

EMERGING TIMES

...growing toward the future

Volume 8 • Issue 4 | April 2019

TALLAHASSEE



Tour provides history, close look at Senate chamber



By **Alison Sizemore**
Sizemore Farms

Class 8 members gathered by the entrance of the Senate chamber to begin their guided tour. The large doors opened and the class was ushered in. The large, expansive room was impressive, as many of the class members had not visited the Capitol building before. Our tour guide instructed us to sit at the senators' desks to begin a short informational session about the chamber's history.

The FFVA group walked the rows of desks looking for a seat, and many chose to sit in their senator's spot. Class members settled in and inspected their desks, which were equipped with voting buttons. The tour guide motioned to a large screen on the side of the chamber, which displayed each senator's name. The group was instructed to press a "yes" or "no" voting button to demonstrate the process.

Our guide gave a short presentation about the history and traditions of the Senate chamber. The improvements made in a recent remodel of the building were pointed out,

drawing attention to the beautiful dome overhead. Large portraits of past Senate presidents hung along the sides of the room. The group heard how each president chooses the artist for their portrait and is free to customize them and make them personalized. The group enjoyed looking at each portrait. The hobbies and passions of each Senate president were subtly included in some of the portraits, and it made for some excellent storytelling by the tour guide. The tour was interesting, educational and a welcome break from the hustle of rushing through the Capitol halls.

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Capitol tour sets the stage for Tallahassee session



By **Jake Brown**
Tater Farms

It is Tuesday morning, March 19, in the lobby of the Doubletree hotel in Tallahassee. Everyone in Class 8 is present and accounted for, and we are ready to tour the Capitol. A very fast-paced, energetic guide is setting the pace for this tour. He walks through the streets as if he has spent a lot of time here and knows exactly where he is going. And he does. Our tour guide is FFVA President Mike Joyner.

After clearing security, we headed straight to the 22nd floor of the Capitol. Here we looked out over Tallahassee and saw FSU, FAMU and many other sites. Then we piled onto two elevators and headed down to the House side of the building. Here we were able to walk inside and look around. Mike had arranged for the Sargent at Arms to introduce himself to the group and talk to us for a few minutes. Another



employee in the Sargent's office gave us a brief history and an overview of how things in the House work.

Then quickly we were off to see the Senate side, but on the way we stopped in the center and learned how both houses of the Legislature end the session -- with the dropping

of a handkerchief. Once we made it to the Senate side, we stood outside the doors while Joyner informed us how that side of the Capitol works. Our visit was very interesting, to say the least. We learned a lot about the ins and outs of how policies and laws are presented and made.



Industrial hemp a priority for Agriculture Commissioner Fried

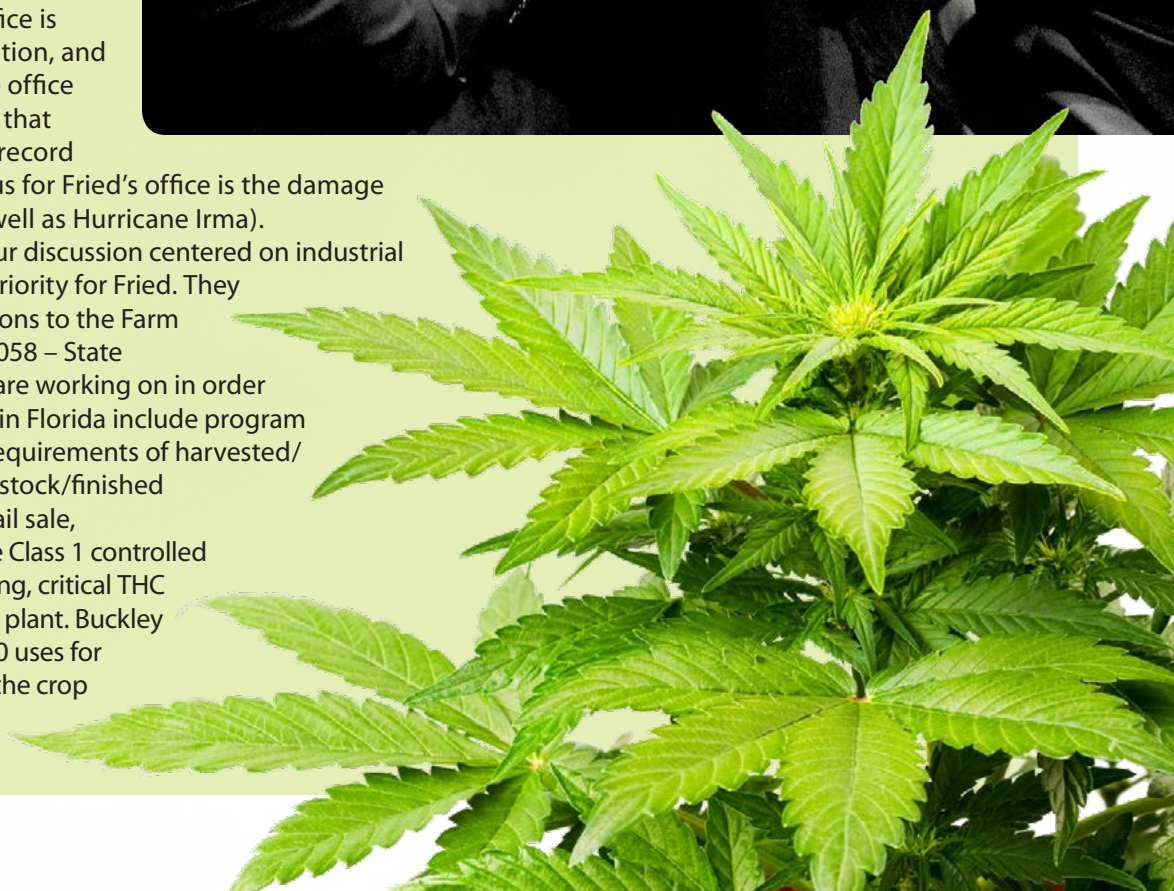


By **Tyler Jacoby**
Highland Precision Ag

Emily Duda Buckley, an alumna (Class 6) of the FFVA Emerging Leader Development Program, started her career in politics at Florida State University. She represented her family's farm, A. Duda and Sons, on all agriculture policy matters.

Now Buckley is the director of legislative affairs at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, where she works daily with Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried. Currently, her office is pushing five pieces of legislation, and two of those are ag bills. The office is focusing on a skimmer bill that will change a current public record exemption. Another big focus for Fried's office is the damage from Hurricane Michael (as well as Hurricane Irma).

However, the majority of our discussion centered on industrial hemp, because it is a major priority for Fried. They are actively working on revisions to the Farm Bill (see HB 333/SB 1020/SB 1058 – State Hemp Program). Issues they are working on in order to legalize hemp production in Florida include program registration, transportation requirements of harvested/raw product, imported plant stock/finished product, distribution and retail sale, de-scheduling hemp from the Class 1 controlled substance list, pesticide labeling, critical THC levels, and invasiveness of the plant. Buckley said there are 20,000 to 30,000 uses for hemp, and Fried's office sees the crop revolutionizing agriculture production in Florida.





When it comes to budget time, let the games begin



By **Nick Wishnatzki**
Wish Farms

Mary Ann Hooks is no stranger to adversity. As a breast cancer survivor, she fought for her life. So when it comes to going toe-to-toe with politicians in Tallahassee, she's clearly up to the task, and her track record as the lobbyist for the University of Florida's Institute for Food and Agricultural Sciences proves it.

As we learned, funding for UF/IFAS, along with every other part of the state's nearly \$90 billion budget, is

used as a bargaining chip. A fully funded IFAS is a significant boon to agriculture and ultimately the state's economic prosperity.

Our group had the unique and exciting experience of being in Tallahassee as each house released its budget. When Hooks heard that the Higher Education Committee proposed \$135 million in cuts to the state university system, she wasn't thrilled. But neither was she deterred. "At the same time, we got \$50,000 in the budget. We asked for \$12 million, but hey – with \$50,000 we are still in the game!" Hooks said enthusiastically. As she explained: "This is when the games really begin. You start seeing what their strategy is. When you



have a foot in the door, that's when they negotiate over each issue and determine whether your member is strong enough to win that battle."

Our leadership class took note of and appreciated Hooks' persistence, tenacity and resilience.

Albritton urges us to fight the good fight

Serving in the House of Representatives from 2010-2018 and recently elected to the Senate, fourth-generation citrus grower Sen. Ben Albritton has continuously been a strong advocate for agriculture.

"District 26 (consisting of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee, and parts of Charlotte, Lee and Polk counties) fits who I am and my personality. It really is our bread basket in Florida," the Lakeland native told Class 8 during our meeting with him.

Albritton, chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, shared the importance of educating others about agricul-

ture; more specifically, that agriculture isn't the one to blame, especially regarding Florida's water issues.

"It's so easy to point fingers at agriculture; we are being attacked," he said.

"No one is talking about the water that leaves the south end of the lake cleaner than what comes in from the north. Agriculture isn't just the third leg of the economic stool (along with construction and tourism), but also the most resilient."

Albritton urged us to let others know that if they eat, they are involved in agriculture. In retrospect, agriculture really embodies everyone. Everyone must eat. Albritton shared the importance of agriculturalists sharing our story and emphasized prioritization. "Prioritize in a way that represents what is important to you. The rest of the stuff, you do it when you can. Fight for the things that are important to you," he advised. Fellow Florida agriculturalists, there's not a better time to share why we do what we do. Not only because that's what's important to us, but also because agriculture really does involve everyone.



By **Breanna Lawyer**
Corteva
Agriscience





Fresh From Florida logo is worth millions around the world



By **Tiffany Dale**
Florida Strawberry
Growers Association

Fifty dollars goes a long way with a Fresh From Florida membership. A Fresh From Florida membership provides access to the use of the Fresh From Florida logo to any Florida agricultural producers and retailers. If you didn't already love all that FFVA has to offer, the FFF membership is another benefit of being a member of FFVA.

High returns on investment in a membership to the Fresh From Florida program was one of the many successes ELDP Class 8 learned about from Jackie Moalli, director of marketing at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Under Moalli's leadership, the FFF program worked with a mere \$5 million budget for consumer marketing campaigns to promote more than 300 of Florida's finest agricultural products throughout their respective markets.

The Fresh From Florida budget in 2018 totaled \$10 million and returned over \$125 million in cash receipts. These



returns make it obvious that consumers are noticing and becoming loyal to the Fresh From Florida brand. Moalli informed the group that Fresh From Florida brand awareness has risen from 40% to 75% since 2013. In addition, awareness of the Fresh From Florida logo has risen from 53% to as high as 78% since 2013. Moalli and the marketing group can say with confidence from their findings that consumers like the idea of local, and are more likely to buy and even pay more for the Fresh From Florida brand when given the chance.

This program offers both an economic and social benefit in the marketplace. The program incentivizes retailers to run promotions on FFF products and assists producers by offering up to \$1,500 annually to offset the costs associated with putting the logo on Florida products. As trade pressures increase and purchasing decisions and options continue to evolve, identifiers and brand loyalty are essential. Whether consumers are grocery shopping, on social media or looking for a recipe, there are countless resources available at www.followfreshfromflorida.com.





Class urges full funding of Fresh From Florida



By **Zach Langford**
Syngenta Crop
Protection

Under the leadership of Butch Calhoun, Mike Joyner and Paul Allen, our class had the opportunity to engage with members of our Legislature in Tallahassee. The hot topic of the day was the budget cuts to the Fresh From Florida campaign. The members of the House and Senate have a vote regardless of their knowledge on

the topic. It's important for all of us to be a voice for agriculture. We had the opportunity to speak with Sens. Audrey Gibson and Lori Berman. During our time with them we shared the status of the Fresh From Florida budget cuts and why this program is beneficial to support the Florida brand and differentiate Florida products from foreign produce in our grocery stores.

Gibson represents District 6 in Duval County and has many committee assignments, including Appropriations and Judiciary. She has served 17 years in the Legislature between her time in the House of

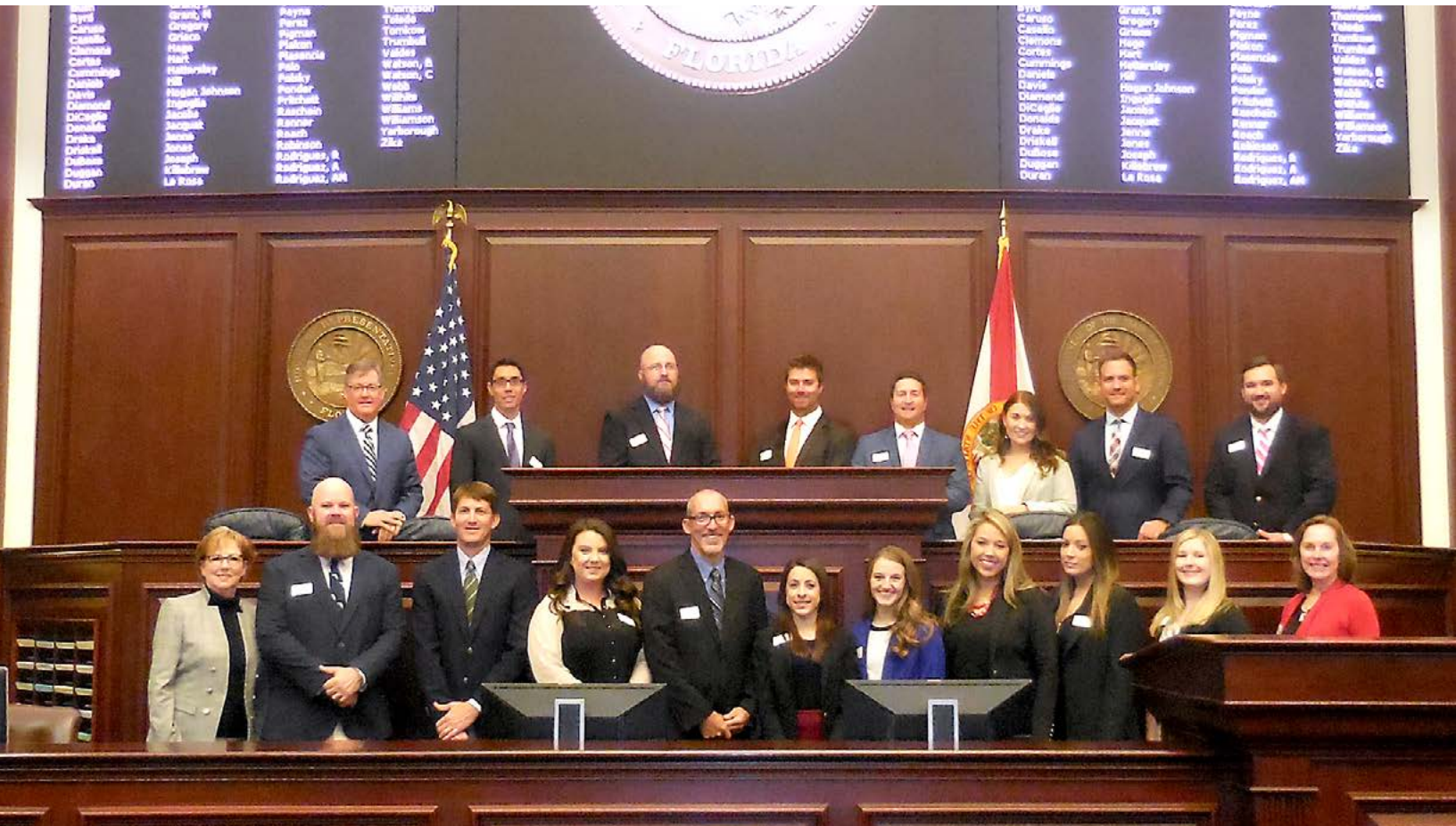
Representatives and her current Senate position.

Berman represents District 31 in Palm Beach County and sits on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture and the Environment and Natural Resources Committee, among others. Berman served in the House of Representatives for eight years and was elected to the Senate in 2018.

Both senators provided some feedback regarding the Fresh From Florida program and asked great questions to better understand our position and how this issue affects us personally as well as Florida agriculture more broadly.



Senators
Audrey Gibson
(left) and
Lori Berman



Joyner issues leadership challenge



By **Cathleen Conley**
A. Duda & Sons

"It shouldn't be lost on you that you were hand-picked for this opportunity," began Mike Joyner, president of FFVA, as he addressed members of ELDP Class 8 in Tallahassee. "Like it or not, you guys are special. FFVA is investing in you."

Joyner's inspiring address came after a quick morning tour of the Florida state Capitol and before several meetings with state representatives. Class

8 visited Tallahassee for a behind-the-scenes look at Florida's political scene and to urge legislators to fully fund the Fresh From Florida program, an initiative to help consumers identify Florida produce in grocery stores.

Speaking from years of experience and with a true passion for agriculture, Joyner congratulated Class 8 and laid out several expectations he has for those in the program. Among them were to be involved and engaged, have a positive attitude, and "squint with your ears," Joyner's unique way of telling the class to listen intently.

Joyner also noted several expectations for the class after the program concludes, including being involved in things that

are significant, being a mentor, having mentors around us, and deciding what we want our leadership legacies to be.

As a final takeaway, Joyner challenged everyone to establish personal guiding principles to help define how we are remembered. He provided several examples of his own guiding principles, such as doing what is right, leading with character, and not associating long hours with hard work.

"To those much is given, much is expected," Joyner concluded, inspiring the class to not only be diligent and thoughtful ambassadors for agriculture, but to also remember that our jobs don't define us and that living balanced lives is key to our successes.



Simmons has firsthand knowledge of growing crops



By **Breanna Lawyer**
Corteva Agriscience

“I remember disking ground on our D21 Allis-Chalmers [tractor] as a kid,” Sen. David Simmons shared with Class 8 as our meeting with him began. Simmons is no stranger to agriculture. Growing up just 30 miles north of Nashville on a diversified crop and livestock farm, the District 9 senator said he had a hand in his first crop at age 11. “I’m a firm believer in agriculture,” he said.

After graduating from Vanderbilt University Law School in 1977, the Tennessee native moved to the Sunshine State. It’s important to keep in mind that the Florida Legislature is made up of citizens who not only devote their time to public service, but also continue their professional careers. Simmons is a founding partner of DSK Law. He served in the House of Representatives from 2000 to 2008 representing parts of Seminole and Orange counties. In 2010, he was elected to the Senate, serving as the (Republican) majority whip in 2010-2012. In 2017, Simmons worked alongside Gov. Rick Scott to stress the importance of repairing the Herbert Hoover Dike around Lake Okeechobee. Most recently, he was selected as the Florida Senate’s new president pro tempore for the 2018-2020 legislative term.

After discussing the importance of pushing for an increased Fresh From Florida budget with Simmons, Class 8 and Butch Calhoun asked what we could do to support his Tallahassee aspirations for this legislative session. His humble response: “Thank you for being involved in agriculture. Just keep doing what you’re doing.” Thank you, Sen. Simmons, for your work in Tallahassee.

Briefing paves way for legislator visits

One of the highlights of the Tallahassee trip was the opportunity to visit legislators. In preparation for the visits, the class was briefed by Butch Calhoun on the prevailing agricultural issues. The House and Senate had just released their budgets, and one of the most alarming changes was the House’s proposed \$3.74 million cut to the Fresh From Florida program’s budget. The class members were given print materials to leave with their legislators and were charged to present their own personal stories of how Fresh From Florida had positively affected their businesses.



By **Alison Sizemore**
Sizemore Farms

The class set off from the meeting room to navigate the winding halls of the Capitol building. The group was warned that many of the legislators would be in meetings and to talk with their staff members. However, many of us were surprised to find our legislators in their offices with open doors. All of the class members had several productive conversations and found that the legislators were sympathetic to their positions. They were happy to take the handouts the class presented and promised to share them with their committee members.

Overall, the experience was positive for ELDP Class 8. Many of the group had never been to the Capitol, let alone met with their legislators. The class was encouraged by their visits and was excited to get more involved in the legislative process. The legislative visits were also impactful for FFVA as a whole, as 15 different stories were shared – each praising the positive impact of the Fresh From Florida program.





Calhoun sets the stage for eye-opening Tallahassee trip



By **Chris Campbell**
Lipman Family Farms

During the ELDP Class 8 trip to Tallahassee, FFVA Director of Government Relations Butch Calhoun lined up a very impressive set of speakers and a trip to remember. Our first event was with our very own FFVA President Mike Joyner. If you don't know this man, you need to. He is a great guy with a lot of knowledge of the ag industry.

Calhoun laid out the procedures of how a bill makes it to the floors of each

chamber and what makes it move or not move through the different committees. He said it is easier for a bill not to be heard than it is to get a bill moving through the right channels. One interesting fact was that a representative in the House can only submit six bills during the legislative session, but senators have no limit on the number of bills they may submit. His explanation on the hierarchy of the Legislature was very insightful: He who controls the money controls where it will be spent. The speaker of the House and the Senate president appropriate how much money a certain committee gets and which representatives or senators are on those committees. There was so much to learn and take in.

If the House and Senate budgets don't match up, committees work together in each chamber to try to resolve the differences. If differences remain, a conference committee made up of members from both chambers works to get the budgets to match. Approval is needed from both chambers before it is sent on to the governor's desk for a signature. The only bill the Florida Legislature must pass is a final budget.

Our thanks to Butch Calhoun. This was such an amazing trip and experience to be a part of. I don't think I'm alone in saying that you will be deeply missed at FFVA. Thank you for all your dedication to Florida agriculture and your work behind the scenes.



Nikki Fried: Fresh ideas for Florida agriculture



By **Carla Aurora de Jesus Rojas**
Southern
Gardens Citrus

Nikki Fried is Florida's 12th Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services and the first woman elected to hold this position in the Sunshine State. Born and raised in Miami, Fried graduated from the University of Florida, where she received her bachelor's, master's and juris doctorate degrees. While in law school, she served as student body president, the first woman to hold the position in nearly two decades. Before her election, Fried worked as an advocate in Tallahassee, representing at-risk children, the Broward County School Board, and working to expand patient access to medical marijuana.

Fried acknowledged she does not fit the conventional model for agriculture commissioner but said she wants our

industry to see her as a partner and to be sure that she is working to enhance Florida agriculture with new ideas.

Fried talked with our group about her priorities, including development of hemp as a key commercial crop in the state. "I see hemp as a revolution for our state and for our country," she said. Another priority is relief for areas damaged by Hurricane Michael, especially Panhandle communities. Her office also is investing in agricultural innovation and technology, looking for partnerships with countries including Israel and Canada, and working on the promotion of Florida agritourism, Fresh From Florida and the Florida Farm to School programs.

When asked about the significance of having a woman Commissioner of Agriculture and the small number of women in leadership roles in the industry, Fried said, "Hopefully, I'm showing that the glass ceiling is



broken for all women across our state." She told us that her office needs to be an example and she has filled many key positions with women, including two of her deputy commissioners. She also has created new positions in order to have inclusion and diversity assured during her tenure.



Farm to School program connects growers with communities



By **Cooper Hopkins**
Hundley Farms

Florida schools bought nearly \$60 million worth of Florida-grown agricultural products this past year. Beth Spratt, outreach coordinator at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, explained how the program is doing its part to encourage schools and farmers make this number even higher.

Spratt presented the three pillars the program focuses on: school gardening, agricultural nutrition education and local procurement. The department believes that it is essential to create enthusiasm about the products themselves through learning about the growing process and about the health value of fresh Florida products. If students enjoy learning about where their food comes from as well as how beneficial it can be for their health, then they will be much more eager to see Florida products on the menu.



Farmers can do their part by inviting schools and their students to learn more about their operations, whether through virtual field trips or on-site visits. This can help students to feel a connection with their local growers and the food that they ultimately consume. The third pillar – and Spratt's specialty – is local procurement and farmers' relationships to schools. Farmers who are willing to either create or build on their relationships with local schools are encouraged to use some of the services provided by FDACS and the Farm to School initiative. They are more than willing to use their resources to help farmers connect with the necessary people to increase the amount of local products in schools and to create an interest in and curiosity about Florida agriculture for the next generation.





A Senate employee gives the class an overview of Senate operations.

A lesson in leadership from Sen. Wilton Simpson



By **Nick Wishnatzki**
Wish Farms

As our FFVA leadership group sat in the hallowed hall of the Florida Senate chamber, it became apparent as we listened to Sen. Wilton Simpson that he has a passion for advocating for and defending our

industry. His demeanor is relaxed and easy-going, but clearly he is focused on the mission. As the Senate's majority leader since 2016, this approach has served him well. We learned early on in our trip from Butch Calhoun, FFVA's director of government relations: "Politics is all about relationships." Among other things, the ability to forge bonds with colleagues on both sides of the aisle is a hallmark of an effective leader.

Elected in 2012 on the promise to make agriculture a top priority, he has

been a tireless advocate for Florida's second largest economic driver. Representing District 10, Simpson was named FFVA's Legislator of the Year in 2013. As the owner of Simpson Farms, an egg farm in Dade City, he is one of the last remaining representatives in the state with a direct tie to agriculture. That tie has strengthened his belief that government should make it easier for farmers, not harder, while at the same time supporting common-sense policies and regulations.

Rick Roth: An advocate for Florida agriculture

The Governor's Club near the Capitol was the setting for a wonderful dinner with various guests, including Rep. Rick Roth. One of FFVA's longtime board members, Roth has represented District 85 covering northern Palm Beach County since 2016. He grew up in Belle Glade and is president of Roth Farms, a sugar cane and vegetable operation located in the Everglades Agricultural Area. His agricultural background and career have provided the legislator with a unique perspective on how to shape policy decisions in the House of Representatives.

Roth shared that it can be easy to become bogged down in the negativity cast on agriculture from people unfamiliar with our industry. Between hurricanes, NAFTA renegotiations and Everglades restoration, the fight seems to never end. He said he can keep a positive outlook because the facts show that he's on the right side of the fence. This

viewpoint allows him to carry the conversation to others who may have an opposing opinion in a very proactive manner.

Roth said a large part of his success is his ability to present the facts without upsetting others. He shared that civility is lacking in politics, and he strives every day to be thoughtful and careful in appreciating the different viewpoints that others may have.

Class 8 was encouraged to continue to evolve as leaders within the industry so that we can shape the discussion in the years to come. As Roth shared, there is nobody better equipped to tell the story of Florida agriculture than those who passionately work within it every day.



By **Justin Newsome**
Bayer
CropScience

ELDP News

- 1 John Beuttenmuller (Class 4)** and his wife, Kelly, welcomed a baby girl, Antonia Raegan Beuttenmuller, on Feb. 14. This Valentine's Day baby weighed in at 8 pounds, 8 ounces and was 20 inches long.
- 2 Ryan Atwood (Class 3)** was appointed to the U.S. Highbush Council as the Southern Region representative.

