

EMERGING TIMES

...growing toward the future

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TALLAHASSEE



CONTENTS

Legislative briefing sets tone for visit	2
New DEP secretary kicks off Class 7 session ...	3
Grimsley: Good customer service in FDACS is key.....	4
Caldwell has been a longtime friend to ag	4
Monticello representative understands ag issues	5
UF/IFAS budget priorities include funding for 4-H, research center	5
Albritton, Roth share words of wisdom	6
Boyd urges class to stay connected with lawmakers, issues.....	6
Sweet corn chosen as state veggie during mock session	7
Fresh From Florida motivates consumers.....	8
Raburn family's agriculture roots run deep	8
As a poultry producer, Simpson lives farming	9
Putnam discusses tough decisions as agriculture commissioner	10
ELDP News	11

Taking on Tallahassee

Class 7 members in FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program walked the halls of the Capitol in Tallahassee in January along with several volunteer leaders from FFVA's Board of Directors.

After an overview about legislation affecting Florida specialty crops, they met with legislators and other key state leaders to discuss priority issues for agriculture. The group also heard presentations on the UF/IFAS budget and Fresh From Florida's marketing program, and they participated in a mock legislative session in the Senate chamber.



Legislative briefing sets the tone for visit to Florida's capital



By **Maria Cavazos**
R.C. Hatton

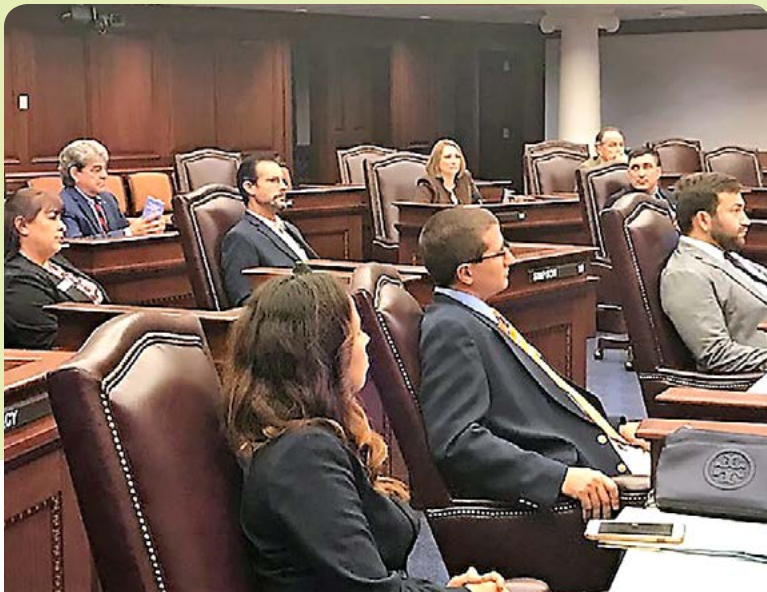
FVA Government Relations Director Butch Calhoun did a phenomenal job coordinating Class 7's meetings with senators, representatives and other state officials. During this time, we were able to see what the Capitol looks like in session.

Calhoun opened our session by reviewing the top agricultural priorities during the 2018 legislative session. We want to ensure that Florida agriculture can continue to meet challenges and to be a strong contributor to the state's economy.

Calhoun explained that there are 120 members in the House and 40 in the Senate and identified which representatives are supportive of agriculture. He briefly explained the process of how an idea becomes

law. First, an idea is drafted into a bill, which needs a sponsor. The bill is then referred to one or more committees or subcommittees. If the chairs of the committees decide the bill is to be heard and it is approved there, it goes to a second reading. However, that doesn't

mean that bill will be heard on the floor. If the bill is read a second time on the Special-Order calendar, it then is taken to a third reading, which is the final reading before the bill goes to a vote on the floor. Only about 10 percent of the bills make it into law, Calhoun said.





New DEP secretary kicks off Class 7's Tallahassee session



By **Myles Basore**
TKM Bengard

Noah Valenstein, the new secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection, kicked off our trip to Tallahassee with an overview of his department. The DEP's overall goal is to be responsive to its stakeholders and taxpayers. Throughout that process, Valenstein said, a better solution is reached when the department honors a

stakeholder's intelligence. This mindset directly correlates with agriculture. As a community we have to inform, include and educate everyone we can at the local and state levels to ensure our industry's success.

Valenstein said he wants to see legislation passed that would eliminate duplicate permitting. This process would reduce the time spent and the hassle required to secure a permit. Doing business in Florida requires an ERP permit (i.e. dealing with surface water or wetlands in the state). A proposed bill this session would allow the DEP to be in control of both the 404 permits and the ERP

permits. This does not eliminate the number of permits, but it would make the process more customer-friendly because a grower would only need a single interaction to receive the permits.

Valenstein also discussed the \$50 million budget requested for land acquisition under the Florida Forever program. Paul Allen, vice chair of FFVA, applauded the secretary for his explanation of the state's vision for land acquisition. Allen also expressed appreciation that the state has not lost sight of the 108 million people east of the Mississippi River who rely on Florida farmers for food.



Grimsley: Good customer service in FDACS is key

As part of our very informative trip to Tallahassee, Sen. Denise Grimsley of Lake Placid spoke with us about her motivation to run for office. A fifth-generation Floridian and third-generation citrus farmer, she explained that her grandfather started the farm with 10 acres of groves. Today, she manages 350 acres of citrus and 100 acres of cattle. In addition, her family's company was a petroleum distributor with 10 convenience stores. Grimsley has been successful in building upon her family experience.



By **Catherine Cellon**
Duda Farm
Fresh Foods

After establishing a successful business and gaining experience in the industry, she decided that more action was needed at the government level for farmers to thrive economically. One Friday, she was replacing a water heater at one of her convenience stores when a government official stopped in. She explained there was going to be a freeze that weekend and she needed the water heater to make coffee and warm food for her customers. But the official red-tagged her equipment and explained he would be back on Monday to turn the water heater back on. She called the appropriate department in Tallahassee and spoke with a very unaccommodating employee. That experience helped ignite her passion to run for office.

Grimsley spoke of her candidacy for agriculture commissioner, saying that the commissioner is the chief consumer advocate and as such should foster a culture of customer service. She said when citizens call the department, someone should help walk them through to a solution. One program in particular that sparks her interest is the Farm to School program, where local fresh food is available for children at their schools. The program will foster a healthier educational system, she said. She also is invested in the FFA and 4-H programs, which she said made her the person she is today.



Caldwell has been a longtime friend to ag

It was enlightening to meet with Rep. Matt Caldwell of House District 79, who is running for the Republican nomination for agriculture



By **Daniel Rifa**
U.S. Sugar
Corporation

commissioner. Caldwell has been a great friend to Florida agriculture and has received the FFVA Legislator of the Year award twice. Currently he has been working on a bill for land conservation, which includes changes to the Florida Forever program that would utilize land and build parks that people would actually use. The bill also would make changes to avoid spending money for maintenance on unused land and to let farmers maintain and farm those lands. Caldwell also has been working on legislation that would require local governments to have plans for future maintenance and replacement for basic utility services such as water and sewage.

During our meeting with Caldwell, several of the volunteer leaders from FFVA discussed the key legislative issues that are of importance to the association during this legislative session. These top issues included the Fresh From Florida marketing program's budget, which was cut last year, and why it's important to get some of that funding back. They also discussed the Everglades Agricultural Area and how it cannot afford to lose any more land to the state for a reservoir project. Caldwell was very receptive to the viewpoints that were presented, and hopefully there will be some headway on these key issues.



Monticello representative understands ag issues



By **Frankie Montalvo**
Glades Formulating Corp.

As a group heavily invested in the future of Florida agriculture, the ELDP is very fortunate to be able to meet with legislators who care about Florida agriculture and its specialty crops. Few politicians can claim to be as invested as Rep. Halsey Beshears of District 7 in Monticello.

Beshears comes from a family nursery business and has long been active in the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association. He is active

with the Jefferson County Farm Bureau and graduated from the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources Class 5.

Beshears is not only what FFVA Director of Government Relations Butch Calhoun would call "a friend," he also is Calhoun's elected representative. Beshears had a strong knowledge of all the policy issues presented by Calhoun and the FFVA delegation during our visit. He understood the importance of the Fresh From Florida marketing budget, BMP cost-sharing, and local property tax issues faced by growers of Citrus



Under Protective Screens (CUPS). Beshears also discussed the importance of the state Agriculture Department's nursery in Dixie County.

During our meeting, Beshears impressed upon Class 7 the values that took him to his position in state government. He told us he isn't in government because he wanted to be in government but because he was firm in his beliefs, told the truth, and worked hard.

UF/IFAS budget priorities include funding for 4-H, research center

In addition to meeting various state legislators to discuss the important agricultural issues that the ag community is hoping to see passed or receive funding for during this session, we also heard from Mary Ann Hooks, who works on behalf of the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. She discussed important legislation that IFAS is hoping to see approved in the 2018 budget.

Hooks took time to speak in detail with Class 7 on several of the major issues for which IFAS is seeking funding. The first – and perhaps the most important – is the return of funding to the 4-H program, which had its budget cut the previous year. With the average age of farmers skewing older, it is important that programs such as 4-H continue in order to educate the next generation of agricultural scientists, engineers and growers.

IFAS also is seeking budget approval for improvement of greenhouses at the Tropical Research and Extension Center in Homestead that were decimated by Hurricane Irma. The university's research centers around the state such as TREC help growers



By **Brent Johnson**
FMC Corporation

by doing applied research to provide solutions to the complex problems – whether it is the need for new crop varieties or solutions for citrus greening or other yield-robbing pests. Hooks said the university also is seeking funding for a state mosquito lab. In a state with high mosquito populations and the rise of mosquito-transmitted viruses such as Zika, a facility such as this would greatly benefit public health in Florida.



Albritton, Roth share leadership experiences

During dinner on our first evening, Republican Rep. Ben Albritton of District 56 gave us some words of wisdom on leadership. He encouraged our class to know who we are, what our beliefs are and what is behind our actions. He said it's important to remember that the most powerful things we



By
Maria Cavazos
R.C. Hatton



Rep. Ben Albritton



Rep. Rick Roth

have are love and self-interest. If we truly want to be leaders, he said, we must be active listeners; that's important if we are to gain respect and not miss something important. Last, he encouraged us to stay involved and engaged in order to understand and become successful leaders.

Also over dinner, Republican Rep. Rick Roth of District 85 shared his leadership experiences. The third-generation farmer and small business owner agreed that it's important to listen more and talk less. Roth explained to us how we learn as business owners and how Tallahassee needs more "good people" in office. "You are your number one asset," he told the group. "You are the decision maker; you are the one making the mistakes and you need to identify yourself as a leader."

Roth encouraged some of us, because we are business people in agriculture, to get to know our elected officials and consider running for office.



Boyd urges class to stay connected with lawmakers, issues

Rep. Jim Boyd has been a strong advocate for agriculture throughout his tenure in the House. Boyd, who represents House District 71



By
Philip Grigsby
Premier Ag
Finance

(western Manatee and Sarasota counties), most recently was instrumental in legislation allowing a sales tax exemption for agricultural producers. We got the opportunity to discuss some of the issues that are on this year's docket for debate and new proposed legislation.

Although the 2018 legislative session is relatively quiet as far as agricultural issues go, we still had plenty of topics to cover and issues we made sure that he would watch out for. Boyd, who is term limited this year, stressed the importance of our involvement in the legislative process and cited the SB 10 issue from 2017 legislative session that was essentially a land grab of some the most productive and important land in the state. A recipient of FFVA's Legislator of the Year award, Boyd reminded Class 7 about how vital it is to be connected to and involved in what goes on in Tallahassee. We were grateful for the representative's time and all that he does in support of our industry.



Sweet corn chosen as state veggie during mock session



By **Philip Grigsby**
Premier Ag Finance

A highlight on our first full day in Tallahassee was the unique opportunity to participate in a mock legislative session on the floor of the Senate chamber.

The Florida Senate is comprised of 40 members from single-member districts. The Senate chamber is a true sight to see, with its members' desks laid out in a semicircular fashion facing a large podium. Support staff

desks line the edges of the chamber, and there is a large balcony for the public. Each desk is a fully functional work station, with multiple amenities including a phone that rings directly to the senator's office.

Before we started the session, two senators – Darryl Rouson of District 19 and David Simmons of District 9 – stopped by and spoke briefly to the class. Both have been great advocates of agriculture over the years.

We were briefed on the order of events and basic procedures to have open discussion over pending legisla-



Sen. David Simmons stopped by to talk with Class 7.

tion. Once we had all of the formalities out of the way, the class came up with an issue to debate and vote on. We proposed creation of a state vegetable. After a short but heated discussion, we chose sweet corn to be the new Florida state vegetable, which passed on the floor with an overwhelming majority.





Fresh From Florida program engages, motivates consumers



By **Adam Roe**
Wm. G. Roe and Sons

During our visit to the state capital, we enjoyed face-to-face time with some of our state's lawmakers as well as influential individuals promoting Florida farming and agriculture.

Jackie Moalli, director of marketing and development for Fresh From Florida, talked about the origin, successes and struggles of the Fresh From Florida

brand. She presented data showing the value of the brand to consumers and how it resonates freshness and quality that motivate them to choose a Fresh From Florida product. An important piece of that comes from working closely with retail partners to promote Florida products and increase customer awareness of the brand and what it stands for.

Moalli also touched on the struggles being felt by the program due to last year's budget cuts. Fresh From Florida is working to maximize exposure with every dollar. This setback has particularly affected its annual TV campaign, which has proven to be a highly effective tool in engaging consumers to



buy Fresh From Florida.

Our time with Moalli gave us insight into the enormous benefits of the Fresh From Florida brand, which is a valuable marketing resource to all Florida farmers.

Raburn family's agriculture roots run deep

Rep. Jake Raburn, a Hillsborough County native, discussed his roots in agriculture and his decision to run for public office with our class. Raburn, who has an extensive family background in Florida agriculture that dates back to his early childhood, attended the University of

Florida. There he earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural communication with minors in food and resource economics and agricultural law. During his time at UF, Raburn worked for the Florida FFA (formerly Future Farmers of America) and the national FFA organization.

After graduation, Raburn worked as a marketing specialist for the Florida Department of Citrus. Two years later, he joined his wife's family business, Hinton Farms Produce Inc., a grower, packer and shipper of fresh berries, cantaloupes and vegetables. Hinton Farms grows and operates in Raburn's home district. Raburn is a producer member of FFVA.

In 2012 Raburn decided to



By **Shane Rogers**
J&J Family of Farms

make an impact in his community by running for what was then the newly created House District 57. With the help of his family, he took a very grass-roots approach by going door-to-door talking to people in the district. He defeated Democrat Bruce Barnett, winning 58 percent of the vote. At the time, Raburn became Florida's youngest legislator at age 27. Since his election, he has placed high priority on both agriculture and education. In 2014, Raburn was re-elected to his second term in the Legislature without opposition.





As a poultry producer, Simpson lives farming on a daily basis



By **Justin Pettit**
Blue Hammock Farms

Sen. Wilton Simpson of District 10 not only supports Florida agriculture, he lives it on a daily basis. Simpson is a poultry producer with an egg-laying operation with more than a million chickens in Trilby. He's been in the egg business since 2001. During our Tallahassee visit, we met with Simpson and discussed

priority agriculture bills before the Legislature this session.

Simpson has many awards and recognitions, one of which was the FFVA Legislator of the Year, along with the Florida Farm Bureau Champion for Agriculture. Simpson has served in the state Senate since 2012 and is the Senate majority leader. Simpson has multiple committee assignments, including Education, Higher Education, Rules, and Joint Legislative

Budget Commission. He also chairs the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development.

Having strong leaders like Simpson in our Legislature gives young farmers the confidence that Florida agriculture is represented by dedicated, hard-working individuals who sacrifice time in their personal lives, families and businesses to make changes in our government for the better.





Putnam discusses tough decisions as agriculture commissioner



By **Frankie Montalvo**
Glades Formulating Corp.

ELDP Class 7 had the pleasure of having Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam speak to us in Tallahassee during our closing lunch. Putnam is in his second and final term as commissioner and is running for governor.

The commissioner spoke at length about many topics important to his position, including issues related to the consumer services side of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. He emphasized that as an elected commissioner, his role includes performing duties outside those

we know in the agriculture industry, and he explained that consumer services encompass far more than regulating gas pumps and business scales.

He discussed some of the hard decisions the role includes. For example, it was critical to conduct aerial spraying in Homestead to prevent the outbreak of the mosquito-borne Zika virus in recent summers. But that had to be balanced with a larger public campaign to discuss how important these operations were, while residents resisted and a looming public health crisis was a “punch line” to much of the rest of the country. Putnam also discussed how the agriculture department’s labs were used for Zika testing, and other FDACS resources were used for control and prevention of outbreaks.

He also spoke about this year’s legislative session. He noted that funding for the Fresh From Florida program had increased in the budget, but not as much as they had hoped. He also discussed the importance of the Rural and Family Lands program and its benefits.

Putnam thanked our group and told us that groups like the ELDP are the present and future to help feed the people of this state and country. Class 7 is immensely grateful for his time and wisdom.





ELDP News



Ryan Atwood (Class 3) is serving as vice president of the Florida Blueberry Growers Association.



Ben Lahr (Class 5) has accepted a position in Oregon with Driscoll's as a production manager working with blueberries, blackberries and raspberries. "I greatly enjoyed my ELDP experience, and it is something I will share with everyone in Oregon," he said.



Josh Temple (Class 5) has a new job working as the North America Biology Program Leader for Insecticides and Nematicides for the agricultural division of DowDuPont.