

EMERGING TIMES

...growing toward the future

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TALLAHASSEE



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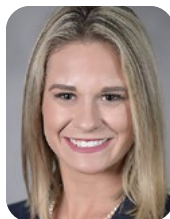
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Class 9 learns about the legislative process

FFFVA ELDP Class 9 members had the opportunity to visit Tallahassee during week three of the 2020 legislative session, where we learned how a bill becomes a law and how to advocate on behalf of the agriculture industry. FFVA President Mike Joyner led our group throughout the Capitol to visit both the House and Senate chambers.

The group visited the chamber for the House, which has 120 members. The chamber walls displayed 10 large paintings by Christopher Still depicting chapters of Florida's history, ranging from prior to European exploration all the way to modern society. The group also visited the Senate, which has 40 members.

One key takeaway from the ELDP class trip was that of the 160 members of the Legislature, only about 10 have an agricultural background. This realization emphasizes the importance for leaders in our industry to step up and be a voice for agriculture.



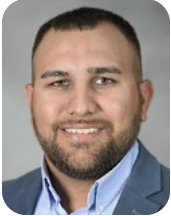
By **Taylor Sewell**
Yara North America



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Watching the Agriculture Committee in action is an enlightening experience



By **Tim Cuellar**
Duda Ranches

On our first full day, Class 9 sat in on an Agriculture Committee meeting. As we walked into the room, an announcement was made that anyone could submit a card if they

wished to comment on the topic being discussed. I found it enlightening that anyone can have the opportunity to speak his or her opinion on a bill. “Interesting” would be an understatement to describe my experience at the meeting.

The topic of discussion was SB 48, which would ban the declawing of cats. Any veterinarian who fails to follow this law would face a fine of \$1,000 for the first offense. The declawing would only be accepted if it were medically

necessary for the cat’s well-being. The committee passed the bill during the meeting, sending it on to the next committee. There were a lot of people in the room to support the measure.

Once the proposal passed and the committee took up the next bill, about 65 percent of those in the room left, indicating the level of support for the declawing bill. It was very interesting to see how this bill fell under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee.





House term limits present challenges



By **Jeffrey Hancock**
Peace River Packing

After an eventful morning of touring the state Capitol and meetings with the Ag Coalition, UF/IFAS and FDACS Fresh From Florida representatives, our group settled in at the Hopping, Green and Sams law firm's board room for lunch. Over a delicious meal of chicken, roasted vegetables and strawberry shortcake, the class had an open discussion with FFVA President Mike Joyner about their experience from the morning activities.

During the discussion, Class 9 member Ethan Basore observed that each of the speakers from the morning bemoaned term limits for state representatives. Joyner elaborated on the issue and told the class how term



limits had certainly changed the way business is done at the state capital. He explained how it was difficult to educate a new class of inexperienced state representatives every two years on agriculture-related issues and to get a feeling for who supports our industry.

He also discussed the experience gap, which occurs when a longstanding supporter of agriculture must leave the House after eight years. It was an enlightening morning and helped us to understand the legislative process in Tallahassee.

FDACS: Diverse priorities with a focus on hemp

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services supports and promotes a diverse range of initiatives, even some you may not expect. ELDP graduate Emily Duda Buckley, director of legislative affairs for Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried, explained the department's scope ranges from the grocery store to gas pumps to hemp and everything in between. Buckley is

the "go-to" person for their division because everything political funnels through her.

This year, Florida hemp production, processing and distribution continue to occupy much of the department's focus. There are multiple bills focused on hemp and Fried's quest for Florida to become a premium hemp producer. However, there also is work to be done to pass bills focused on clarifying outdated statute language and improving privacy laws for aquaculture and animal testing facilities, Buckley said. As always, it is a busy political season in the capital, but the general mood is hopeful that much will be accomplished.



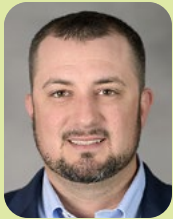
By **Tony Kalogridis**
H&A Farms



**Commissioner
of Agriculture**



Old Capitol preserves Florida's unique history



By **Johnny Lunsford**
L&M Farms

Florida's historic Capitol Museum was once the epicenter of the Sunshine State's governmental affairs. This grand old building was saved from demolition in the late 1970s through citizens' action, and now it stands proudly next to the

new Capitol. The museum displays more than 250 artifacts in 21 rooms for visitors to see.

From the governors' private office to the Supreme Court chamber, we could imagine the busy days of policymaking in the tall, echoing halls. The museum's mission is to "illuminate the past, present and future connections between the people of Florida and their political institutions through programs of civic education, historical interpretation and preservation." From Indian artifacts

and historic agricultural tools to a collection of video interviews of past legislators, there is no way one can experience all of the museum's exhibits in a single visit.

As a Florida native, it was great for me to see Florida's unique heritage preserved in this beautiful building. My recommendation is simple: Whether lobbying for Florida policy during the legislative session or teaching our younger generation about Florida's proud history, find time to visit the old Capitol.





Value of Fresh From Florida brand high among consumers



By **Jay Johnston**
Deseret Farms of Ruskin

Jackie Moalli, director of marketing at the Florida Department of Agriculture, spoke with us in depth about the Fresh From Florida program. The Fresh From Florida program evolved from The Florida Ag Promotional Campaign founded in 1990 by the Florida Legislature. There are over 47,000 farms on 10 million acres in the state, and this program puts Florida agricultural products in front of consumers and helps them to identify

our products vs. imports at the grocery store. The program works with more than 70 retail partners in 25 countries for a total of about 15,000 stores.

Members of the program have access to the Fresh From Florida logo to use on their products. The logo is widely recognized by consumers up and down the Eastern Seaboard and around the world, FDACS research has shown.

Moalli presented data that demonstrates the value of this brand. Nine out of 10 consumers recognize the brand and are more likely to buy products labeled Fresh From Florida. Retailers are requesting Fresh From Florida displays for their stores and the labels to be on Florida products. The focus



on developing consumer preferences is now driving value and benefitting Florida producers.

We left the meeting with a greater understanding of the benefits that the Fresh From Florida Program brings to all of Florida agriculture. A continued focus on the marketing of the brand will provide a more customer-oriented future for all Florida agricultural products and especially those that participate and use the logo.





Ag Coalition members give lobbying insight



By **Perry Mason**
Maury L. Carter & Associates

The conversation our group had with representatives from the Ag Coalition was fascinating. The discussion provided insight into the world of politics and how much behind-the-scenes work is involved in getting bills passed.

The participants were Nancy Stephens (Ag Coalition chair), Adam Basford (Florida Farm Bureau) and Gary Hunter (Hopping, Green and Sams). As Basford pointed out, relationships are everything. I find that this rings true in everyday life. It was truly an experience to have these Tallahassee veterans lay the groundwork for the legislative process inside and outside of the capital.

Basford's story about what brought him to politics was resounding. My family and others in the citrus industry are suffering from the effects legislation can have on small family farms. It seems that now more than ever farmers must be globally aware, not simply concerned with national farming issues. Lobbyist assistance is crucial in helping educate politicians on issues we're facing and what legislation is needed in order to ensure the vitality and livelihood of farmers.

Dynamic duo pursues funding for UF/IFAS

During a jam-packed legislative session week in Tallahassee, ELDP Class 9 had the pleasure of hearing the real take on the budget lobbying process from the experts themselves: Mary



By **Johnny Lunsford**
L&M Farms

Ann Gosa Hooks, director of government affairs for UF/IFAS, and Assistant Director Victoria Price. With an extensive background in legislative processes, water, land use, growth management and environmental policy, Hooks is an influencer who knows how to get things done when it comes to the \$91 billion budget at hand. At her side, Price monitors the issues that affect UF/IFAS and develops strategies to build governmental partnerships that create funding opportunities. From choosing sponsors with political and partisan divides, to educating legislators with term limits and campaigns nagging at their heels, these lobbyists have their work cut out for them.

A veteran of 10 years at IFAS and before that as director of government affairs for Florida Farm Bureau, Hooks walked our class through the clean and dirty tactics legislators use to influence policy. There are great differences in the proposed House and Senate budgets this session. The hurdles they navigate to pave the way to common-sense budget policy is something that our class was able to capture firsthand with their presentation. We wish them the best of luck and are thankful to have them representing Florida agriculture in Tallahassee.





Commissioner Fried's office has ambitious legislative goals



By **Ethan Basore**
TKM Bengard

It was an honor to meet with Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried. Fried is the first female agriculture commissioner in the state's history. She does not come from an agriculture background, but public service has always been in her life. The commissioner, who was student body president at the University of

Florida, graduated with a law degree and a master's in political campaigning. The commissioner's first role in public service was when she was the public defender for Florida's 8th Judicial District. She then moved on to help protect Florida families during the economic recession as a foreclosure defense lawyer.

We sat down with the commissioner on the last day of our capital visit, and the class had the opportunity to discuss ongoing issues facing our industry. Fried discussed what her office is trying to accomplish during this legislative session. The commission-

er's staff is trying to pass more than 10 bills this year, including a general maintenance bill that would help expedite and increase the productivity of the office. Also proposed is a hemp bill that would give her office the funding and additional staff required to make Florida a powerhouse in the hemp industry. The commissioner may be overly optimistic, but after our meeting I believe she is a true supporter of Florida agriculture. The commissioner thanked the ELDP class for visiting the capital and encouraged us to become more involved in our state politics.



Payne spells out strong support for ag

“Every time we fill up a green space with

concrete, it is a lost opportunity for agriculture.” Those are the wise words from Rep. Bobby

Payne, one of the many legislators whom Class 9 had the pleasure to meet. Payne is a Republican representing House District 19, which includes Putnam, Clay, Bradford and Union counties.

Payne began his career working 38 years in the electric and utility business. He praised his time in the utility business because it taught him how to build relationships. This is a crucial part of being able to wield influence and make progress while the Legislature is in session. Payne emphasized his support for agriculture, recognizing that agriculture has sustained the Florida economy when tourism did not. Payne has worked tirelessly for the water quality bill. He said he is tired of hearing farmers and ranchers being attacked in the media as sources of nutrient loading into waterways.

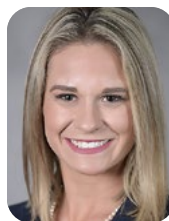
The short time we were able to spend with the representative assured me that he is devoted to advocating for Florida agriculture. Payne received FFVA's 2019 Legislator of the Year Award along with Sen. Ben Albritton. Because he was unable to attend the convention to receive the award, Class 9 had the opportunity to present it to him in Tallahassee.



By **Tim Cuellar**
Duda Ranches



Agriculture plays role in improving Florida's water quality



By **Taylor Sewell**
Yara North America

While visiting Tallahassee, FFVA ELDP

Class 9 members heard from Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Noah Valenstein and Alex Binkley with DEP's External Affairs. They shared the department's legislative session priorities, including funding for upgrading wastewater treatment facilities, Everglades and springs restoration, and bills that aim to improve general water quality.

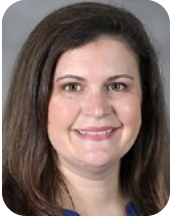
The two bills of interest to the DEP are The Clean Waterways Act (SB 712) and House Bill 1343. These water quality bills take a comprehensive look at improving water quality across the state and outline the four areas playing an active role in water quality: stormwater, wastewater, agriculture and septic tanks. Provisions around agriculture include requiring the Department of Agriculture to inspect farms enrolled in Best Management Practices and the development of new BMPs with help from the University of Florida.

By working together, DEP and agricultural producers can make great strides in protecting our state's water quality.





It starts with responsibility and hard work



By **Kim Burman**
Glades Crop Care

After thanking us for making the journey to Tallahassee, Rep. Toby Overdorf shared his unique qualifications and priorities as a Republican member of the Florida Legislature representing the House District 83, which includes parts of Martin and St. Lucie counties. He said the first critical foundation of responsibility and hard work comes from his childhood, which was shaped by Saturday morning

chores on his family's New England horse farm.

As an environmental consultant on the regulatory side of matters, Overdorf turned his frustration with limitations into motivation. He responded to his father's challenge to rise by being elected to office in 2018. With undergraduate and graduate degrees in biology and an environmental MBA, Overdorf has the educational background to support his position. He works hard to make a difference by serving on the House Commerce Committee as well as House subcommittees for Higher Education and Career Readiness; Higher Education Appropriations; Local, Federal, and

Veterans Affairs; and Transportation and Infrastructure.

Class 9 was pleased to learn that Overdorf understands the impact and potential of Florida agriculture. Some of his priorities include bills addressing water quality, endangered species and BMPs. During the session, he is collaborating with Rep. Bobby Payne and Sen. Ben Albritton on several issues. Activity between sessions is crucial to shape outcomes of future sessions, he explained. Looking ahead, he is already engaged in seagrass mitigation for the next session. He encouraged our class to visit him at his new office in downtown Stuart or contact him at toby.overdorf@myfloridahouse.gov.





Sen. Wilton Simpson: An advocate for state agriculture



By **Luke Davis**
Southern Gardens Citrus

In a political climate where the voice of Florida agriculture is diminishing, Sen. Wilton Simpson stands up and fights for our industry. Simpson, an egg farmer and more recently a citrus grower, understands the uphill battle that agriculture faces with the urbanization of Florida.

The senator explained that there are very few state legislators left who truly understand the importance of agriculture to our state. He stressed how extremely important it is for us as young leaders in the industry to get involved with our local lawmakers and educate them on the impact that agriculture has on their everyday lives. It is also imperative that we get to know our local and state officials and even more important that they know who we are and what we stand for. Simpson emphasized the significance of communicating with non-agriculture people about our industry. The more people we educate, the more we can bring to our side to help keep agriculture strong in the state of Florida.

We still face many issues, and there are many fights we must continue to fight to keep agriculture as a prominent force in Florida. To do that, we all must heed Simpson's advice and keep advocating for agriculture.



Albritton emphasizes the importance of leadership

On its recent visit to Tallahassee, Class 9 had the honor and pleasure to speak with Sen. Ben Albritton. The senator, who previously served in the House, has always been a strong voice for and supporter of Florida agriculture. The senator discussed the importance of leadership and what we need to do to keep Florida agriculture strong. He stressed the importance of our collective voice and what it means to be a proud Florida farmer.



By **Ethan Basore**
TKM Bengard

Albritton is a strong supporter of Best Management Practices and is pushing a bill he's sponsoring for Florida farmers to "get on the program" and to follow them as intended. Albritton wants to fight back against the attack on Florida farmers and ranchers. We need to be proud of what we produce and what we do to protect Florida's natural resources. Albritton also issued a challenge to the class members to get involved. As emerging leaders, he said, it is our job to be the next generation's voice for Florida. It was a true honor to meet with this great advocate and supporter of Florida agriculture.

Roth works on water and land bills to protect ag

On the final day of our visit, we met with Rep. Rick Roth. He is a third-generation Florida farmer from Belle Glade who is in his fourth term representing District 85. Roth also is the longest serving member on the FFVA board of directors and president of Roth Farms. Roth spoke about what drove him to get involved in politics. He started as the Palm Beach County Farm Bureau president and decided to run for office in 2016. Roth has a passion for farming and advocating for the Florida farmer. He spoke about being an advocate at the local level and appreciating the different views of others at the state level. His focus going forward will be to work on water and land bills to protect agriculture. Water is always a hot topic in Florida, and Roth said the conservation of water for agriculture use is one of his priorities.



By **Jay Johnston**
Deseret Farms
of Ruskin

Roth said legislators are trying to get people to move to Florida before they retire and bring their businesses with them and “grow Florida the way Floridians want it to grow.” They also recognize the importance of passing legislation that will protect agricultural lands, springs, pristine waters and other areas along the Kissimmee River from development. It is easy to see Roth’s passion for agriculture and for the state that we all call home.



Raschein plays key roles in ag committees



By **Perry Mason**
Maury L. Carter & Associates

From the moment Rep. Holly Raschein began her conversation with our class, I realized how “on fire” she was to serve our great state. Raschein is no stranger to hard work, holding two jobs in the Florida Keys:

one at a hospital and the other working in business development at First State Bank of the Florida Keys. Before learning about Raschein, I believed that senators and representatives did those jobs full-time. It was refreshing to learn that our legislators do this work because they love it, and most often work other jobs simultaneously.

Raschein serves District 120, which includes Monroe and southern Miami-Dade counties. She chairs the Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee and is vice chair of the Agriculture & Natural Resources Subcommittee. She plays a major role for agriculture by helping educate individuals in more urbanized areas on what farmers do. I am confident that Raschein is a warrior for agriculture, and I am grateful to have her on our side.





ELDP News

- 1 John Evans (Class 5)** and his wife, Ann, welcomed baby daughter Margaret Ann Evans on Dec. 18, 2019. She weighed 7 pounds, 3 ounces, and was 19.5 inches long.
- 2 Andrew Bryan (Class 6)** and his fiancée, Jana Williams, were married on Dec. 20, 2019, at Lowndes Grove Plantation in Charleston, S.C.
- 3 Frankie Montalvo (Class 7)** and his wife, Alexis, welcomed baby son Juan Montalvo IV on Nov. 11, 2019. He weighed 8 pounds, 7 ounces, and was 19.5 inches long.
- 4** Five ELDP alumni have been named to FFVA's board of directors. They were appointed after changes to FFVA's bylaws that added five new at-large board seats designated for ELDP producer-member graduates. The new ELDP board members are: **Elizabeth Malek, Lipman Family Farms (Class 1), Derek Orsenigo, Grower's Management (Class 2), Dustin Grooms, Fancy Farms (Class 4), Justin Pettit, Blue Hammock Farms (Class 7), and Josh Griffin, Grimes Produce Company (Class 8).**

