

# Legislative Session Preview

Happy New Year, FRSA! Temperatures are dropping but the heat is rising in Tallahassee as we switch into high gear for the 2020 regular session of the Florida Legislature, which convenes on January 14 and adjourns on March 13. A myriad of policy issues will be on the table this year, from sweeping healthcare bills to comprehensive alimony reform. Major funding initiatives like ongoing environmental restoration efforts and teacher pay increases will also dominate the conversation as the Legislature crafts an approximately \$91 billion budget for the next fiscal year. Of course, 2020 is an election year, so the lens of politics will shade each of these policy and budgetary issues in a uniquely Florida way.

FRSA will have a seat at the table and a strong voice on all issues of significance to the industry. We already know that professional licensure deregulation, construction defect reform and skilled worker/talent issues will be major topics. Furthermore, we will remain vigilant on the Florida Building Code as well as our workers' compensation system to make sure that citizens' interests are protected. I look forward to working with our leadership, the Governmental Affairs Committee and each of you wishing to engage in-depth on these and other important industry issues.

In advance of the session, I wanted to provide a broad overview and highlight a few political topics for the interested observer. Historically, legislative session during an election year is a little more subdued than a non-election year. Session is earlier (January-to-March in an election year versus March-to-May in non-election years) and Members are generally eager to return home to their families, districts and upcoming legislative races. Every seat in the Florida House of Representatives is up for re-election in 2020 and one-half of the seats in the Florida Senate will be on the ballot. Each session always has its own unique personality, sculpted by the political players, the headlines and the major challenges of the day. Further, there is always the chance for the unexpected to alter the course of a session without warning, such as the tragedy in Parkland in the waning days of the 2018 session. It's impossible to predict everything that the 2020 session may bring, but here are a few of the key factors.

## A (very popular) Governor DeSantis has a Healthy Legislative Agenda for 2020

Governor DeSantis has hit the ground running in Tallahassee, scoring major 2019 victories in priority areas like immigration (banning sanctuary cities in Florida) and environmental restoration. He isn't

resting on his laurels for 2020, though. Most notably, the Governor has proposed another major immigration policy for the state: the mandatory use of E-Verify by all Florida employers. E-Verify is a federal database used by employers to check an applicant's work eligibility. A Senate bill, SB 664, has been filed by Senator Tom Lee (R-Brandon) and co-sponsored by GOP Party Chairman Senator Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota). In the House, Representative Cord Byrd (R-Jacksonville) is expected to file similar legislation in the coming days.

Further, the Governor has announced a major budget priority for 2020 – teacher starting pay and bonuses – to the tune of nearly \$1 billion. The dual-part plan would see starting teacher pay set at \$47,500 and would also create a \$300 million bonus pool for teachers and principals statewide. The idea of increasing teacher pay is popular across the state with Democrats, Republicans and Independents, but the devil is in the (budget) details. Florida's Constitution requires the Legislature to annually pass a balanced budget, so cuts will have to be made elsewhere in order to fund these priorities.

## Legislative Leaders Look to the Future

With term limits, the doors of the Florida Legislature are always swinging, including a change of leadership in both the House and the Senate. With this transition imminent, the 2020 session will be the final opportunity for current leaders to cement their legacies. It's also the time when incoming leaders begin defining theirs. House Speaker Jose Oliva (R-Hialeah) and Senate President Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton) both saw their major priorities cross the finish line in 2019. Oliva sought healthcare deregulation aimed at greater transparency and competition, including a repeal of the state's certificate of need (CON) process for facility licensure. Galvano sought the creation of three new Multi-use Corridors of Economic Significance ("M-CORES") to boost the state's transportation network and foster opportunities for rural economic development. With major wins achieved, it's likely that Oliva and Galvano will utilize the balance of their influence to shore up these initiatives and tackle any unfinished



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“When a board seat became available and Ryan was nominated to fill the seat, it was an easy decision for the rest of the board to approve.”

RT3 Board Member Tom Whitaker agreed saying, “Ryan is a passionate roofing industry member. His communication skills and knowledge of how to build a high performing sales team are without question.”

Ryan worked for a leading roofing contractor in Florida and was key to promoting a sales software that the contractor created to contractors nationwide. His passion continued to grow and he founded Sales Transformation Group to share his vision, strategy, structure, systems and processes that help contractors succeed.

In addition to his service on the RT3 Board of Directors, Ryan chairs the RT3 Communications Task Team and is in the process of launching a technology focused RT3 podcast that is expected to go live in the first quarter of 2020.

Ryan joins current board members Tom Whitaker, President of Harness Software, Anna Anderson, CEO of Art Unlimited, Heidi J. Ellsworth, Partner, RoofersCoffeeShop, Steve Little, Head Coach at KPost Roofing & Waterproofing and Ken Kelly, President of Kelly Roofing.

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business. On their heels, a new crop of leaders will ascend to the helm of the legislative branch, led by Speaker-Designate Chris Sprowls (R-Clearwater) and President-Designate Wilton Simpson (R-Spring Hill). Both men will bring with them a new style, new priorities and a new supporting cast into leadership roles across the Legislature. As leader designates, both Sprowls and Simpson are also in charge of their Chamber’s respective majority-party campaign efforts. Their work on that front has already begun, influenced heavily by our third and final factor.

### **A Presidential Election Looms**

Everyone knows 2020 will be a political juggernaut with President Trump up for re-election and a broad field of Democratic contenders looking to unseat him. Federal elections and issues trickle down to state politics, especially in a Presidential cycle. Especially in Florida, especially now.

President Trump will focus heavily on the Sunshine State ahead of our March 17 presidential preference primary (where his Democratic rival may

be crowned) and our November 3 general election. The Legislature will play a significant role in the policy – and the politics – of it all. Major policy issues will include election security to prevent domestic or foreign interference, voter access (including the ongoing implementation of Amendment 4 aimed at the restoration of felons’ voting rights) and campaign finance reform. Following the 2016 election, the pressure is on to guard the integrity of the 2020 election and Floridians’ faith in their voting systems. As for the politics, the Florida Legislature will feel the eyes of the nation as topics like gun laws, tax policy and immigration continue to dominate the debate, the headlines and the political polls.

With these influences, the 2020 session of the Florida Legislature will set the course not only for the future of our state, but very likely for the future of our nation. What a time to be engaged in Florida politics! It’s a pleasure and a privilege to advocate for FRSA in Tallahassee and together we will leave our own unique mark for 2020 and beyond.

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