

**EVERY**

**VOTE**

**COUNTS**

**FLORIDA CONSERVATION VOTERS  
ELECTIONS REPORT 2018**



## A LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALIKI MONCRIEF

If 2018 taught us anything, it's that there are no guarantees in Florida politics. Decades of increased barriers to voting, gerrymandering, institutional racism, and the transient nature of our population make every hard-won victory in our state that much more significant and valuable.

You and I have a tough job. But we knew that from the start, and because of your support, we came closer than ever to making the health of our environment the central issue in this year's elections.

Florida's environment is in crisis-mode, making the work ahead in 2019 even more critical. Our communities continue to endure devastating waves of red tide, algae blooms, rapidly intensifying hurricanes, climate change, water quality, and more. We are reaching a tipping point—the culmination of bad policies and short-sighted decisions made by politicians who allowed us to reach this crisis state. If there's one silver lining to the outcome of this year's elections (and there are actually a few, which we highlight in this report), it's that Floridians did not stand idly by. Voter turnout reached all time highs, driven in large part by highly mobilized and engaged citizens, who put in more volunteer time than we've ever seen in a non-presidential year.

While we didn't achieve all of our goals, I am happy to report that, thanks to people like you, the Conservation Voter Movement in Florida is getting stronger. We're getting closer to reorienting our state government and political leadership towards a conservation majority.

When I look back on 2018, I am thrilled that so many conservation leaders won seats in the state House of Representatives—I think we are changing the composition of that body for the better. I'm also especially proud of FCV's work to pass the Voting Rights Restoration Amendment (Amendment 4), which affords returning citizens their right to vote. It was truly an inspiring moment.

The 2019 Florida Legislative Session can't get here soon enough. And thanks to people like you, we will bring our people-powered movement to the Capitol. Thank you for all that you do for Florida.

Sincerely,



Executive Director  
Florida Conservation Voters



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



### Florida Conservation Voters

**Will Abberger**  
**Lester Abberger**  
**Paula Dockery**  
**Pegeen Hanrahan**  
**Rich Templin**



### Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund

**Pegeen Hanrahan**  
**Pam Harting**  
**Clay Henderson**  
**Georgiana Holmes**



## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2018 ENDORSED CANDIDATES!



Annette Taddeo, SD 40



Anna Eskamani, HD 47



Margaret Good, HD 72



Dolores Hogan Johnson, HD 84



Geraldine Thompson, HD 44



Jennifer Webb, HD 69

## STATEWIDE RACES

The 2018 election marked Florida Conservation Voters' first foray into statewide candidate races. We were proud to endorse Mayor Andrew Gillum for governor and Rep. Sean Shaw for attorney general. Both of these leaders made conservation issues a top priority in their campaigns, and we celebrate them for taking our environment seriously.

Both the governor and attorney general have an essential role to play in protecting our water, land, and wildlife, and they are critical to making our communities more resilient and sustainable for everyone. FCV's strategy was to educate and mobilize voters who care about these issues. And we were hugely successful in influencing news coverage and social media discussion.

In October, the FCV Action Fund invested nearly \$500K on digital ads highlighting red tide and climate change in the governor's race. Our ads were featured in numerous political publications and were shared widely online. We were delighted that a question about climate change was the very first question asked at the first gubernatorial debate in Tampa. On the heels of a governor who wouldn't let his own Department of Environmental Protection utter the words "climate change," environmental issues were front and center in the campaigns. That's a shift in the political conversation that is worth celebrating.

After a state-mandated machine recount marred by dysfunction and controversy, Congressman Ron DeSantis prevailed over Mayor Gillum for governor. We are pleased that our conservation message broke through to the broader voting public, but the turnout for Mayor Gillum was just not enough to overcome the significant challenges to electing progressive candidates in Florida.

Governor-elect Ron DeSantis has a lot to prove. His campaign's environmental platform was devoid of any mention of climate change and lacked specifics on critical problems. This does not mean he cannot become an outstanding environmental governor. But there is no time for a learning curve in this job. Our role over the next four years, together with supporters like you, is to monitor the governor's actions and guide his policies as they pertain to our water, public lands, clean energy, and access to democracy.

Unfortunately, Rep. Shaw was not successful in his bid for attorney general. While his message was strong, it was difficult for him to overcome the significant political fundraising gap between him and his opponent, Ashley Moody. Rep. Shaw has a bright future in Florida politics, and we expect to see him on the campaign trail again soon.

There was one other cabinet-level race we were closely monitoring this election. The Florida Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services is an oft-forgotten position, albeit a powerful and important one. As Election Day drew closer, the race to replace Adam Putnam tightened in the polls with the relatively unknown Nikki Fried edging closer to State Rep. Matt Caldwell (R-Lehigh Acres). Fried, running on a platform of gun control, medical cannabis reform, and protecting our water, appealed to Florida voters who were looking for significant change out of this office. On Election Night, it looked like Rep. Caldwell was going to win in a squeaker, but after the recount, Fried wound up winning by just a few thousand votes. FCV is heartened by Commissioner Fried's serious approach to using this office to protect, restore, and enhance our natural resources and promote clean energy alternatives. We look forward to working with her as soon as possible.

# THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

We believe that our government works best when it accurately represents the people they are governing. Florida Conservation Voters was proud to endorse 13 inspiring and dedicated conservation leaders for offices in the Florida Legislature. Of those 13 candidates, 7 were people of color and 10 were women. We are delighted to inform you that 5 of our endorsed candidates won their elections! The core of our future conservation majority has arrived.

Running for public office is a difficult and life-changing decision to make. Our endorsed candidates displayed hard work and dedication throughout the election. They changed the public narrative, brought a spotlight to crucial conservation issues, and encouraged people to vote. Unfortunately, our two priority state senate races didn't turn out the way we hoped.

After a late candidate dropout, our friend and conservation colleague Lindsay Cross (D-St. Petersburg) jumped into the race for Senate District 24 to unseat incumbent Sen. Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg). Lindsay campaigned tirelessly and made Pinellas County's red tide and coastal water problems an unignorable issue. In the end, Lindsay's late entrance coupled with the incumbent's significant fundraising advantage proved impossible to overcome.

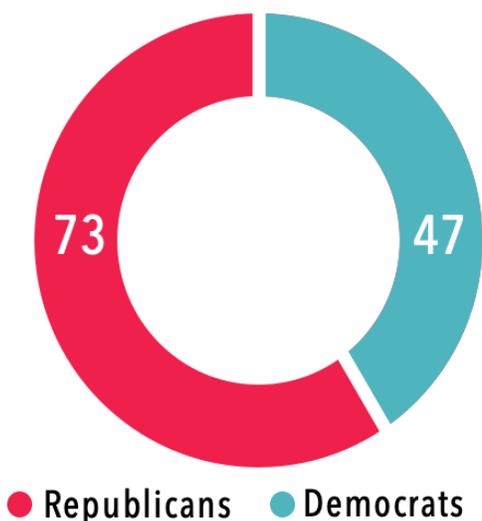
In another closely-watched race, Dr. Kayser Enneking

(D-Gainesville) challenged incumbent Sen. Keith Perry (R-Gainesville) for Senate District 8. Kayser had a unique and genuine story to tell voters about water quality and our health, and she did an admirable job bringing these issues to the forefront of her election. Polling throughout the summer and fall was neck and neck.

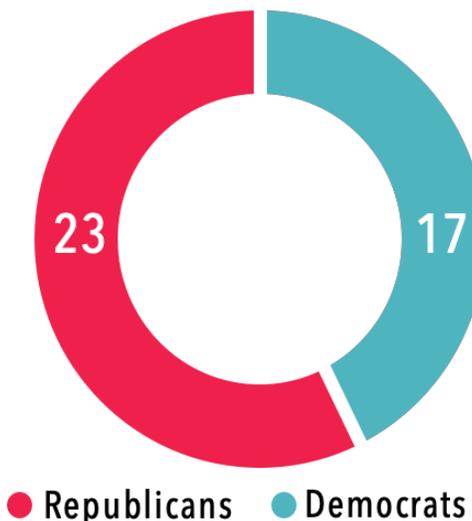
Then, curiously, a former City Commissioner and lifelong Democrat jumped into the race at the last minute, but now as an Independent. His campaign was flush with funds from Republican lobbyists in Tallahassee and an untraceable dark money PAC that also made up nearly half of Keith Perry's campaign donations. As the final votes were tallied on Election Night, Kayser Enneking would fall short by fewer than 2,000 votes. The Democrat-turned-Independent candidate received about 4,000, effectively siphoning enough votes away from Enneking to steal the election for Sen. Perry. Powerful interests that benefit from the status quo clearly won't stop at anything to keep us from winning, but despite that, we almost prevailed. That's why we can't back down.

But perhaps the biggest upset from the Florida Senate was the election of Janet Cruz (D-Tampa), who defeated incumbent Sen. Dana Young (R-Tampa) for Senate District 18. The difference in this narrowly won race was just 382 votes.

## FLORIDA STATE HOUSE



## FLORIDA STATE SENATE



# VOTING RIGHTS RESTORATION AMENDMENT

Saying that Florida’s 2018 General Election ballot was long would be an understatement. Thanks to the Florida Legislature, citizens groups, and our unique Constitutional Revision Commission, we had a total of 12 statewide ballot questions, not to mention the myriad of local ballot questions. While FCV was closely monitoring many of these amendments and their associated campaigns, the Voting Rights Restoration Campaign, also known as Second Chances or Amendment 4, was our clear priority this election.

The Voting Rights Restoration Amendment aims to reinstate voting rights to nearly 1.4 million returning citizens who have served their time and paid their debts. The amendment excludes those convicted of homicide and/or sexual assault. To put it briefly, the clemency process in Florida was inconsistent, unnecessarily cumbersome, and ultimately failed in bringing returning citizens back into the folds of society.

FCV believes that voting rights are human rights, and that our democracy works best when as many legal citizens as possible have access to the ballot box. It’s a fact: when we all vote, the environment wins.

That’s why FCV was an early supporter of the Second Chances campaign back in 2017. Through our partnership with our national affiliate, the League of Conservation Voters, we contributed tens of thousands of dollars and many hours of staff time in support of this important campaign. We conducted presentations around the state, communicated with our members, spoke to the media, and raised general awareness about this good Amendment.

You should be proud. This Voting Rights Restoration Amendment was successful, and earned the approval of more than 64% of Florida voters. But, as we have learned from our trials with the Water and Land Conservation Amendment, the legislature and governor’s office does not always implement the will of the voters. FCV is monitoring the ongoing voting rights restoration process and will keep you informed on our social media accounts and our online newsletters to let you know how you can help make sure Floridians get their right to vote.

While there were other Amendments on the 2018 ballot that would/could affect conservation in Florida, there

was only one that directly referenced our natural world. Florida already has a statutory ban on oil drilling in state waters, but because this is such an important and bipartisan issue in Florida, the Constitutional Revision Commission chose to put the question of enshrining this law in our State Constitution on the 2018 ballot. In a quirky turn of events, the CRC decided it was best to couple this concept with a ban on indoor vaping.

Thankfully, voters approved what became Amendment 9 by nearly 69% of the vote. But, to be clear, this does not entirely protect Florida from any risk of oil washing up on our shores. Florida only controls waters 2 miles out in the Atlantic and 10 miles out in the Gulf of Mexico. The federal Department of Interior controls everything beyond that mark. Florida’s congressional delegation, as well as citizens, must remain vigilant against any attempt to drill off our coasts. And you can be sure our current president’s administration is looking to drill as much as possible.

## 2018 ELECTION BY THE NUMBERS

**62.1%**

STATEWIDE VOTER TURNOUT

**77.7%**

HIGHEST TURNOUT COUNTY SUMTER

**50.4%**

LOWEST TURNOUT COUNTY HENDRY

**8,000,000**

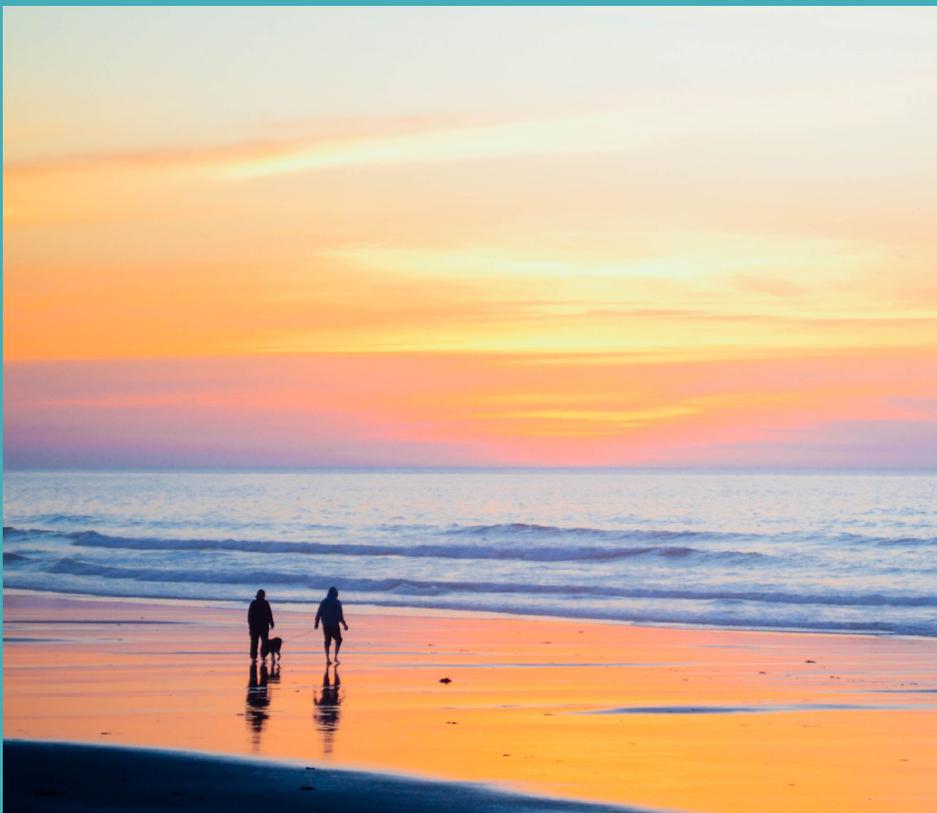
NUMBER OF FLORIDIANS WHO VOTED

## WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2019

If there is one thing that sums up 2018, it's that **every vote counts**. Turnout for this non-presidential year election was extremely high, but it's up to people like us to make sure it stays that way. A few extra hundred voters in some of our largest counties could have entirely reshaped this election. It was that close. And we cannot ever forget that.

Now with the historic midterm election behind us, Floridians can now reset and refocus on the hard policy discussions that will be coming in 2019. Florida has a new governor, many new members of the legislature, and hundreds of changes to the staff at our various environmental protection agencies. And the questions are unending. Will Governor DeSantis follow-through with his campaign promises? Will our new leaders stand up to the destructive environmental policies of the Trump administration? Should we expect another lost summer of algae blooms and red tide? Will Florida finally act on climate change? Only time will tell. The good news is that we have the power to shape how these questions are answered by staying engaged with the political process.

Thank you for all that you do for Florida. And thank you for giving your time and energy to growing the Conservation Voter Movement. Together, we are changing our state for the better, and we wouldn't want anyone else by our side.



## MEET OUR STAFF



Laura Ciociola  
Operations Manager



Courtnee Connon  
Communications Manager



Grant Lewis  
Central Florida Lead Organizer



Brittany Melin  
Development Manager



Olivia Nedd  
South Florida Lead Organizer



Jonathan Webber  
Deputy Director