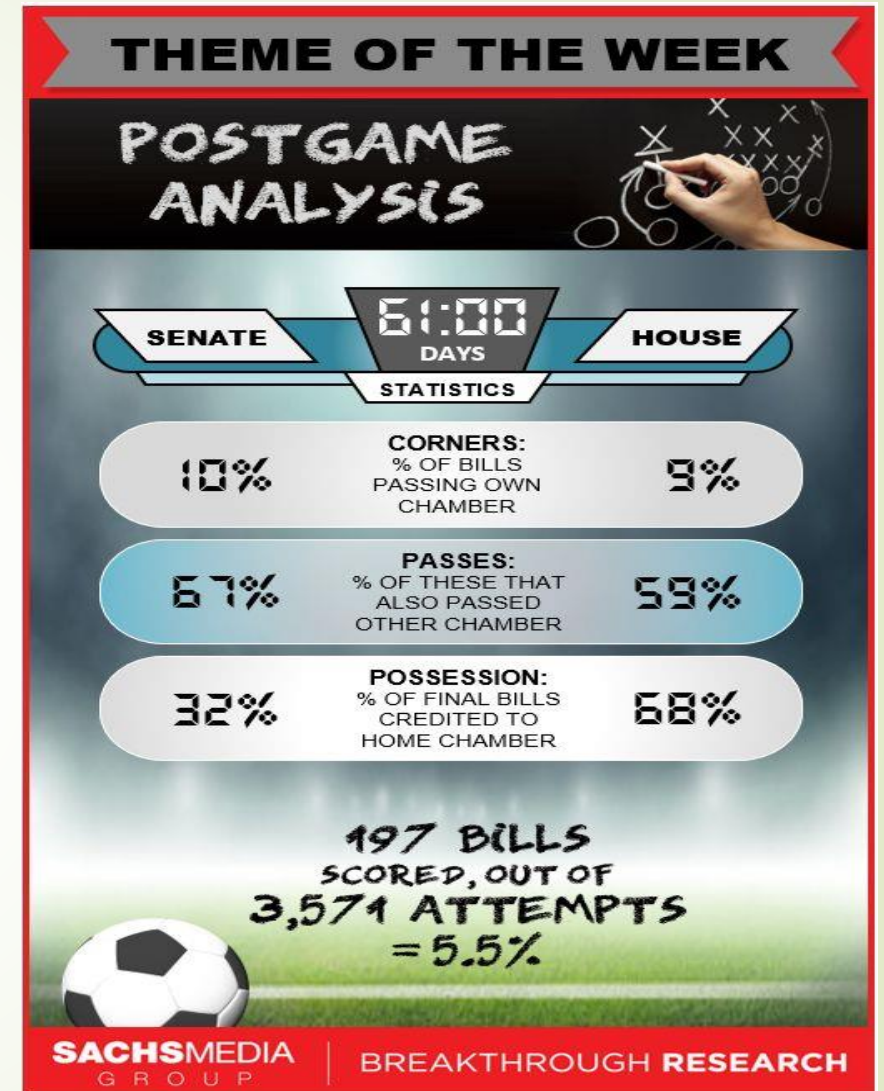
## Florida State Senate Party Control: 1992-2018

Year	'92	'94	'96	'98	'00	'02	'04	'06	'08	'10	'12	'14	'16	'18
Democrats	20*	19	17	15	15	14	14	14	14	12	14	14	15	17
Republicans	20*	21	23	25	25	26	26	26	26	28	26	26	25	23



# Know the Process

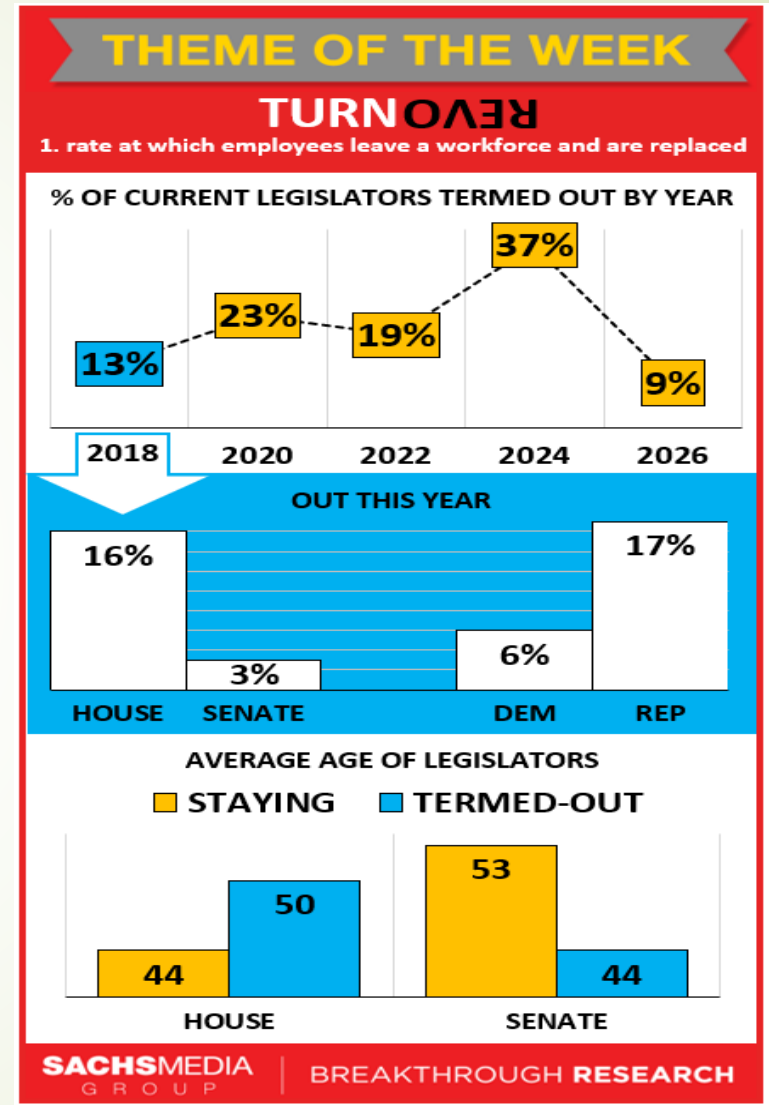
- ▶ You can't be effective without knowing how it works: take the time.
- ▶ [www.flsenate.gov](http://www.flsenate.gov)
- ▶ [www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov)
- ▶ The process changes constantly, with completely new leadership teams every two years.
- ▶ If you have access to political professionals, use them. Have them give you a lay of the land.
- ▶ The speaker and president refer bills to committee. How a bill is referred tells us a great deal about its chances of success.
- ▶ The process of negotiating the language in a bill takes place in the committee process and can last for months.
- ▶ Session is where a year's worth of work is IMPLEMENTED. Not formed or negotiated.
- ▶ Interim Committee weeks are every bit as important as session and is the best time to visit.
- ▶ Committee work is where everything happens. News bills or ideas do not "pop" up on the Floors toward the end of Session..
- ▶ The overwhelming majority of bills that are filed will fail to become law. Most bills will die on the agendas of one of their committee references. Very few bills are actually voted down in either committee or on the floor, they run out of time.





# Consider the Politics

- Understanding the leadership dynamic.
- Money plays a part, but it's not everything. Those who give campaign contributions almost always give to many legislators and from many sources. Single issue givers usually give to those who already support them. There are limits to campaign contributions.
- Understand the dynamic between the House and Senate. They are often at odds. We pay attention to how budget negotiations are going between the House and Senate because this can shut session down.
- There are innumerable moving parts going on at the same time.
- Partisanship: Most bills are unanimous.
- Redistricting.



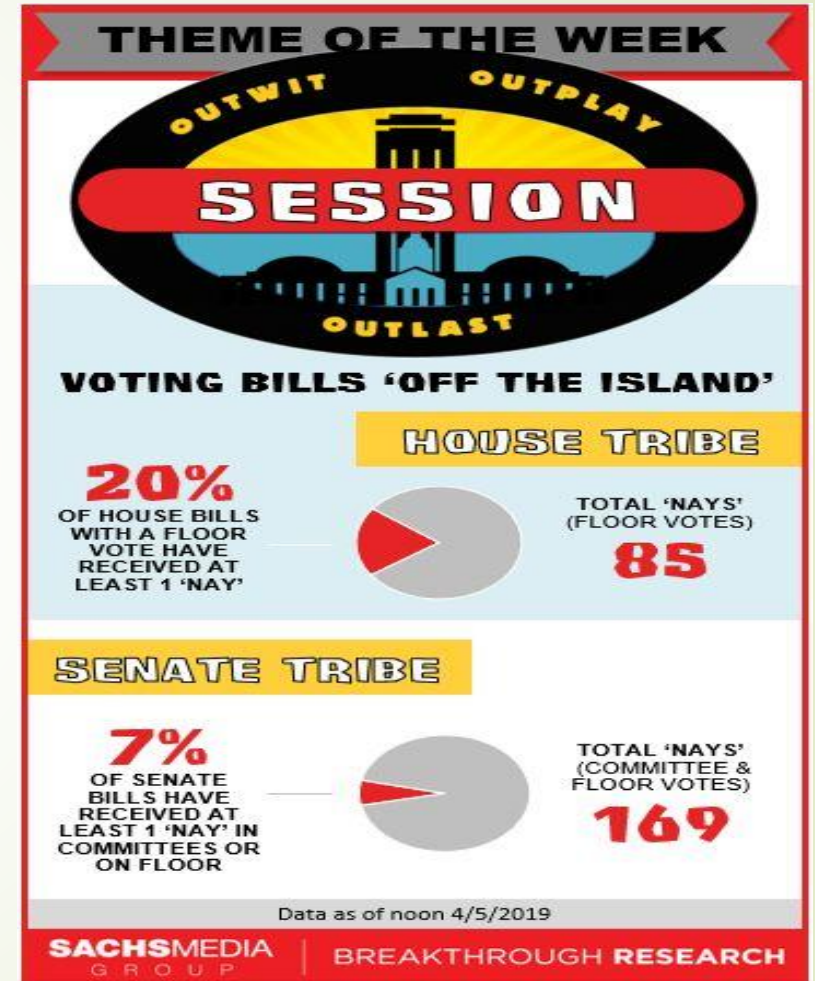
# An informed constituent is always the best lobbyist

- It's harder to tell a constituent no. Lobbyists have multiple clients. They expect to hear no.
- Lobbyists are usually managers, not mind changers.
- It's most effective when they associate you with "home."
- Taking the time to come to Tallahassee is significant.
- Know your audience. Do your homework on those you will meet as best you can.
- Six degrees of separation. Read their bio's, find things in common.



# What you need to know before the meeting

- Prepare a “leave behind.”
- Legislators are like Trauma surgeons.
- They are often dealing with realities that we don’t know about.
- Just because a member voted for something doesn’t mean they necessarily support it.
- Understand both sides and explain the other side as well.
- They have heard everything you are going to tell them already. What makes it personal for you?





# Never say never, but this won't help

- ▶ Don't be angry.
- ▶ Don't take it personally. This is hard when dealing with issues that relate to our families wellbeing.
- ▶ Don't spin: If you tell a half truth or leave something out you're done.

## Pace of Session


- ▶ By the time you read about it in the newspaper it has probably changed.
- ▶ The 60 day session is a grind, it's hard for any parent to be away from family.
- ▶ Frustrations run high.



# What they don't want you to know


- ▶ About half of the legislature has only slightly more influence than you do in the legislative process. The House is a TOP down process.
- ▶ Legislative aides are important
- ▶ Senior staff runs the show.
- ▶ Legislators can not keep track of all of the issues going on around them. Do not assume they are aware of a particular item.
- ▶ There are two kinds of lobbyists; the ones who know the members and the ones who know the issues.
- ▶ That they go home every weekend.
- ▶ Despite the “sunshine” a tremendous amount of business goes on behind closed doors.
- ▶ Legislators are often under great pressure from leadership to vote for priority issues, especially on the budget side.





Never forget that individuals with the exact same amount of integrity can come to opposite positions on important issues.



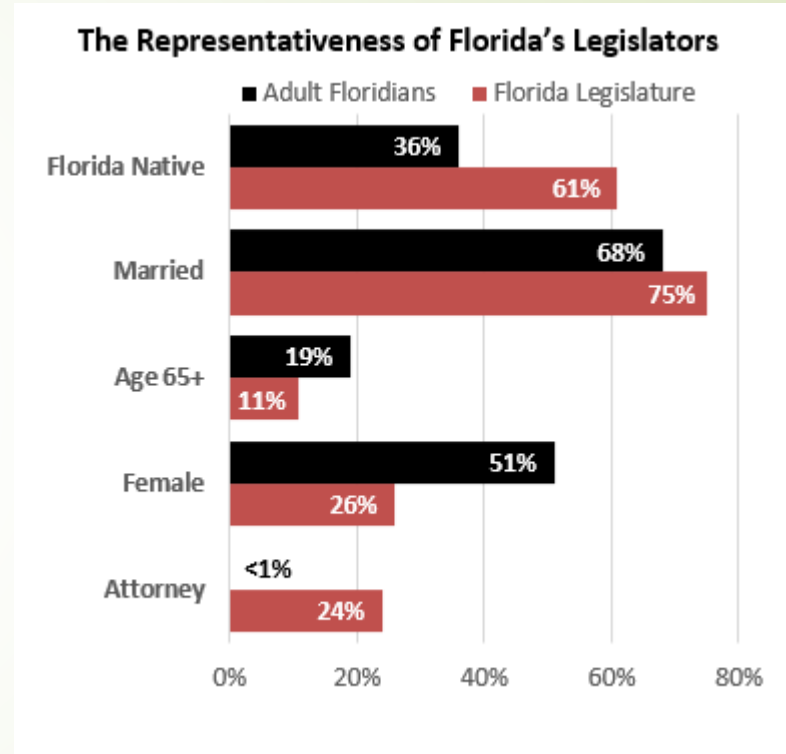


Today's enemy is  
tomorrow's  
champion.

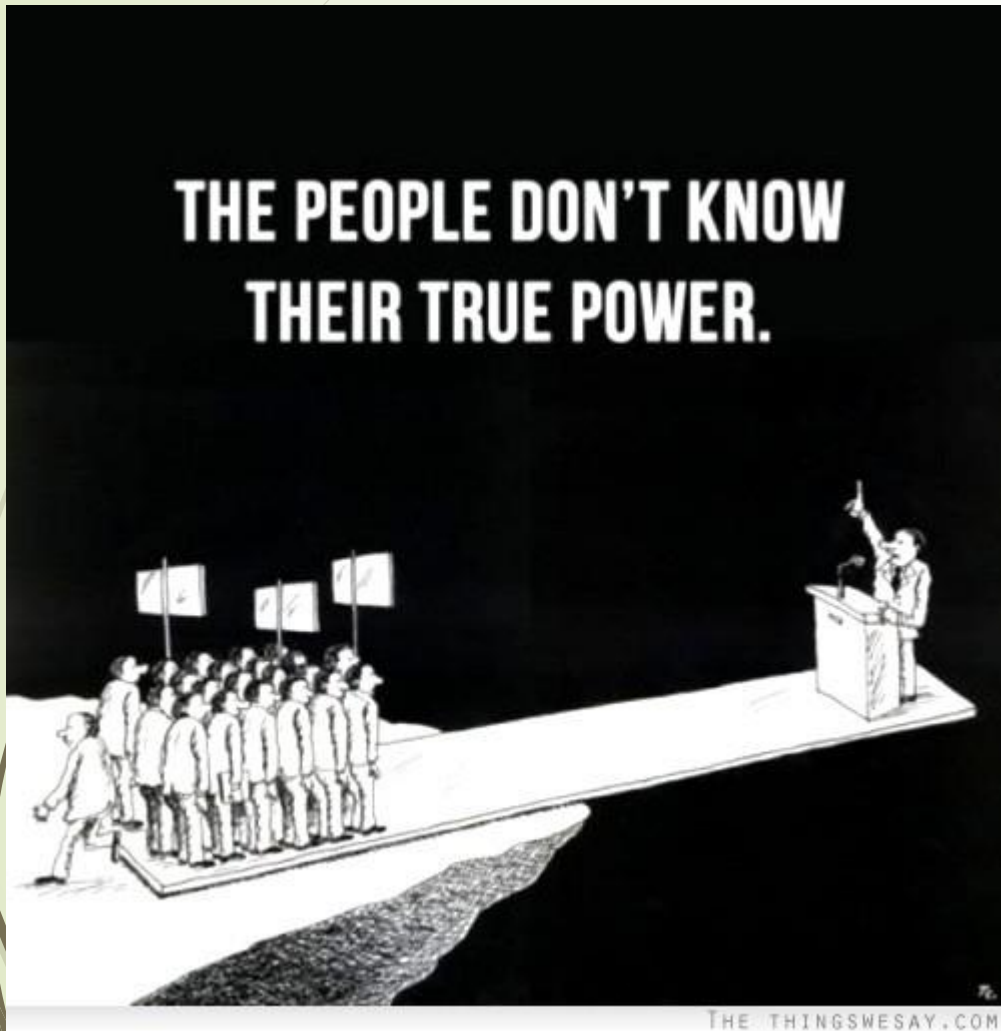


# Get to know your legislator over the summer

- Develop a relationship with your legislators.
- Get to know your County's Delegation.
- Speak in generalities and call dib's on an issue you believe will come up in the legislature. .



# The best advocacy is.....



- Personal.
- Reasonable.
- Inclusive.
- Authentic.



Please join us at The 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Family Café! June 5-7, 2020 Orlando, Florida.

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