

President Negron Announces Appointments to Florida's Constitution Revision Commission

Nine Senate appointees represent diverse cross-section of Florida

Tallahassee—Florida Senate President Joe Negron (R-Stuart) today appointed nine members of Florida's Constitution Revision Commission (CRC). Pursuant to Article XI, Section 2 of Florida's Constitution, the 37-member commission is established every 20 years to propose amendments to the state constitution for voter consideration.

“I am very grateful to the many talented Floridians who applied to serve as Senate appointees to the CRC. Florida is fortunate to have so many private citizens willing to take time away from their families and careers to serve the public in this important capacity,” said President Negron. “My goal in selecting the nine Senate appointees was to choose individuals who represent a diverse cross-section of our state in terms of their personal, professional, and political life experiences. The most serious and important issue for me, and a common thread among our Senate appointees, is a fervent commitment to individual liberty and personal freedom guaranteed by our state and federal constitutions. The Senate appointees are all women and men of good judgment.”

The Constitution Revision Commission meets for approximately one year. Commissioners travel the state to receive public testimony, identify issues, perform research, and recommend ballot language to the Secretary of State. Fifteen members are appointed by the Governor, nine by the Senate President, nine by the Speaker of the House, and three by the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court. The Attorney General also serves on the commission.

“These nine individuals each possess a tireless work ethic and zeal for public service that has propelled them to the highest levels of success in the private sector, as well as state and local elected office,” continued President Negron. “Another common trait is dedication to young people. The appointees are strong advocates for school choice opportunities that celebrate the power of the parents to determine what form of education is best for their child. They are also active in community-led programs that support vulnerable and at-risk children on their path to adulthood. These affiliations and convictions demonstrate to me that these nine individuals are committed to confining government to its proper, limited role. I am also confident they will ardently safeguard the supremacy of the individual.”

Don Gaetz

For more than 30 years, former Senate President Gaetz dedicated his life to expanding Floridians' access to quality health care services as a hospital administrator and co-founder of a successful hospice care business. After tremendous success in the private sector, he devoted his talents and time to public service. As a school board member and later as superintendent, he led Okaloosa County to become the highest performing public school system in Florida, winning numerous national awards for academic excellence. President Gaetz has an undergraduate degree from Concordia College and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Troy State University.

Known for a relentless commitment to reform, and the ability to collaborate across party lines, in 2012 he was unanimously elected by his colleagues to serve a two-year term as President of the Florida Senate. President Gaetz used his time leading the Senate to champion expanding economic opportunities through education, increasing government accountability through major ethics reforms, and making Florida the most military and veteran-friendly state in the nation.

Anna Marie Hernandez Gamez

Ms. Hernandez Gamez focuses her Miami-based law practice on complex real estate and commercial litigation. The daughter of Cuban immigrants, Ms. Hernandez Gamez is the past president of the Cuban American Bar Association (CABA). Her work at CABA has focused on its core missions of increasing diversity in the judiciary and legal community, fostering respect for the law, and providing equal access to and adequate representation of all minorities before the courts.

In addition to her legal practice, Ms. Hernandez Gamez has been an active supporter of several charitable organizations in the Miami area and served as a Take Stock in Children mentor. Ms. Hernandez Gamez earned her undergraduate degree in History and Political Science from Florida International University and a juris doctor with honors from University of Miami School of Law.

Patricia Levesque

As chief executive officer of the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) and executive director of the Foundation for Florida's Future, Ms. Levesque has worked with federal and state leaders, teachers, parents, and students to advance education systems that maximize every student's potential for learning.

Prior to her education non-profit work, Ms. Levesque served as deputy chief of staff to Governor Jeb Bush. In that capacity she oversaw state agencies responsible for education, general government services, business and professional regulation, elder affairs, veterans affairs, workforce, lottery, and juvenile justice. She also served as staff in the Florida Legislature for six years, working in the Office of the Speaker and as staff director over education policy. Ms. Levesque was a member of the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission in 2007-08.

Sherry Plymale

Ms. Plymale has served as chair of the State Board of Community Colleges, as chief of staff to Commissioner Frank Brogan in the Florida Department of Education, as a trustee of Florida Atlantic University and St. Leo University, and as a board member of the Martin County School Readiness Coalition. She has also served as the chair of the Florida Atlantic University Board of Trustees.

Ms. Plymale has dedicated much of her time to work with the YMCA, the Children's Home Society of Florida, and the Healthy Kids Corporation. She is also a member of the Florida Atlantic University Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute. Ms. Plymale earned an undergraduate degree from St. Leo University.

William "Bill" Schifino, Jr.

Mr. Schifino currently serves as president of The Florida Bar for the 2016-2017 term, and previously served as president of the Hillsborough County Bar Association. In addition, Mr. Schifino recently concluded eight years of service as a member of the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Judicial Nominating Commission, serving as its chair. Both Governors Jeb Bush and Charlie Crist appointed him to this critical position.

Mr. Schifino has also dedicated significant time to the Florida Guardian ad Litem Association, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Greater Tampa, Boys & Girls Club of Tampa Bay, Inc., and the Tampa Bay Little League, Inc. He earned his undergraduate degree from Tulane University and his law degree from the University of Florida College of Law, where he serves on the Board of Trustees of the UF Law Center Association. Mr. Schifino is board certified in the area of business litigation.

Chris Smith

Former Senator Smith has been an active member of the Ft. Lauderdale community throughout his legal career. He served as president of the Fort Lauderdale Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Youth Council and was later appointed to the City of Fort Lauderdale's Planning and Zoning Board, where he served as the youngest member.

Senator Smith went on to serve nearly two decades in the Florida Legislature while maintaining a private law practice in South Florida. He served as the Democratic Leader in both the House and the Senate during the same time periods that President Negron served as the Appropriations Chair in the House and Senate. Senator Smith earned his undergraduate degree from Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU) in Charlotte, North Carolina, and his law degree from Florida State University College of Law.

Bob Solari

After a successful private sector career in citrus, real estate, and financial planning, Commissioner Solari turned to serve his community of more than 35 years. As a former City of Vero Beach Council member and now Indian River County Commissioner, he has been a strong advocate for Indian River County taxpayers and a zealous defender of individual rights.

Commissioner Solari is a graduate of the University of Denver and Fordham University School of Law. He also earned a Master's Degree in Business Administration from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Jacqui Thurlow-Lippisch

A former teacher with years of classroom experience instructing middle and high school students, Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch most recently served as a city commissioner and as mayor for the town of Sewall's Point. Her time on the Commission included appointments to various state and local boards that focused on environmental issues facing her area.

Ms. Thurlow-Lippisch has dedicated considerable time to informing the residents of Florida about environmental damage to the St. Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon. Her service on several local boards and her support of organizations like River Kidz has helped promote efforts

to find solutions to the damaging discharges from Lake Okeechobee. She is a graduate of the University of Florida and earned her Master's Degree in Education from the University of West Florida.

Carolyn Timmann

Clerk Timmann is the Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller of Martin County. She has served the State of Florida in each branch of government. Clerk Timmann served in the Legislative Branch as a legislative assistant to State Representative Tom Warner and later in the Executive Branch as executive deputy chief of staff to the Governor, overseeing military and veterans' affairs, gubernatorial councils and commissions, and statewide consumer and technology projects. She served as a division director in the Executive Office of the Governor, managing public records and projects to provide statewide electronic information. Clerk Timmann also served in the Judicial Branch as a judicial assistant in the Nineteenth Circuit and Special Assistant to Florida's Solicitor General.

In addition to her duties with the court, Clerk Timmann serves on the Board of Directors of Helping People Succeed and is a member of the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary. She also assists other organizations such as the Elliott Museum and the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She attended the University of Georgia, Indian River State College, and Florida State University, earning both Associate and Bachelor Degrees.

For more information, please visit www.FLSenate.gov.

Chief Justice Names 3 to Constitution Revision Commission

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Chief Justice Jorge Labarga today announced his three appointments to the Constitution Revision Commission, which is created every 20 years to review the Florida Constitution and make proposals directly to voters.

Labarga's appointments are Hank Coxe of Jacksonville, Arthenia Joyner of Tampa and Roberto Martinez of Coral Gables.

"I looked not only for people skilled in the law, but also for those who have a breadth of knowledge about all the functions of government and its impact upon the everyday lives of everyday people," the chief justice said.

More than 70 people contacted the Court to request appointment to the CRC. Under the Florida Constitution, the chief justice appoints three of the 37 commissioners. Labarga made his appointments with the advice of the other six members of the Supreme Court:

- Coxe, a Jacksonville attorney who specializes in federal and state criminal matters, has served as president of The Florida Bar. He has also served on the Judicial Qualifications Commission, which is the constitutionally created board that receives and investigates allegations of judicial misconduct. He served on the Florida Supreme Court Innocence Commission and the Judicial Nominating Commissions for the Fourth Judicial Circuit as well as the First District Court of Appeal.
- Joyner, a Tampa attorney, represented her community in the Legislature for 16 years, first in the Florida House and then in the Florida Senate. She was a student participant in the first civil rights demonstration in Tampa, part of the effort to desegregate department store lunch counters. A few years later, as a student at Florida A&M University, she was part of the demonstrations seeking to desegregate the city's movie theaters and churches.
- Martinez, a Coral Gables attorney, has served in the U.S. Attorney's Office in South Florida, first as an assistant U.S. attorney and then, later, as the U.S. Attorney. He has a record of active service in education, both in his home county of Miami-Dade and also on a state level, serving as a member of the state Board of Education for several years. He served as a member of the Florida Taxation and Budget Commission in 2007-08 and chaired the commission's Government Services subcommittee.