



2025

# FLORIDA TAXWATCH ANNUAL REPORT



THE TRUSTED EYES AND EARS  
OF FLORIDA TAXPAYERS

# ABOUT



## FLORIDA TAXWATCH

**E**stablished in 1979, Florida TaxWatch has become an integral part of Florida's fiscal policy and governance. As a non-partisan, non-profit taxpayer research institute and government watchdog, we have a long-standing history of advocating for efficient use of taxpayer dollars and promoting accountable governance.

From the outset, our institute has led in analyzing state budgets, tax policies, and spending practices. Our commitment to rigorous, unbiased research has shaped fiscal policies and bolstered Florida's economic prosperity.

Over the years, we've adapted to changing economic and political landscapes, broadening our research to sectors like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. This expansion ensures comprehensive scrutiny of government spending for efficiency and effectiveness.

Our work has influenced policy decisions, enhanced government operations, and led to taxpayer savings. Through detailed reports, briefings, and conferences, we continue to be a beacon of transparency and accountability.

Florida TaxWatch stands firm in its mission, committed to objectivity and non-partisanship as we safeguard Florida's fiscal health. Our focus extends beyond economic growth, emphasizing productivity enhancements and the impact of fiscal and economic policies on taxpayers and businesses.

Looking forward, we remain a leading voice for efficient government and responsible fiscal stewardship. Dedicated to our founders' legacy, we strive to serve as a trusted advisor and watchdog for all Floridians, ensuring that Florida continues to exemplify fiscal responsibility for future generations.

# FOREWORD



## DOMINIC M. CALABRO

*PRESIDENT & CEO*

**F**LORENDA TAXWATCH WAS FOUNDED BY CITIZENS who believed principled stewardship of public dollars is not a slogan—it is a duty. From our earliest days as the Citizens Council for Budget Research to the organization Florida TaxWatch is today, our compass has never wavered: protect the taxpayer, promote efficient and effective government, and do so constructively, independently, and without partisanship.

That clarity of purpose is why TaxWatch endures while administrations change, fiscal cycles rise and fall, priorities shift, and the demands of a fast-growing state only intensify. Through it all, Florida TaxWatch has remained what one Florida newspaper once called us in three simple phrases: a respected watchdog, an influential guidedog, and an unrelenting birddog—serving as the trusted eyes and ears of Florida taxpayers. We earn that description every day through rigorous research, nonpartisan analysis, and practical recommendations that help leaders spend public dollars more wisely and transparently.

This Annual Report is a snapshot of a year—and a legacy—defined by that mission. It reflects the dedication of our Board of Trustees and officers, the expertise of our research team, the professionalism of our staff, and the partnership of members and supporters across Florida. To each of you, thank you. Your confidence and counsel have strengthened this iconic institution.

This year is a milestone of transition. As I conclude my service as President & CEO, I will “pass the torch” at our Annual

Meeting to Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp, who will serve as Florida TaxWatch’s next President & CEO. Jeff understands what makes Florida TaxWatch unique in Florida’s civic life—our commitment to taxpayers, our insistence on facts over rhetoric, and our belief that better government is both possible and necessary. I know he will honor our traditions and expand our impact.

Stepping back is both humbling and hopeful. Humbling, because no leader accomplishes anything alone. Hopeful, because the institution is stronger than any one person. The same principles that guided our founders guide us still: independence, integrity, and an unrelenting focus on results for the people of Florida.

I leave confident that Florida TaxWatch will continue to ask hard questions, offer practical answers, and help build a our state and local governments worthy of those they serve. The future is bright for our free state of Florida—and TaxWatch will be there, as always, making sure every dollar works as hard as the taxpayers who earned it.

Thank you for the incredible privilege and deep honor of serving each of you and all of the taxpayers these nearly five decades.

Respectfully,

*Dominic M. Calabro*

**Dominic M. Calabro**

*President & CEO*

JIMMY PATRONIS  
1ST DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION  
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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(202) 225-4136

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-0901

September 28, 2025

Mr. Dominic Calabro  
Florida TaxWatch  
106 North Florida Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Dear Dominic,

Congratulations on your retirement from Florida TaxWatch after 46 years of dedicated service to the State of Florida!

During my time as Florida's Chief Financial Officer, I saw firsthand the tremendous value that Florida TaxWatch provides. Under your leadership, the organization became an indispensable partner in protecting taxpayers and ensuring government accountability. Our state is stronger because of your work. I have many fond memories of speaking at Florida TaxWatch events, and I am confident the organization's important mission will continue to thrive under Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp.

Katie and I extend our heartfelt best wishes as you begin this next chapter of life. If I can ever be of assistance, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,



**Jimmy Patronis**  
Member of Congress

“That’s what  
[Florida]  
TaxWatch  
does. It hits  
you in the  
face with  
reality.”



(2019) U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JIMMY PATRONIS SPEAKS ABOUT HIS AWARD-WINNING TEAM AT A TALLAHASSEE NEWS CONFERENCE ANNOUNCING THE 2019 GOVERNMENT PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS (FORMERLY TPA) WINNERS



## THE FLORIDA SENATE

### SENATOR JASON W.B. PIZZO

#### DISTRICT OFFICE:

3475 Sheridan Street  
Suite 211  
Hollywood, FL 33021  
Phone: 954.893.5045  
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#### CAPITOL OFFICE:

210 Senate Office Building  
404 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399  
Phone: 850.487.5037

#### STAFF:

Maggie Gerson  
Chief Legislative Aide  
[gerson.maggie@flsenate.gov](mailto:gerson.maggie@flsenate.gov)

Kayla Francis  
Senior Legislative Aide  
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Joanne Alvarez  
District Legislative Aide  
[alvarez.joanne@flsenate.gov](mailto:alvarez.joanne@flsenate.gov)

#### COMMITTEES:

Appropriations Committee  
on Pre-K-12 Education,  
*Vice Chair*

Regulated Industries,  
*Vice Chair*

Appropriations

Appropriations Committee  
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Environment, and General  
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Criminal Justice

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Committee

#### BEN ALBRITTON

*President of the Senate*

#### JASON BRODEUR

*President Pro Tempore*

September 28, 2025

Florida TaxWatch  
106 North Florida Bronough Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32301

Florida TaxWatch Members,

Please accept my sincere congratulations on 46 years of distinguished service to the State of Florida. Florida TaxWatch has earned its reputation as a reliable, non-partisan source of data-driven analysis—and in today's environment, that work is both rare and essential.

In my office, your reports are not just referenced—they are required reading. Your research regularly informs the policymaking process, providing the clarity and context necessary to craft legislation that truly serves Floridians.

That level of trust and credibility is the result of strong, principled leadership. Dominic Calabro has spent decades building an institution grounded in facts, not politics. His legacy is one of integrity, independence, and public service. It has been my privilege to cite and share your work on the Senate floor, knowing it stands on solid ground.

As Dominic begins his next chapter, I am confident that Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp will continue this tradition of thoughtful, non-partisan analysis. I look forward to Florida TaxWatch's continued contributions to our State's public discourse.

Please extend my very best wishes to Dominic, and my ongoing appreciation to the entire Florida TaxWatch team.

Sincerely,

Jason Pizzo

“My staff is required to read Florida TaxWatch reports. It should be required reading for Florida legislators.”





**RON DESANTIS**  
GOVERNOR

September 30, 2025

Dear Mr. Calabro and Members of the Florida TaxWatch Board of Trustees:

Congratulations on 46 years of vigilant service as the taxpayer's watchdog. Your commitment to keeping Floridians informed and your annual Budget Turkey Report provides an invaluable public service. We share a common goal and have been able to protect Florida taxpayers by vetoing hundreds of millions of dollars in spending that lacks transparency and public review.

This powerful legacy of accountability is a direct result of Dominic Calabro's unwavering leadership. For decades, he has been a courageous and indispensable voice for fiscal discipline in our state.

I have full confidence that Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp will continue this vital work with the same integrity. My administration remains a committed partner in the mission to safeguard taxpayer dollars. I wish Dominic the very best and thank the entire Florida TaxWatch team for its dedication to our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ron DeSantis".

Ron DeSantis  
Governor

“We appreciate  
[Florida  
TaxWatch’s]  
involvement in  
this process.”



Florida  TaxWatch 40<sup>th</sup>  
1979 - 2019

THE BREAKERS

DEC. 2-4 2019

SPECIAL THANK YOU TO TODAY'S LUNCH SPONSORS

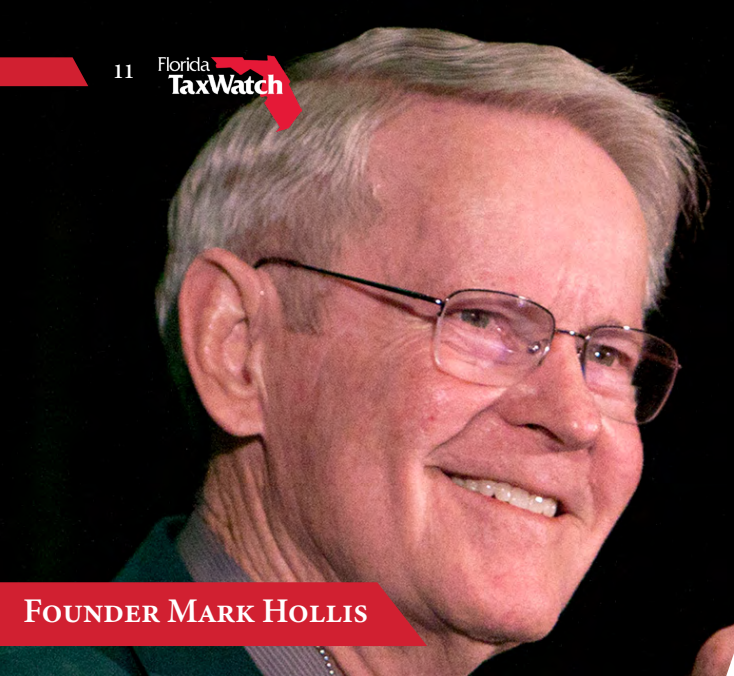
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(2004) FOUNDERS MARK HOLLIS & PHIL LEWIS (SEATED) WITH GOVERNORS BOB MARTINEZ, JEB BUSH, WAYNE MIXSON, AND TAXWATCH FOUNDER T. WAYNE DAVIS





FOUNDER MARK HOLLIS



FOUNDER PHIL LEWIS

## FLORIDA TAXWATCH'S FOUNDING

*46 YEARS. BILLIONS SAVED.*

In 1977, Senate President-designate Phil Lewis asked Publix executive Mark Hollis why Florida's business community was coming to Tallahassee for higher consumer taxes instead of a smarter state budget. That challenge sparked the idea for a citizen watchdog.

Two years later in Tampa, an organizational meeting created the Citizens Council for Budget Research—renamed Florida TaxWatch five years later. Founders included J.E. Davis, Winn-Dixie founder; T. Wayne Davis, Winn-Dixie founder; George Jenkins, Publix Founder; Mark Hollis, President of Publix; Phil Lewis, President of the Florida Senate; and Ken Plante, Florida Senator.

Their aim: build a citizen-funded, independent guardian that tracks how tax dollars are spent, exposes waste and inefficiency, and drives practical improvements—balancing the interests of business, labor, government, and taxpayers. From day one, the model was simple: independent, research-driven recommendations that make state government more competitive, productive, and accountable.

The premise still holds: spend public dollars wisely, and Florida can meet essential needs without raising taxes as steeply or as often—sometimes even lowering them—while improving outcomes.

Today, Florida TaxWatch's research informs laws, constitutional amendments, budgets, and new programs. Governors, Cabinet officers, legislators, agency heads, and frontline employees use Florida TaxWatch analysis to deliver better value for taxpayers. That unrelenting focus on better government remains the organization's engine.



FOUNDERS MARK HOLLIS (LEFT) &amp; PHIL LEWIS (RIGHT)

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CHAIRMAN PIYUSH PATEL, 2025 FLORIDA TAXWATCH SPRING MEETING



WESLEY BARNETT (LEFT), ACCEPTING THE FLORIDA TAXWATCH CHAIRMAN'S AWARD ON BEHALF OF CHAIRMAN BARNEY BARNETT FROM CHAIRMAN DAVID MANN (RIGHT) AND ADAM PUTNAM (CENTER)



(1998) DOMINIC CALABRO (BIG SCISSORS) IS JOINED BY FLORIDA TAXWATCH CHAIRMAN T. O'NEAL DOUGLAS (MIDDLE) FOR THE RIBBON CUTTING OFFICIALLY OPENING THE PERMANENT HOME OF FLORIDA TAXWATCH



**CHAIRMAN PIYUSH PATEL (LEFT), RECEIVING THE FLORIDA TAXWATCH CHAIRMAN'S AWARD FROM U.S. SEN. GEORGE S. LEMIEUX (CENTER) AND DOMINIC CALABRO (RIGHT)**



**CHAIRMAN STEVE EVANS,  
2025 FLORIDA TAXWATCH GOVERNMENT PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS**



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

PIYUSH PATEL | KYRA SOLUTIONS

**I**T IS MY HONOR TO PRESENT this Annual Report as your Chairman. This report reflects both the achievements of the past year and the legacy of those who built the strong foundation and reputation Florida TaxWatch enjoys today.

I extend special recognition to our President & CEO and friend, Dominic Calabro, whose steadfast leadership has fostered a culture of innovation and excellence. Our research team continues to deliver timely, insightful work that shapes policy, earns the respect of lawmakers and media, and cements our place as an indispensable voice in Florida's policy landscape.

I am grateful for the wise counsel of our Officers and Executive Committee, whose guidance has been invaluable during pivotal moments. And above all, I thank you—our members—whose dedication makes Florida TaxWatch dynamic, responsive, and impactful.

We look forward to welcoming you to this year's Annual Meeting, October 6–8, 2025, at the Four Seasons Hotel at Walt Disney World. Your awesome commitment and significant engagement ensures that together, we continue shaping a stronger future for Florida and all of its hard-working taxpayers.

Respectfully,

*Piyush A. Patel*

**PIYUSH PATEL**

*Chairman*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

DOMINIC M. CALABRO | FLORIDA TAXWATCH

Reflecting on 46 years of Florida TaxWatch, I am filled with immense pride in the substantial and enduring impact of our work. Our influence has not only stood the test of time but has grown, solidifying TaxWatch's role as a trusted fiscal watchdog and advocate for the hardworking taxpayers of Florida.

This year also marks a significant transition. As I conclude my service as President & CEO, I am honored to pass the torch to my dear friend and a dedicated public servant, Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp. Jeff's character, integrity, and deep love for Florida TaxWatch and his understanding of our state's challenges make him the ideal leader to guide this organization into its next chapter. I have the utmost confidence that he will not only honor our foundational principles but will expand Florida TaxWatch's impact for years to come.

While I am stepping back from this role, my commitment to our shared mission is unwavering. In my retirement, Dr. Bill Kent and I will be, with deepest support and appreciation, launching the Florida TaxWatch Foundation. The foundation will secure endowments, bequest and major gifts to ensure the independence and long-term success of Florida TaxWatch for years to come.

None of TaxWatch's successes would be possible without the incredible leadership of our Officers and Board, and the generous support of our members. I especially want to thank and recognize our outstanding Chairman, and true friend, Piyush Patel, for his extraordinary leadership and unwavering ethical guidance. Having known and worked closely for many decades with Incoming Charman David Casey, I know that his leadership and guidance will be incredibly impactful.

It is my hope that hardworking Floridians will always have a respected institution to turn to for sensible, responsible reforms. It has been the privilege of a lifetime for me and my family to serve this organization and the people of Florida. I leave confident that the future for our great state is bright, and that Florida TaxWatch will be there every step of the way, making sure that Florida remains the beacon and envy of the nation. The hard-working taxpayers of Florida deserve and expect nothing less.

With the deepest respect and my sincere appreciation,

*Dominic M. Calabro*

**DOMINIC M. CALABRO**

*President & CEO*





# TREASURER'S MESSAGE

MARVA JOHNSON | FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

**I AM PLEASED TO REPORT** that Florida TaxWatch remains on a sound financial footing as we close another successful fiscal year, which concludes on October 1, 2025. While the final year-end financials will be reflected in our audited statements, I can affirm that we continue to operate with strong fiscal discipline and accountability. Our resources are being carefully managed to ensure that every dollar is directed toward advancing our mission—delivering rigorous, independent research and promoting government efficiency on behalf of Florida's taxpayers.

This year has been particularly meaningful as it marks the final year of service for our longtime President and CEO, Dominic M. Calabro. Under his leadership, Florida TaxWatch has grown into one of the most respected taxpayer research institutes in the nation. It has been an honor to help steward our financial resources during this important transition, ensuring that the organization is well-positioned for continued impact in the years ahead.

Our commitment to accountability and transparency remains unchanged. In keeping with our Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, no funds are allocated to lobbying activities—only to the research,

analysis, and outreach efforts that strengthen Florida's fiscal policy landscape.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I want to thank our members and supporters for their trust and continued investment in our mission. Your partnership allows Florida TaxWatch to remain a trusted voice for taxpayers today and well into the future.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marva Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**MARVA JOHNSON**

*Treasurer*

# INCOMING CHARMAN'S MESSAGE

DAVID CASEY | MAXIMUS

**T**O SAY THAT WE OPERATE IN DYNAMIC TIMES is, without doubt, an understatement. As we continue to adapt and evolve as an organization, it is essential to focus on our mission: providing the taxpayers of Florida and public officials with high-quality, independent research and analysis on issues related to state and local government taxation, regulations, expenditures, policies, and programs. Florida TaxWatch research not only recommends productivity enhancements but also explains the statewide impact of fiscal and economic policies on the state's residents and businesses. Over the past 46 years, our pursuit of this mission has undeniably transformed the business environment and, more importantly, the lives of Floridians—a fact that should fill us with pride.

This is a particularly historic moment for our organization. The past, current, and future strength of Florida TaxWatch is rooted in the commitment of our membership, the dedication of our volunteer leadership, the expertise of our executive team, and the passion of our staff. For more than four decades, that strength has been personified by our President and CEO, Dominic Calabro. As he prepares for a well-deserved retirement, we

extend our deepest gratitude for his visionary leadership and unwavering dedication, which have been instrumental in shaping Florida TaxWatch into the respected institution it is today. While his legacy is immense, we are also filled with great optimism for the next era of leadership under incoming President and CEO, Lt. Gov. Jeff Kottkamp, who will take the helm on January 1, 2026—I look forward to the opportunity to be the first Chairman under his leadership.

In this time of transition, your engagement is more critical than ever. I join Chairman Patel in encouraging your active participation in our endeavors. We depend on an engaged membership to continue delivering on our mission. Help us set the priorities, get involved in the programs, become a sponsor, attend our events, and invite your colleagues to join us.

I look forward to being a part of this exceptional team as we honor our past and build a strong foundation for our future.

Respectfully,



**DAVID CASEY**

*Incoming Chairman &  
Secretary*







DR. BILL KENT (LEFT), EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER,  
AND SECRETARY DAVID CASEY (RIGHT) AT THE 2025 FLORIDA  
TAXWATCH SPRING MEETING

# VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

**F**OR 46 YEARS, Florida TaxWatch has delivered results for Floridians under the guidance of exceptional volunteer leaders. Our board has consistently included former Governors, U.S. Senators, legislative leaders, and some of the most influential figures from Florida's private sector. Their expertise is the foundation of our work, ensuring every recommendation is independent, evidence-based, and focused on creating a better Florida for every taxpayer.

## CO-FOUNDERS

MR. JAMES E. DAVIS (1907 - 1993)  
CO-FOUNDER, WINN-DIXIE STORES, INC

MR. T. WAYNE DAVIS  
TINE W. DAVIS FAMILY FOUNDATION

MR. MARK C. HOLLIS (1934 - 2012)  
PRESIDENT, PUBLIX SUPER MARKETS, INC.

MR. GEORGE JENKINS (1907 - 1996)  
CO-FOUNDER, PUBLIX SUPER MARKETS, INC.

SEN. PHILIP D. LEWIS (1929 - 2012)  
FORMER PRESIDENT, FLORIDA SENATE

SEN. KENNETH A. PLANTE (1939 - 2015)  
FORMER MIN. LEADER, FLORIDA SENATE

## PAST CHAIRMEN

U.S. SEN. GEORGE S. LEMIEUX (2020 - 2022) MR. JOSEPH P. LACHER (1997 - 1999)

SEN. PAT NEAL (2018 - 2020) MR. DAVID MCINTOSH (1995 - 1997)

MR. DAVID MANN (2016 - 2018) MR. BYRON E. HODNETT (1994 - 1995)

MS. MICHELLE ROBINSON (2014 - 2016) MR. L. CHARLES HILTON, JR. (1993 - 1994)

MR. JOHN B ZUMWALT, III (2012 - 2014) MR. BUELL G. DUNCAN (1992 - 1993)

MR. MARSHALL CRISER, III (2010 - 2012) MR. MICHAEL ZAGORAC, JR. (1990 - 1992)

MR. DAVID A. SMITH (2007 - 2010) MR. T. WAYNE DAVIS (1981 - 1982, 1988 - 1990)

MR. MICHAEL A. JENNINGS (2005 - 2007) MR. THOMPSON LYKES RANKIN (1986 - 1988)

MR. BARNEY BARNETT (2003 - 2005) SEN. PHILIP D. LEWIS (1984 - 1986)

MR. STEVE EVANS (2001 - 2003) SEN. KENNETH A. PLANTE (1982 - 1984)

MR. T. O'NEAL DOUGLAS (1999 - 2001) MR. MARK C. HOLLIS (1979 - 1981)

# 2024-2025 CORPORATE OFFICERS



**CHAIRMAN**  
PIYUSH PATEL



**PRESIDENT & CEO**  
DOMINIC M. CALABRO



**CHAIRMAN-ELECT**  
JAMES REPP



**TREASURER**  
MARVA JOHNSON



**SECRETARY**  
DAVID CASEY



**IMM. PAST CHAIRMAN**  
U.S. SEN. GEORGE LEMIEUX

## 2024-25 MEMBERS AT LARGE OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**SAMIRA BECKWITH**  
HOPE HEALTHCARE SERVICES/  
CHAPTERS HEALTH SYSTEMS

**TOMMY CULLIGAN**  
PUBLIX SUPER MARKETS, INC.

**STEVE EVANS**

**TOM HOBAN**  
Kitson & Partners

**BELINDA KEISER**  
Keiser University

**DR. BILL KENT**  
Bill Kent Family Foundation

**DON KISELEWSKI**  
FLORIDA POWER & LIGHT

**GOV. BOB MARTINEZ**  
Holland & Knight

**RAY MONTELEONE**  
Paladin Global Partners

**MICHAEL NACHEF**  
Lee Health

**SEN. PAT NEAL**  
Neal Communities



SEN. KELLI STARGEL, 2025 STATE OF THE TAXPAYER DINNER



JEFF BINKLEY, 2025 STATE OF THE TAXPAYER DINNER





**DOMINIC CALABRO AND CAROLYN NOLTE, 2025 STATE OF THE TAXPAYER DINNER**



**RAY MONTELEONE AND BELINDA KEISER, 2025 ANNUAL MEETING**



**DR. BILL KENT INTRODUCES COLUMNIST GEORGE WILL, 2024 ANNUAL MEETING**



**DAVID WHITAKER AND DOMINIC CALABRO, 2025 SPRING MEETING**

# 2024-25 BOARD OF TRUSTEES



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		<b>Rep. Kurt Kelly</b>	<i>Florida Coalition for Children</i>		



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<b>Troy McNichols</b>	<i>AT&amp;T</i>	<b>Emmett Reed</b>	<i>Florida Health Care Association</i>	<b>Michael Zeff</b>	<i>Chamber of Commerce of The Palm Beaches</i>
<b>Tim Meenan</b>	<i>Meenan P.A. Law Firm</i>	<b>David Robinson</b>	<i>THRIVE</i>	<b>Lady Dhyana Ziegler</b>	<i>Z Creators</i>
<b>Rodrick Miller</b>	<i>The Beacon Council</i>	<b>April Salter</b>	<i>SalterMitchell PR</i>		
<b>Dr. Harry Moon</b>	<i>Nova Southeastern University</i>	<b>Milton Segarra</b>	<i>Discover the Palm Beaches</i>		
<b>Bill Moor</b>	<i>Capital City Bank Group, Inc.</i>	<b>Scott Shalley</b>	<i>Florida Retail Federation</i>		
<b>Dr. Timothy Moore</b>	<i>Indian River State College</i>	<b>John Smith</b>	<i>BIZPAC</i>		
<b>Karen Moore</b>	<i>The Moore Agency</i>	<b>Senator Kelli Stargel</b>	<i>Florida Polytechnic University</i>		
<b>Peter Moore</b>	<i>Chen Moore and Associates</i>	<b>Cassandra Stevenson</b>	<i>Raymond James &amp; Associates</i>		
<b>Scott Moss</b>	<i>Moss and Associates</i>	<b>Shane Strum</b>	<i>Broward Health</i>		
<b>Sumanth Neelam</b>	<i>Odin Florida</i>	<b>Craig Swygert</b>	<i>Clear Channel Outdoor</i>		
<b>David Nicholson</b>	<i>Tampa Electric Company</i>	<b>Norm Taplin</b>	<i>NTG Consultants</i>		
<b>Carolyn Nolte</b>	<i>Florida Press Association</i>	<b>Mario Trueba</b>	<i>First Horizon Bank</i>		
<b>Hon. Cynthia O'Connell</b>	<i>Florida Prepaid College Foundation</i>	<b>Peter Tuffo</b>	<i>Suffolk Construction</i>		
<b>W. Bruce O'Donoghue</b>	<i>Control Specialists</i>	<b>Randall Vitale</b>	<i>BBX Capital Partners</i>		
<b>Ed Pozzuoli</b>	<i>Tripp Scott</i>	<b>David Whitaker</b>	<i>Greater Miami Convention &amp; Visitor Bureau</i>		
		<b>Dawn White</b>	<i>Baptist Health South Florida</i>		



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# A YEAR OF PARTNERSHIP



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19 OF THESE — AND ONE  
GTON — WE’D GET A LOT  
TTER OFF. STATE-BASED  
IZATIONS LIKE THIS ARE  
GOING TO SAVE US.”

- GEORGE WILL,  
AMERICA’S FOREMOST  
POLITICAL COLUMNIST

Florida  
**TaxWatch**



# 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

**O**UR PREMIER EVENT brought together national political leaders, influential policymakers, and top business executives to address the critical issues shaping America's future. Esteemed speakers like George Will, Grover Norquist, and Barry Goldwater Jr. led powerful discussions on why Florida has become a "laboratory of liberty" and a model for the nation's economic and policy direction.

From tackling the national debt to debating the country's drift toward socialism, attendees gained unparalleled insights into the conservative principles driving success. Join us next year to be part of the conversation that sets the agenda for a stronger, more prosperous Florida.



MARIA SACHS (CENTER) PRESENTS PROCLAMATION DECLARING OCTOBER 30 AS FLORIDA TAXWATCH, INC. DAY TO JEFF KOTTKAMP AND DOMINIC CALABRO AT THE 2024 ANNUAL MEETING



(2020), DOMINIC CALABRO, GOV. RON DESANTIS, AND SEN. PAT NEAL, 2020 ANNUAL MEETING





DOMINIC CALABRO AND SCOTT MOSS,  
2024 FLORIDA TAXWATCH ANNUAL MEETING



DOMINIC CALABRO AND CINDY O'CONNOR  
2024 FLORIDA TAXWATCH ANNUAL MEETING



GEORGE WILL (LEFT) AND BARRY GOLDWATER, JR. (RIGHT),  
2024 FLORIDA TAXWATCH ANNUAL MEETING



FLORIDA TAXWATCH CHAIRMAN MIKE JENNINGS, IMMEDIATE PAST TAXWATCH CHAIRMAN BARNEY BARNETT, FORMER HOUSE SPEAKER ALLAN BENSE, AND FLORIDA TAXWATCH PRESIDENT & CEO DOMINIC M. CALABRO



AT-THE-TIME-U.S. SENATOR-ELECT MARCO RUBIO, DOMINIC CALABRO, CHAIRMAN DAVID SMITH AND FLORIDA CFO-ELECT JEFF ATWATER, 30TH ANNUAL BOARD & MEMBERSHIP MEETING.



(2009) FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES SPEAKER LARRY CRETUL SERVED AS CO-EMCEE WITH THE FLORIDA COUNCIL OF 100 CHAIR AND PRESIDENT OF GULF POWER, SUSAN STORY, FOR THE 2009 PRUDENTIAL - DAVIS PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS KICKOFF IN TALLAHASSEE. THEY ARE JOINED BY CHAIRMAN MIKE JENNINGS, VICE PRESIDENT OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS FOR PRUDENTIAL, LT. GOVERNOR JEFF KOTTKAMP, AND DOMINIC CALABRO.



# 2025 GOVERNMENT PRODUCTIVITY AWARDS

PRESENTED BY KYRA SOLUTIONS

**F**OR OVER 30 YEARS, the Florida TaxWatch Government Productivity Awards have honored innovative state employees who improve services and boost efficiency. The program has inspired staff to enhance public services, saving or maximizing nearly \$10 billion through over 16,000 nominations.

This year's ceremony was held on September 18th in Tallahassee at the Florida Historic Capitol Museum. It celebrated state employees whose efforts improved operations and generated significant taxpayer savings, with this year's winning projects estimated to save over **\$38.5 million**. Winners from various agencies showcased creativity, efficiency, and leadership in public service, driving practical solutions that benefit all Floridians.

This year's program was made possible by Kyra Solutions, Inc., the Florida Council of 100, and the vision of J.E. and A.D. Davis, co-founders of Winn-Dixie Stores Inc., along with the dedication of our judges and sponsors who ensure outstanding public service is recognized.



AMANPREET KAPOOR,  
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



STEVEN VON BODUNGEN, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT  
OF BUSINESS & PROFESSIONAL REGULATION

# 2024 JUDGES

**Jose Boscan**, *Government Affairs Manager*,  
**Sen. Lisa Carlton**, *Senator, Co-Owner & Manager*,  
**David Casey**, *Senior VP, Gov't Relations & Business Development*,  
**Tom Hoban**, *President & Chief Investment Officer*,  
**Mario Trueba**, *President South Florida & New York*,  
**Samantha Neelam**, *CEO*,  
**John Clark**, *Wealth Management Advisor*  
**Casey Perkins**, *Chief of Policy Research*,  
**Charlotte Audie**, *President & CEO*,

**Waste Management**  
**Mabry Carlton Ranch, Inc.**  
**Maximus**  
**Kitson & Partners**  
**First Horizon Bank**  
**Odin**  
**Merryll Lynch**  
**Safety New Hospital Alliance of Florida**  
**Florida Outdoor Advertising Association**





FLORIDA STATE UNIVERISTY'S WINNING PROJECT SUBMISSION, "INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH SAVED MILLIONS IN TAXPAYER SAVINGS", IS ESTIMATED TO SAVE \$10,073,497 ANNUALLY.



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COMMERCIAL FINANCE FLORIDA AWARD  
AWARDED TO THE COMMERCIAL FINANCE AWARD FOR THE 2024 FISCAL YEAR  
Florida State University  
192 Institutional Research Saved Millions in Employer Savings  
FOR THE 2024 FISCAL YEAR

# 2025 STATE OF THE TAXPAYER DINNER

**A**S THE TRUSTED EYES AND EARS OF FLORIDA TAXPAYERS for more than 45 years, Florida TaxWatch embraces our responsibility to provide a forum for our state's elected leaders to speak directly to the interests of the taxpayers.

While the annual State of the State address and opening statements of each legislative chamber cover the accomplishments and future plans of our elected leadership, none specifically highlight the issues affecting taxpayers.

Florida TaxWatch presented the inaugural State of the Taxpayer Dinner in 2016, and it has since become the premier event for Florida's elected leaders to discuss the issues that will impact taxpayers over the next year. This year's dinner was held on March 11, 2025, at The Carriage House at Goodwood Museum & Gardens in Tallahassee.

The event featured an all-star lineup with Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson and Senate Minority Leader Jason Pizzo addressing a capacity crowd, ensuring that as the Legislative Session begins, the attention of Florida's leaders is where it belongs: on the taxpayers.



DAVID ALBERT, MAXIMUS, 2025 STATE OF THE TAXPAYER DINNER



(LEFT TO RIGHT) LT. GOV. JEFF KOTKAMP, EXEC. VP & GENERAL COUNSEL, FLORIDA TAXWATCH, SAM GARRISON, INCOMING SEPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, & KEYNA CORY PRESIDENT, PUBLIC AFFAIRS CONSULTANTS

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DOMINIC & DEBBIE CALABRO

STEVE & LINDA EVANS





SEN. JASON PIZZO, 2025 STATE OF THE TAXPAYER DINNER



WILTON SIMPSON, COMMISSIONER, FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES, 2025 STATE OF THE TAXPAYER DINNER



**GOVERNOR BOB MARTINEZ WITH DOMINIC CALABRO AND GOVERNOR BOB GRAHAM AT THE 40TH ANNUAL MEETING**





(2022) THE CITIZENSHIP INSTITUTE IS RENAMED TO *THE GOV. BOB & MARY JANE MARTINEZ CITIZENSHIP INSTITUTE* AT FLORIDA TAXWATCH IN THEIR HONOR



GOVERNOR BOB MARTINEZ



MAYOR JOHN DAILEY SPEAKS AT THE GOV. BOB & MARY JANE MARTINEZ CITIZENSHIP INSTITUTE AT FLORIDA TAXWATCH



(2016) GOVERNOR AND MARY JANE MARTINEZ WITH THE INAUGURAL CLASS OF THE CITIZENSHIP INSTITUTE, FLORIDA TAXWATCH SENIOR VP OF RESEARCH BOB NAVE (UPPER LEFT) AND ROBERT WEISSERT (BACK ROW, SECOND RIGHT)



(2022) DOMINIC CALABRO AND U.S. SEN. GEORGE LEMIEUX HONOR GOV. BOB & MARY JANE MARTINEZ, NAMING THE CITIZENSHIP INSTITUTE IN THEIR HONOR

# GOVERNOR BOB & MARY JANE MARTINEZ CITIZENSHIP INSTITUTE

AT

Florida TaxWatch

**U**NDER THE LEADERSHIP OF GOVERNOR BOB MARTINEZ, participants in the Governor Bob and Mary Jane Martinez Citizenship Institute at Florida TaxWatch (Citizenship Institute) learn firsthand from Florida's most influential policy leaders and business executives about how state and local government policies impact their business and community, and how to make sure their voice is heard and respected.

The Citizenship Institute is an applied learning program that prepares participants to better understand how government actions affect their businesses. Participants receive 3-4 days of intensive instruction from current or former agency heads, legislators, distinguished university professors, and other state and local officials, as well as Florida's 40th Governor Bob Martinez.

By limiting the class size to 15-20 of Florida's up-and-coming business and community leaders, the Citizenship Institute is far more instructive and hands-on than traditional "leadership" programs. By providing participants the unique opportunity to discuss relevant policy issues with government and political leaders that have extensive real-world experience, participants gain a better understanding of how to engage government officials and have their voices heard; how their tax dollars are appropriated and used by government; and how to navigate through the myriad licensing and permitting requirements and government regulations that can strangle businesses.

## 2025 GRADUATES

<b>Gina Betz</b>	Regional Director of Student Services	Keiser University
<b>Carlo Fassi</b>	PGS External Affairs Manager	TECO
<b>CyRhonda Flanagan</b>	Director of Membership & Engagement	Florida TaxWatch
<b>Tina Grier</b>	Executive Assistant to the President & CEO	Florida TaxWatch
<b>Brandi Gunder</b>	Vice President for Research	Florida TaxWatch
<b>James Lentz</b>	President	The Harmony Foundation
<b>Tracy Melvin</b>	Senior Project Lead	Maximus Federal
<b>Rachael Mueller</b>	Chief Fund Development Officer	Goodwill Industries of North Florida
<b>Carolyn Nolte</b>	President & CEO	Florida Press Association & Intersect Media
<b>Justin Smith</b>	Deputy County Administrator	DeSoto County
<b>Andy Taylor</b>	NW Florida Regional Manager	TECO
<b>Rachel Walter</b>	Senior Innovation Catalyst	Lee Health



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DAVID NICHOLSON AND CARLO FASSI, TECO, 2025 SPRING MEETING



(LEFT TO RIGHT) BRANDI GUNDER, FLORIDA TAXWATCH, CYRHONDA FLANAGAN, FLORIDA TAXWATCH, GINA BETZ, KEISER UNIVERSITY, TRACY MELVIN, MAXIMUS, CAROLYN NOLTE, FLORIDA PRESS ASSOCIATION & INTERSECT MEDIA, ANDY TAYLOR, TECO, (BACK) TINA GRIER, FLORIDA TAXWATCH, (FRONT) RACHEL WALTER, LEE HEALTH, RACHEL MUELLER, GOODWILL INDUSTRIES OF NORTH FLORIDA, AND CARLO FASSI, TECO

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VP OF RESEARCH AND DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE  
OF QUALITY HEALTH & AGING BRANDI GUNDER, 2025  
SPRING MEETING

# Institute for QUALITY HEALTH & AGING

## Florida TaxWatch

**E**STABLISHED IN SEPTEMBER 2023, the Florida TaxWatch Institute for Quality Health and Aging was created to bring together a distinguished group of respected healthcare leaders, practitioners, and policy experts committed to advancing the future of healthcare in Florida. Through rigorous, evidence-based research, the Institute intends to provide policy makers with actionable recommendations on critical issues shaping healthcare today, including quality of care, access, and the rising costs that affect Floridians statewide.

The Institute is preparing to launch a new year of meetings and research, guided by the leadership of Samira Beckwith, who has been appointed chair for the 2025-26 year, and the expertise of its members. This collaborative effort is focused on identifying practical, innovative policy solutions that address immediate challenges while anticipating the needs of a rapidly evolving healthcare landscape. By combining professional insight with real-world application, the Institute aims to serve as a trusted source for developing strategies that improve health outcomes, strengthen the healthcare system, and ensure a higher quality of life for Florida's aging population.


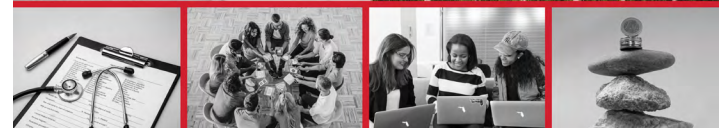
**SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH**  
Social & Community  
Context  
December 2024



Florida  
TaxWatch




**Social Determinants of Health**  
Neighborhood and  
Built Environment  
November 2024



SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST AND DIRECTOR OF THE  
CENSUS INSTITUTE MEG CANNAN, 2024 ANNUAL MEETING

# Florida TaxWatch

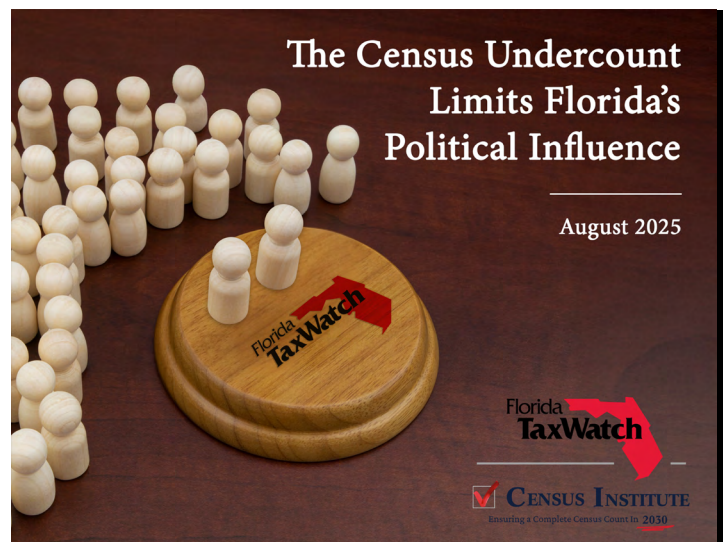
## CENSUS INSTITUTE

Ensuring a Complete Sentence Count In **2030**

**L**AUNCHED IN 2021, the Florida TaxWatch Census Institute delivers data-driven analysis of the 2020 Census undercount to help ensure every Floridian is accurately counted and represented during the 2030 Census. Accurate census data is vital for fair representation, proper allocation of federal dollars, economic growth, and infrastructure planning. This year, the Census Institute released two opinion editorials and four commentaries:

- “The Consequences of a Census Undercount on Florida’s Healthcare Funding” (February 2025)
- “The Census Undercount’s Toll on Florida Roads” (June 2025)
- “The Census Undercount Limits Florida’s Political Influence” (July 2025)
- “Apportionment Changes Amid Policy Proposals,” (September 2025)

Collectively, these research products received more than 150 media hits across the state.







(2014) PIYUSH PATEL, KYRA SOLUTIONS, WITH AWARD WINNER DR. SHELIA WINDOM, EDUCATION COMMISSIONER PAM STEWART, AND DOMINIC CALABRO

# 2025 PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS

**I**N 2013, FLORIDA TAXWATCH ESTABLISHED ITS PRESTIGIOUS PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS (PLA) PROGRAM to recognize and reward Florida's highest-performing principals whose schools draw from predominantly at-risk populations, yet whose students consistently outperform those in schools with comparable populations. Each year, Florida TaxWatch recognizes the top five elementary, top five middle, and top five high school principals, determined by a unique, data-driven methodology.

This program, the first of its kind in the U.S., uses the Florida Department of Education's Florida Value-Added Model (FL-VAM) common school component

estimates, which describe the amount of learning that is typical for students in each school that differs from the statewide conditional expectation and indicates the total contribution of the school to greater than or less than predicted student achievement. Florida TaxWatch calculates student learning gains for math and reading by grade and by school year.

Through this program's Academic A+ Challenge Match Scholarship Program (through a partnership with the Florida Prepaid College Foundation) a deserving student at each winner's school will receive a two-year prepaid scholarship to attend the Florida college of their choice.



**SUPERINTENDENT OF LEON COUNTY SCHOOLS  
ROCKY HANNA, 2025 PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS  
CEREMONY, R. FRANK NIMS MIDDLE SCHOOL**



JESSICA CIMIJOTTI-LITTLE, PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS DIRECTOR & FLORIDA TAXWATCH RESEARCH ANALYST, AND PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT LEON MUNGIN, JR.

PRESENTING SPONSORS:

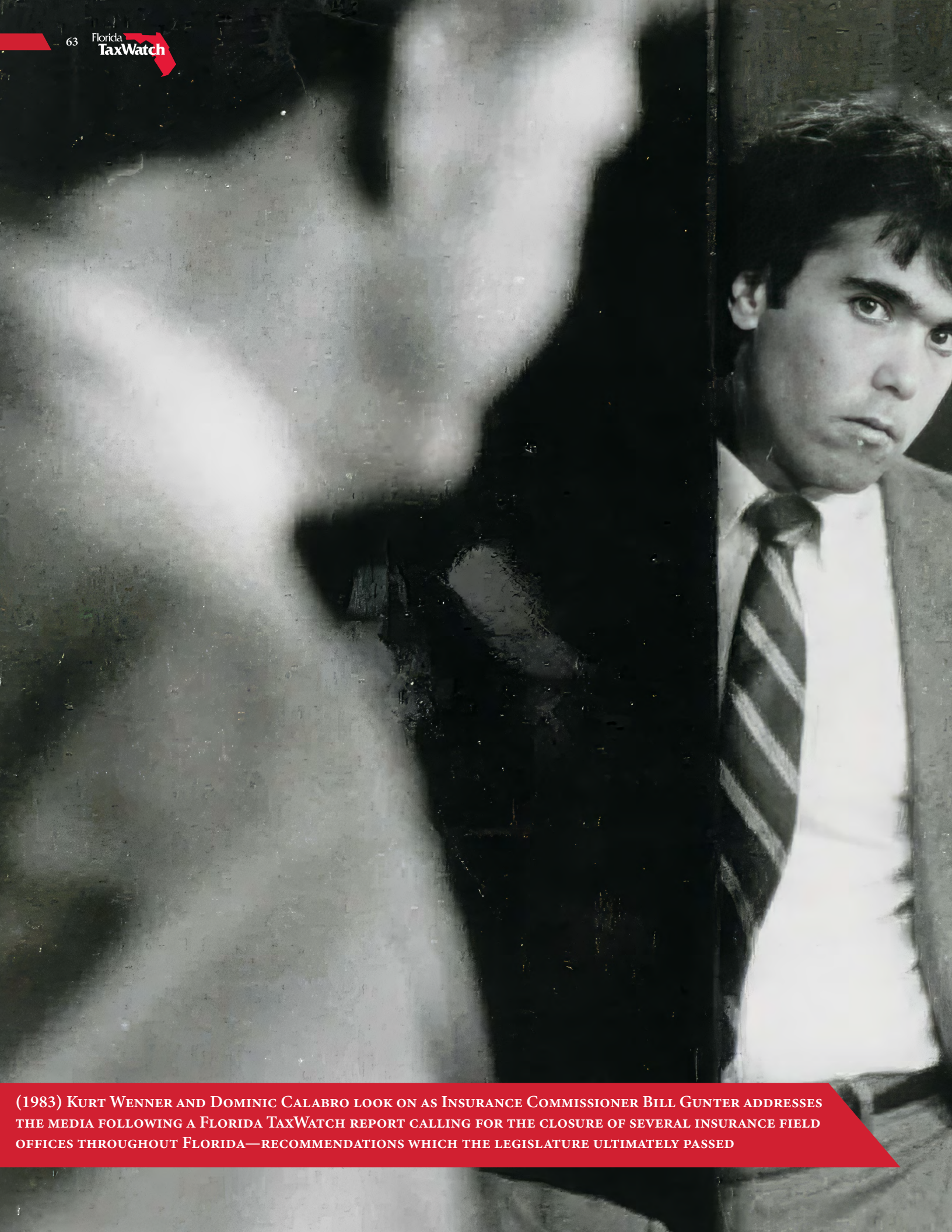


DOMINIC & DEBBIE CALABRO  
STEVE & LINDA EVANS



FOR A FULL LIST OF THE 2024-25 PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP AWARDS WINNERS, PLEASE VISIT [FLORIDATAXWATCH.ORG/PRINCIPALLEADERSHIP](https://FLORIDATAXWATCH.ORG/PRINCIPALLEADERSHIP)

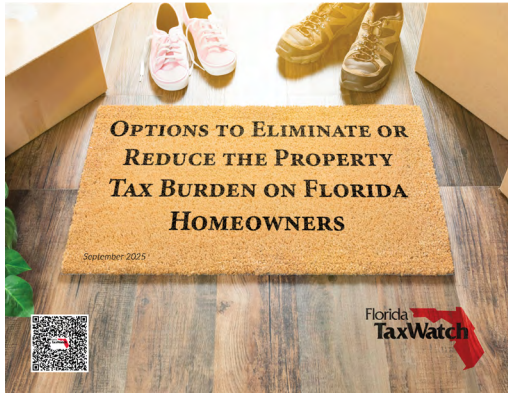




(1983) KURT WENNER AND DOMINIC CALABRO LOOK ON AS INSURANCE COMMISSIONER BILL GUNTER ADDRESSES THE MEDIA FOLLOWING A FLORIDA TAXWATCH REPORT CALLING FOR THE CLOSURE OF SEVERAL INSURANCE FIELD OFFICES THROUGHOUT FLORIDA—RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE LEGISLATURE ULTIMATELY PASSED



# 2025 SELECT RESEARCH



## OPTIONS TO ELIMINATE OR REDUCE THE PROPERTY TAX BURDEN ON FLORIDA HOMEOWNERS

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2025

Florida's rapid property tax increase has intensified the financial strain on homeowners and raised fundamental questions about the nature of property ownership, which currently resembles a form of "perpetual rent" to the government. This report from Florida TaxWatch explores five distinct options for reform, including: (1) the gradual phasing out of property taxes on homestead properties over a number of years; (2) accelerate the elimination of property taxes for senior citizens, offering immediate relief to those on fixed incomes; (3) eliminate all non-school property taxes for homeowners, thereby protecting the primary funding source for public education; (4) implement a

straight-forward, across-the-board reduction in the assessed value of properties; and (5) legislative changes, such as making the rolled-back tax rate the default and strengthening disclosure requirements on tax notices. The ultimate goal is to redefine property ownership in Florida, making it more secure and attainable while ensuring the continued delivery of essential public services.



## APPORTIONMENT CHANGES AMID POLICY PROPOSALS

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2025

Florida's 2020 Census undercount, about 750,000 residents (3.48%), reduced the state's political representation and likely cost billions of dollars in federal funding over the decade. The analysis uses the U.S. Census Bureau's Post-Enumeration Survey to correct state populations for net coverage error and applies the standard Method of Equal Proportions used for U.S. House apportionment. Three scenarios are modeled: (1) an accurate count of all residents; (2) an accurate count excluding unauthorized immigrants; and (3) an accurate count of citizens only. *In every scenario, Florida gains at least one additional U.S. House seat*; in the scenario excluding unauthorized immigrants, Florida gains two. Any added House seat also adds one Electoral College vote, underscoring the

importance of an accurate count to Florida's national influence. The report recommends early, statewide support for the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA), including a Governor's Office liaison to coordinate with local governments and legislative funding for technical assistance, and early outreach to hard-to-count communities through trusted local partners.

## Government Efficiency Should Not Be Something We Only Do Every Four Years

August 2025



## GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY SHOULD NOT BE SOMETHING WE DO EVERY FOUR YEARS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 28, 2025

The state's efforts to make government more efficient consist primarily of the constitutionally mandated Government Efficiency Task Force (GETF), which meets every four years), the Local Government Efficiency Task Force (LGETF), and (most recently) the Governor's 2025 Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) initiative. Since inception, the GETF has offered 172 cost-efficiency proposals with savings estimated at \$15.14 billion. Since 2020, the LGETF has offered proposals to standardize local election schedules; modernize public-notice practices; consolidate duplicative reporting; align deadlines with municipal fiscal years; centralize submissions; study Florida Retirement

System migrations for local pensions; and cap business-occupancy license fees. DOGE teams have reviewed each state agency to hunt for waste, scrutinize questionable federal grants, and coordinate statewide reviews, paired with on-site local spending audits that began July 31, 2025. Florida TaxWatch urges the Legislature to enact a Florida Government Efficiency Act that would require the Governor's annual budget to include explicit efficiency and cost-saving items, informed by the Auditor General, OPPAGA, the GETF, agency inspectors general, state agencies, and credible outside institutions such as Florida TaxWatch. The Legislature would be required to consider these items during appropriations.

## Update on the Implementation of the Live Local Act

August 2025



## UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LIVE LOCAL ACT

TUESDAY, AUGUST 12, 2025

In 2022, 35 percent of Florida paid more than 30 percent of their income on housing. By 2024, the deficit of affordable housing units for households with incomes in the 0–30 percent of Area Median Income range was more than 323,000 units. The Legislature's 2023 Live Local Act—amended in 2024 and 2025—was designed to accelerate supply by combining incentives (notably property-tax exemptions) with strong preemption and streamlined approvals for qualifying projects. Many eligible taxing authorities have “opted out” of the 75 percent “missing middle” (80–120 percent AMI) exemption, citing concerns that benefits accrue to developers without guaranteed rent relief. Recent

amendments strengthen enforcement (priority court handling, fee awards, and municipal reporting), but more is needed to close the gap—especially for the “missing middle.” Florida TaxWatch recommends adding state-level housing tax credits (e.g., a homebuilder credit for attainable single-family, a state low-income housing credit to complement federal and adaptive-reuse credits) and encouraging consistent local implementation.

## Florida TaxWatch 2025 Legislative Session Wrap-Up

*Extended Session Edition – Includes Final Budget, Tax Package, and Vetoes*

August 2025



## FLORIDA TAXWATCH 2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WRAP-UP: EXTENDED SESSION EDITION - INCLUDES FINAL BUDGET, TAX PACKAGE, AND VETOES

TUESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2025

Florida's extended legislative session concluded June 16 with a \$115.1 billion budget and \$2.0 billion tax package. The Governor signed the budget on June 30 and issued \$376 million in line-item vetoes, resulting in a net budget of \$114.8 billion while maintaining strong fiscal reserves of \$12.6 billion. The report examines key legislative achievements including: (1) the repeal of the Business Rent Tax (BRT) effective October 1, 2025; (2) delivering \$1.3 billion in state savings; and (3) making the Back-to-School sales tax

holiday permanent with \$217 million in annual consumer savings. The report also analyzes continued challenges with member projects—approximately 1,700 earmarks totaling over \$2.5 billion—and highlights Florida's accelerated debt reduction efforts, including \$580 million dedicated this year and a cumulative \$7.3 billion in tax-supported debt retired since 2019. Florida TaxWatch recommends continued fiscal discipline, enhanced transparency in project selection, and systematic implementation of tax reforms to maximize taxpayer value and maintain Florida's strong fiscal position.



## 2025 BUDGET TURKEY WATCH REPORT

TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2025

Florida TaxWatch's 2025 Budget Turkey Watch Report delivers an independent review of Florida's \$115.1 billion budget. The report identifies 238 appropriations totaling more than \$413 million that bypassed established vetting procedures or public scrutiny—designating them as “Budget Turkeys”—and flags an additional \$799.5 million in member projects that merit heightened executive review. The analysis details how many of these projects circumvent competitive grant processes or displace funds from statewide priorities, cataloguing the most problematic categories. Florida TaxWatch recommends that the Governor rigorously evaluate each flagged appropriation for alignment with core state functions, transparency, and return on taxpayer investment and urges the Legislature to

establish statutory, competitive selection processes for recurring project categories to restore accountability, protect statewide priorities, and ensure prudent fiscal stewardship.

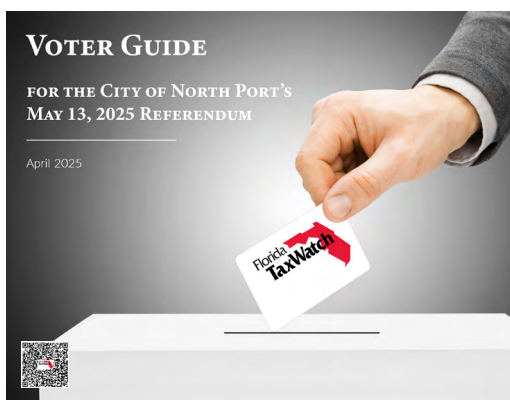


## EXTENDING THE LOCAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES TAX INCREASE MORATORIUM AND A SALES TAX EXEMPTION FOR BROADBAND EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE PART OF ANY TAX RELIEF PACKAGE THIS SESSION

MONDAY, APRIL 14, 2025

Florida TaxWatch's report details how Florida's current Communications Service Tax (CST) ranks among the highest in the nation and explores its effects on both businesses and low-income households, who are particularly vulnerable to the disproportionate burden of such taxes on essential wireless services. While a recent legislative moratorium has temporarily halted increases in local CST rates, that safeguard is scheduled to expire on

January 1, 2026. This could expose Floridians to additional tax hikes at a time when broadband connectivity is critical for economic growth and daily living. Furthermore, the report evaluates a proposed sales tax exemption for broadband equipment. Such a policy change would help reduce the overall cost burden on consumers and stimulate much-needed investment in broadband network upgrades—particularly in underserved and rural areas.



## THE VOTER GUIDE FOR THE CITY OF NORTH PORT'S MAY 13, 2025 REFERENDUM

TUESDAY, JUNE 17, 2025

The City of North Port, Florida's second fastest growing city in the United States, faces significant challenges from rapid urbanization, population growth, and ongoing recovery from Hurricane Ian's devastating impact in 2022. After a failed November 2024 referendum that would have allowed the City Commission to issue debt for emergency response and public safety projects, the Commission returned to voters with separate items for individual consideration. The referendum includes five questions: (1) authorizing debt issuance for emergency response without voter approval; (2) removing residency requirements for City Clerk and Attorney positions; (3) issuing up to \$115 million in bonds for a new police

headquarters facility; (4) authorizing \$14 million in bonds for a solid waste transfer station; and (5) approving \$17 million in bonds for wastewater treatment facility improvements. The report analyzes each referendum question in detail, exploring the financial implications, arguments from supporters and opponents, and potential consequences of approval or rejection.



## USING MICROELECTRONIC SENSORS TO CONTINUOUSLY MONITOR VERTICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

FRIDAY, APRIL 4, 2025

This Florida TaxWatch report explores how microelectronic smart sensor networks can proactively monitor vertical infrastructure to detect issues such as structural fatigue, corrosion, or damage before they lead to catastrophic failures, as seen in the 2021 Champlain Towers South collapse (98 deaths) and the 2018 Florida International University pedestrian bridge collapse (6 deaths). Microelectronic sensors, embedded in structures and connected via the Internet of Things (IoT), offer real-time data on critical parameters like pressure, water levels, and stress, enabling early intervention. These technologies promise cost savings, extended infrastructure lifespan, and enhanced safety. For condominiums,

sensors could reduce compliance costs under new safety laws by optimizing maintenance, potentially preventing tragedies like Champlain Towers. Florida TaxWatch urges policymakers to adopt these technologies to safeguard lives and property, emphasizing that continuous monitoring could transform infrastructure management amid growing environmental and economic pressures.



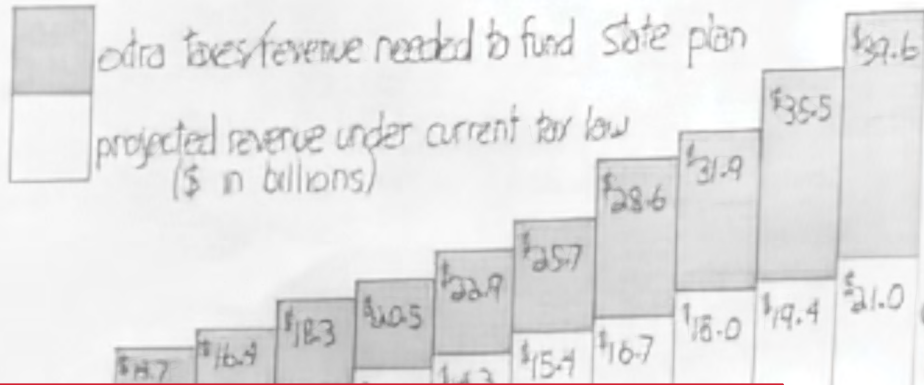
## THE CONTINUING DECLINE OF FLORIDA'S CITRUS INDUSTRY

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2024

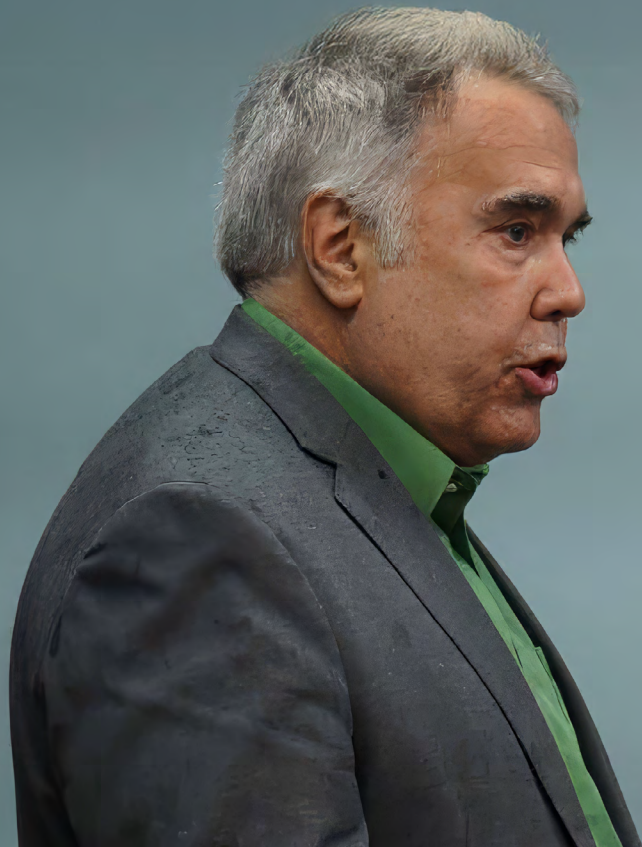
Florida's citrus industry, once a cornerstone of the state's identity and economy, has suffered a staggering 90 percent decline in production over the past two decades. This Florida TaxWatch report reveals citrus annual production has plummeted to just 20 million boxes - a devastating drop from 300 million boxes in the early 2000s - due to citrus greening disease, hurricane damage, and mounting economic pressures. The analysis details how citrus greening (HLB disease) has infected nearly 100 percent of Florida's commercial groves, reducing yields and increasing production costs. Combined with hurricane devastation and global market challenges, these factors have pushed many multi-generational growers

out of business, threatening a \$6.9 billion industry that supports over 32,000 jobs. With citrus deeply embedded in Florida's cultural heritage, the report urges policymakers to prioritize long-term revitalization efforts that could reverse the decline and protect the industry's \$1.2 billion annual contribution to state and local tax revenues.

# Plan May Nearly Double Cost of Government



(1985) DOMINIC CALABRO SHOWS HOW FLORIDA TAXWATCH PROJECTS THE COST OF STATE GOVERNMENT GOING INTO THE MID-1990'S.



SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF RESEARCH KURT WENNER, THE SECOND-LONGEST TENURED FLORIDA TAXWATCH STAFF MEMBER, MAY BE FLORIDA'S MOST KNOWLEDGEABLE TAX AND BUDGET EXPERT

## Florida TaxWatch On: AMENDMENT 2

A PREVIEW OF WHAT'S TO COME 2000-2007 (PRELIMINARY)

AN UNBALANCED SYSTEM

NET VALUE

TAXABLE VALUE

HOVMESTEAD RESIDENTIAL

2000 ASSESSMENT \$200,000

3 1/4% CAP

NON-HOMES RESIDENTIAL

2000 ASSESS \$200,000

NO CAP



(2019) FLORIDA TaxWATCH PRESIDENT & CEO DOMINIC M. CALABRO AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF RESEARCH KURT WENNER (LEFT) ADDRESS THE MEDIA



(2007) PRESIDENT & CEO DOMINIC CALABRO ADDRESSES THE PRESS

TaxWatch has helped taxpayers to **BECOME BETTER INFORMED** about unnecessary government spending—and to make themselves, and government **BETTER ABLE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT.**

— PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN

"...A well-respected **PILLAR** of state government known as the '**EYES AND EARS**' of taxpayers across the state."  
— **FLORIDA POLITICS**

What we've got in Florida TaxWatch is an **OLYMPIC-SIZED EFFORT** to make sure that public policy in the state of Florida is **SECOND TO NONE.**

— GOVERNOR BOB MARTINEZ

# HEED TAXWATCH

— MIAMI HERALD EDITORIAL HEADLINE

The state is undoubtedly more healthy and prosperous because TaxWatch has been on the job. It has been **AN HONEST WATCHDOG** in warning of abuses, **A CREDIBLE GUIDE DOG** in finding thrifty solutions to problems, and **A TIRELESS BIRD DOG** in making sure taxpayers get their money's worth.

— TAMPA TRIBUNE

This is the first time in the history of the state of Florida that **ALL THREE MAJOR CREDIT RATING AGENCIES** have given us a "**AAA**" **BOND RATING**... it's because of being fiscal stewards of our resources...it's also **ATTRIBUTED TO THE GOOD FOLKS AT TAXWATCH HOLDING US ACCOUNTABLE.**  
— **U.S. REPRESENTATIVE JIMMY PATRONIS**

" If we had 49 of these — **AND ONE IN WASHINGTON** — we'd get a lot better off. State-based organizations like this are going to save us."  
 — **GEORGE WILL**

I cannot think of a more important time to have an organization like TaxWatch...an **INTELLIGENT WATCHDOG** that is **PAYING ATTENTION TO THE DETAILS** and **HOLDING OFFICIALS ACCOUNTABLE** to taxpayers.  
 — **ATTORNEY GENERAL ASHLEY MOODY**

The contribution of Florida TaxWatch is **UNPARALLELED IN THE HISTORY OF FLORIDA GOVERNMENT**, and deserves the thanks of all the taxpayers of Florida.  
 — **US SENATOR & GOVERNOR BOB GRAHAM**

...Fortunately for the legislators, **TAXWATCH** already has done much of **THEIR WORK FOR THEM.**  
 — **ORLANDO SENTINEL**

Florida TaxWatch **NEVER FORGETS OUR TAXPAYERS**...It's so important for government to have access to **TIMELY RESEARCH TO HELP MAKE SOUND DECISIONS**...TaxWatch is helping keep taxpayers informed.  
 — **AGRICULTURE COMMISSIONER NIKKI FRIED**

Florida TaxWatch is a testament to democracy in action...bringing a **VALUE-ADDED DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES, HEALTH, AND PROSPERITY OF ALL FLORIDIANS** because of your constructive ideas and vision. Thank you for your **UNRELENTING EFFORTS** to safeguard the long and short-term interests of the citizens of Florida.  
 — **GOVERNOR JEB BUSH**

Florida TaxWatch is **HELPING TO ENSURE THAT FLORIDA TAXPAYERS ARE WELL SERVED.**  
 — **PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH**



SENIOR VP OF RESEARCH KURT WENNER,  
2025 FLORIDA TAXWATCH SPRING MEETING



(LEFT TO RIGHT) RESEARCH ECONOMIST JUI SHAH, SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST MEG CANNAN, AND  
MEMBER SERVICES COORDINATOR MADELINE KING, 2025 FLORIDA TAXWATCH SPRING MEETING



(1991) FLORIDA TAXWATCH STAFF, INCLUDING DR. NEIL CRISPO (BOTTOM LEFT), KURT WENNER (BOTTOM MIDDLE) AND DAVE DAVIS (BOTTOM RIGHT)



(1991) FLORIDA TAXWATCH STAFF, INCLUDING THE FIRST EMPLOYEE EVER HIRED AT FLORIDA TAXWATCH, BABS TAFF (BACK LEFT)

# FLORIDA TAXWATCH 2024-25 STAFF

## EXECUTIVE



PRESIDENT & CEO  
DOMINIC M. CALABRO



EXEC. VP & GENERAL COUNSEL  
THE HON. JEFF KOTTKAMP, ESQ.



DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION,  
EXEC. ASSISTANT TO THE PRES. & CEO  
TINA GRIER

## DEVELOPMENT



VP OF DEVELOPMENT  
TANYA BREZA



DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP &  
ENGAGEMENT  
CYRHONDA PLANAGAN



(FORMER) MEMBER SERVICES  
COORDINATOR  
MADELIN KING

## PROFESSIONAL CONTRACTORS AND CONSULTANTS



ACCOUNTANT  
HUNTER HEUCHAN



EVENT MARKETING SPECIALIST  
SAMANTHA CASTALINE



CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER  
KEITH DEAN, CPA



PRESIDENT OF ON 3 PUBLIC RELATIONS  
CHRISTINA JOHNSON

# RESEARCH



SENIOR VP OF RESEARCH  
BOB NAVE



SENIOR VP OF RESEARCH  
KURT WENNER



VP OF RESEARCH  
BRANDI GUNDER



SENIOR RESEARCH ANALYST  
MEG CANNAN



RESEARCH ANALYST  
JESSICA CIMIJOTTI



RESEARCH ECONOMIST  
JUI SHAH

# COMMUNICATIONS



DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS  
GEORGE KANTELIS

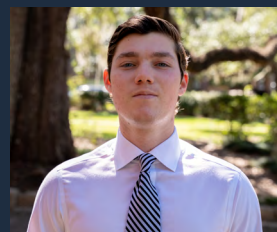


MEDIA SPECIALIST  
AZARIAH CLEMONS

# 2024-25 INTERNS



INTERN  
JONUS GOLDSTEIN



INTERN & MEMBER SERVICES  
COORDINATOR  
JACK ROSEMAN



INTERN  
TAYLOR THORNE

**FORMER STAFF:**  
Meredith Pelton, VP of Strategic Initiatives  
Ana Hamil, Director of Membership and Engagement

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# We Believe

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift

You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong

You cannot help small men by tearing down big men

You cannot help the poor by destroying the rich

You cannot lift the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer

You cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than your income

You cannot further the brotherhood of men by inciting class hatreds

You cannot establish security on borrowed money

You cannot establish character and courage by taking away a man's initiative and independence

You cannot help men permanently by doing for them what they could and should do for themselves

*– From the pen of Reverend William John Henry Boetcker (1873–1962) & often attributed to Abraham Lincoln*

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Stay Informed

 [FloridaTaxWatch.org](https://www.FloridaTaxWatch.org)

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