

# EMERGING TIMES

*... growing toward the future*

## Leaders join FFVA board members in Tallahassee for a closer look at ag issues



Members of FFVA's Emerging Leader Development Program in front of the Florida Senate Chamber prior to meeting with Senate President Don Gaetz.

Members of the Emerging Leader Development Program got a firsthand look at the legislative process and FFVA's activities to protect and promote Florida agriculture during a two-day session in the state Capitol.

Class members joined FFVA board members and FFVA Director of Government Relations Butch Calhoun for various meetings with lawmakers and other state leaders to discuss issues facing agriculture and bills moving through the legislature.

The group spent time with Senate President Don Gaetz, Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam and Assistant

Commissioner Mike Joyner as well as Susan Nardizzi and Jackie Moalli with Fresh From Florida.

They also met with Senate Majority Leader Lizbeth Benacquisto; Rep. Matt Caldwell; Sen. Wilton Simpson; Rep. Halsey Beshears; Rep. Holly Raschein; Rep. Ben Albritton; Rep. Jake Raburn; Rep. Kevin Rader; Sen. Alan Hays; Rep. Jim Boyd; Florida Wildlife Commission section leader Scott Sanders and Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences governmental relations director Mary Ann Gosa-Hooks.



## Learning the legislative process



by Geoff Roe  
Wm. G. Roe & Sons

Before getting down to business in Tallahassee, FFVA's Director of Government Relations Butch Calhoun gave us an overview on how a bill is formed. We also discussed the complexity of the election process for House majority leader and Senate speaker. "Bills and appropriations live and die based on the leadership race in both chambers," He explained. Talk then turned to the pertinent bills being considered this session. Potentially the most important is SB 312/HB 575, which pertains to sales tax exemptions for certain farm purchases. Various repair items would be covered, but the purchase of irrigation equipment would be the biggest-ticket item. The bottom line, Butch emphasized and several lawmakers emphasized, is that this bill would save an estimated \$15 million per year for Florida farmers.

A hot topic in South Florida, perhaps enflamed by the recent proposed budgets by the House and Senate, is funding for the UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center. Of the \$4.9 million needed for the center, only \$10,000 has been budgeted by the Senate, while no funding has been allocated in the House. Butch explained that while the funding budget in the Senate is nowhere near the amount requested, the important thing is that there is a placeholder, and a lot can change before this session ends. Other important measures are a bill related to crop gleaning that would reduce liability for farm owners, and funding for Operation Cleansweep, a pesticide amnesty program that previously ran from 1995 to 2011.

## A greater appreciation for our legislators



by Jamie Lang  
PNC Bank

Ever since 1868, a group of Floridians congregate once a year to discuss the laws and finances of our state. 146 years later, I joined this tradition by taking my first trip to our state's Capitol on National Ag Day 2014. The experience was absolutely invaluable to me and my development as an agricultural leader, and I left Tallahassee with training that has directed me to communicate policy issues more effectively.

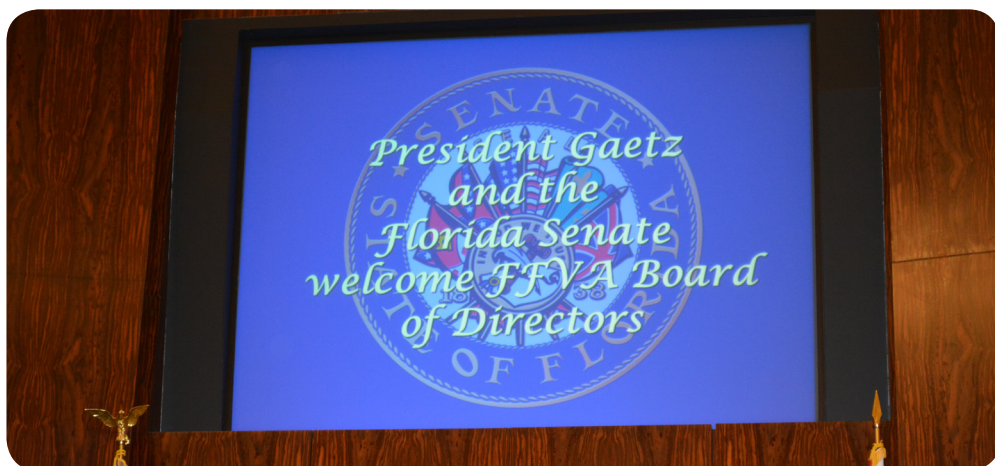
FFVA Director of Government Relations Butch Calhoun briefed our group on the many issues and bills that directly or indirectly involve agriculture and provided many updated itineraries of our "drive-in" that seemed to change as fast as Florida's legislative process. Our two-day tour with some of the FFVA board members started in the Senate Chamber with President Don Gaetz and was followed by a full day of meetings with lawmakers that left me with a greater appreciation for our legislators, many of whom hold a personal stake in our industry.

We met with Rep. Holly Raschein of Dis-

trict 120 (Key West), who reported that the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee released its proposed budget for 2014-2015 that includes \$50 million in funding for the Florida Keys Wastewater Plan. Additional topics discussed included the Department of Agriculture proposed funding for research on laurel wilt, a disease affecting avocado production in Miami-Dade County, and Rep. Raschein's sponsorship and dedication that ultimately passed key agritourism legislation in 2013.

Our evening was shared with Monroe County residents who visited the capital to lobby for the bills on March 25 during Florida Keys Day, with festivities including a tasting of the largest key lime pie. We also met with Rep. Halsey Beshears of District 7 and rallied for funding for the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center, a UF/IFAS center in Immokalee that supports six counties in Southwest Florida.

Our group also got an update on the status of the Gleaning Bill, which passed the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee. Reflecting on his two-year term, Rep. Beshears encouraged us to become engaged constituents and reminded us that "no good deed goes unpunished" when doing the right thing for the right people. Overall, we learned that the legislators we met are concerned about Florida farmers and the tough issues of the industry, and they are devoted to creating and supporting bills to benefit the sustainability of Florida agriculture.



FFVA got a warm welcome from Senate President Don Gaetz during the tour of the Senate Chamber.





## Legislation built for a cause



by Clayton Norman  
DuPont Crop Protection

Rep. Kevin Rader was among the numerous legislators we met with in Tallahassee. The Delray Beach Democrat is an independent insurance agent and businessman who represents the western communities of Palm Beach County in District 81. One of his insurance specialties is beekeepers, who are important to helping to produce crops. Rep. Rader is a man of many talents, juggling family life with a wife and four children, multiple community interests, numerous committee roles, all while fulfilling his duties as a representative.

One topic that our group discussed was gleaning -- the act of collecting leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or on fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. There are local organizations in Florida that help with this process of getting the produce to soup kitchens and homeless shelters in different communities. There are concerns regarding liability as it relates to outsiders coming onto a farmer's property and getting hurt. FFVA is supporting the bill that Rep. Rader has sponsored, which would expand the exemption from civil liability for farmers who allow a person to access their land for removing farm produce or crops left in the field. This is a great cause and this is just one of the many issues that Rep. Rader is behind when it comes to the interests of Florida growers.

## From root canals to irrigation canals



by Elton Baldy  
Bayer CropScience

Our behind-the-scenes Capitol tour during our March trip included several round-table discussions with key agricultural supporters, including senators. Throughout the week's discussions, there were several topics covered that affect Florida agriculture.

Some estimates indicate up to 80 percent of Americans fear a visit to their dentist. We had the opportunity to discuss vital issues to our industry with former dentist of 27 years, Sen. Alan Hays (District 11), and it was a pleasant visit that no one feared. It was a lively discussion that gave us key insights on issues that affect our daily business. The famous saying, "Water, water, everywhere, not a drop to drink" was the basis of our conversation on water management and regulation affecting our state's water resources.

There was discussion on new technologies, current programs, and further needs to address the topic of water in the state. One of the key findings was that voters need to be educated on sound production practices and find the proper balance between politics and stewardship. Water is a vital resource to our state's economy, and proper policy for the future of our water resources is key for the success of production agriculture in Florida. We thank Sen. Hays for his time and attention to discuss these issues with our group.

## Boyd co-sponsors sales tax exemption



by Ryan Atwood  
Keyplex

We had the opportunity to discuss important agricultural issues with Rep. Jim Boyd during our visit to Tallahassee. Rep. Boyd lives in the Bradenton area and spoke of his relationship with the farmers there. His background includes serving on the agricultural appropriation committee his first two years in office. Rep. Boyd discussed the importance of crops such as citrus and tomatoes for his local area.

He gave an overview of how Florida legislators work together, such as on the Sales Tax Exemptions bill (SB 312/HB 575), which he co-sponsored. The bill would exempt from sales tax the purchase of irrigation equipment, support stakes, farm equipment repairs and farm trailers.

Additionally, there is provision in the bill on water retention (water farming) by landowners being classified under the Greenbelt Law for agricultural assessment. He praised FFVA's leadership and team in Tallahassee for the great work they do on behalf of Florida agriculture. He added that FFVA is a source of information for him and his staff and said that we in agriculture were well-represented by the organization.



## A trip to the battlefield that is Tallahassee



by Jordan Theis  
Prudential Ag Investments

My first trip to the political battlefield of Tallahassee was a riveting experience. The machinations of the democratic process were in full swing as members of the FFVA board of directors and the Emerging Leader Development Program arrived. One could nary open a door without stumbling upon a deal being made. The sidewalks around the Capitol hummed with a gaggle of politicians discussing the latest scuttlebutt. Every cafe table was filled with various politicos trading

favors like chits at a poker table. Call, raise or bluff?

So it was with trepidation and awe that we entered the nucleus of power – the Senate chamber. From our perch in the balcony we could survey the organized chaos below. Aides and interns scurried about handing out fliers about an upcoming bill. A doe-eyed intern rattled off the legislation being introduced. Discussion was quick. Counterarguments were fierce. Senators bellowed their approval or nayed their dissent. Either the bill would pass and become law that dictates the very lives of the citizens of Florida, or the bill would fail and be tossed in the garbage heap. The vote was tallied. The gavel was struck. Fate was decided.

The man who wielded the gavel was Senate President Don Gaetz. His position granted him the first and last words. His peers in the Senate had voted him as President. His reputation as a man that can work across party aisles to get things

accomplished has led him here.

It takes a true leader to rise above the din of voices. Sen. Gaetz took the time to address our group and provided background on his colorful political journey to the Senate presidency. He explained that the 2014 session has been particularly tough to negotiate because for every \$1 in funds available in the state coffers there were \$38 in requests. With so many hands reaching into the pie, most would go home hungry.

With the helpful guidance of FFVA's Butch Calhoun, our group was able to meet with numerous senators and representatives. The FFVA board members patiently outlined the bills that were important to agriculture and steadfastly stuck by those bills even in the face of opposition. I have been to the mountaintop and seen a band of determined farmers emerge victorious from Tallahassee. Patience, persistence and education were the tools that FFVA used to help secure a brighter future for ag in Florida.



Members of the board and Emerging Leader Development Program met with Senate President Don Gaetz in the Senate Chamber.





## Tackling BMPs for Wildlife



by Matt Stacey  
Crop Production Services

Scott Sanders, a section leader with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, spent much of his career with the commission in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He went on to manage Lake X Cattle Company in Osceola County, and then came back to the agency around 1990.

Sanders is working on the wildlife Best Management Practices for agriculture. "The agency values what agriculture brings to the table for fish and wildlife conservation. We strive to have an effective working relationship with the individuals involved in production agriculture," he told the group. Several agriculture industry representatives have approached Sanders to consider using wildlife BMPs in place of "incidental take" permitting for state-listed species.

Sanders said that many of the practices already in place by the majority of production agriculture landowners are beneficial to fish and wildlife. He used these practices to make up the draft manual of BMPs that is being circulated in the industry. More than 60 species are considered state-listed. The list was reviewed and narrowed down to 16 species, which are in the draft manual. Sanders tries to manage these species to keep them off the endangered list and off of a federal list.

He continues to work with the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services and other agencies to develop a manual to help growers implement wildlife BMPs. To gauge the needs of material included in the manual, several surveys are being conducted with growers.



ELDP class members Matt Stacey, Clayton Norman and Geoff Roe discuss issues between meetings with legislators.

## Benacquisto juggles legislation and campaign



by Cathy Atchley  
On Point Ag

Wednesday morning, our FFVA group was joined by Senate Majority Leader Lizbeth Benacquisto for breakfast at the Governors Inn.

Benacquisto has served in the Florida Senate since 2010. At the time, her district included Lee County to the west and Palm Beach County to the east. Redrawn in 2012, District 30 now includes Lee and Charlotte counties in Southwest Florida. She did let it slip though that she's partial to Palm Beach County. Benacquisto acknowledged her appreciation for agriculture. She proclaimed herself a proud supporter of agriculture and

recognizes the importance of the industry to her personally (as she feeds her own family), and in feeding the United States. When asked about juggling her current campaign for Congress with legislative work during the session, Benacquisto said, "It's a blur." In addition to serving as Senate majority leader, Benacquisto serves on 11 committees and is vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee. She described her schedule, emphasizing the fact that during the legislative session her role is to work as a senator. Before and after hours she works on her congressional campaign. Benacquisto travels home to her family in Lee County each weekend and is busy campaigning until the April 22 special primary election.

Benacquisto spoke favorably about supporting funding needs for the UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center and Operation Cleansweep. With perhaps an ounce of sarcasm, she reminded us that if she hasn't received requests for \$100 million by 11 a.m., it's a slow day.



## High stakes this session for UF/IFAS



by Geoff Roe  
Wm. G. Roe & Sons

Mary Ann Gosa-Hooks, the director of government affairs for the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, told us her primary job is to educate lawmakers on IFAS affairs and to secure funding for the university. She explained that one of the major hurdles she faces is that lawmakers come from diverse backgrounds but all of them will vote on agricultural issues at some point during the legislative session. "Education is my most important issue," she explained. This

has been magnified by the reality of term limits, which force a high turnover of new legislators who may not be familiar with agricultural issues. Mary Ann likened the legislative session to a high-stakes poker game: There will be upward of 2,000 bills introduced, competition will be fierce, but only 190 to 200 will be passed.

With budgets being cut, Mary Ann emphasized the importance of retaining the staff that is in place at IFAS and how the competition in the scientific world is putting pressure on IFAS to update labs and give wage increases to researchers. We also discussed the Southwest Florida Research and Education Center. Mary Ann said she remains confident in the amount of funding that IFAS will receive this session. She explained that much work gets done in the last couple days of the session, and funding can come from almost anywhere. She closed our meeting by saying, "It's not over till it's over, and I want to win."

## The impact of Fresh From Florida



by Clayton Norman  
DuPont Crop Protection

On the second day of our ELDP voyage in Tallahassee, we heard from Susan Nardizzi and Jackie Moalli from Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Division of Marketing and Development. They spoke to the group about the Fresh From Florida program's strategic marketing initiatives. The objective is to promote the sales of Florida-grown commodities in the retail, trade, and consumer channels.

They took us through what is involved with the marketing side of Fresh From Florida. Obviously the team is doing its homework with research, focus groups and analysis on what exactly consumers want. In the TV markets, for example, the target audience is women ages 35 to 54 because they are the primary shoppers for their households. After showing us several commercials that aired over the winter featuring recipes with fresh Florida produce, Susan spoke about print, digital media and recipe webpage ads that the Fresh From Florida brand is being featured in. Sweet corn, vegetable medleys and strawberries were just a few of the crops shown in these media. You might have seen these ads... Mouthwatering, right?

One takeaway from this visit with Susan and Jackie was how involved Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam is with Fresh From Florida. At dinner the evening before, the commissioner spoke to our class on the importance of Florida agriculture, and held up the restaurant menu as a prime example. Displayed next to almost every dish listed was the Fresh from Florida logo. Do your part and look for this brand when you visit your local grocer, restaurant or even browsing the Internet.



Jamie Lang gets comfortable while testing out a desk in the Senate Chamber.





## Caldwell explains committee process



by Jeff Goodale  
Duda Farm Fresh Foods

Members of the Emerging Leader Development Program and some of FFVA's board visited with a number of leading members of the state Senate and the Florida House of Representatives in Tallahassee on March 25.

One of the legislators that the group was fortunate enough to spend some time with was Rep. Matt Caldwell of House District 79. Rep. Caldwell chairs the Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee, which was of particular interest to the group. He also sits on the Finance and Tax, Insurance and Banking and State Affairs subcommittees.

Rep. Caldwell discussed his role as subcommittee chairman and how that responsibility affects the flow of bills through his committee as well as other committees. He discussed how this process works and shared with the group that it is difficult when you see that a bill isn't going to pass committee and you have to pass on that news to the representative that sponsored the bill. He talked about how each committee meeting is unique in that sometimes you can get through seven or eight bills in 30 minutes and other times you spend more than an hour on just two bills.

Rep. Caldwell also talked about some of the items that the board wanted addressed -- the UF/IFAS Southwest Florida Research and Education Center and the sales tax exemption bill. Caldwell offered constructive feedback on each item as well as guidance on how to help in the legislative process. He said we should be speaking personally with our representatives. He also cautioned against confusion in what you are hoping to get accomplished. Confusion on any bill is never your friend in this process, he said.

## Albritton: Agriculture must be heard



by Daniel Cavazos  
Veg Pro International

ELDP's fourth session of the year took us to our state capital, Tallahassee, where the madness of legislative session was in full force. There, FFVA Director of Government Relations Butch Calhoun had lined up a hectic schedule for members of FFVA's board of directors and ELDP Class 3. Scheduled speakers included members of our state's House of Representatives and Senate along with other state officials.

One of our scheduled speakers for the tour was all-star Rep. Ben Albritton of District 56 in Bartow. Rep. Albritton is a citrus farmer and businessman; he lives and breathes Florida agriculture. During our time with him, he asked a very important question: "How many of you have had personal contact with your senator or House member so far?" A few hands went up. Rep. Albritton went on to say that for many years of his life he lived in a bubble with regard to communication between him and lawmakers. "The magnitude of the impact that can be accomplished during session is invaluable," he said. He also mentioned that he would do the best that he could to get legislators out to meet people in agriculture. "Building and strengthening our relationships with legislators is vital in order for agriculture to be heard," Albritton said.

So let's take Rep. Albritton up on his offer and educate the urban environment on the importance of agriculture in Florida.

## Raburn discusses ag certificate bill



by Sam Glucksman  
Glades Crop Care

Republican Rep. Jake Raburn of District 57 in Hillsborough County is a longtime member of the FFVA and grows an assortment of crops including strawberries, blueberries, peppers and watermelons. He serves on several House committees, including Appropriations, Health and Human Services, Education, State Affairs, and Economic Affairs. He is vice chair of the Education Appropriations Subcommittee and is involved with several other subcommittees including Health Innovation, K-12 Education, and Transportation and Highway Safety.

The FFVA ELDP Class 3 and members of the FFVA board discussed issues and concerns with Rep. Raburn. He shared with us his efforts on a new bill that will provide funding to collect data from the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to prepare high school graduates to join the agricultural workforce. Currently, the industry certification does not include agricultural occupations, so there is no funding. Graduates who will remain in-state will be targeted so Florida jobs are not taken by out-of-state or international applicants.

Rep. Raburn welcomed everyone to knock on his door anytime if we would like to discuss something with him. His current term is limited to 2020, but I believe with his efforts much will get accomplished for the betterment of the agricultural industry and the state of Florida.



## Getting to know FFVA Legislator of the Year



by Matt Stacey  
Crop Production Services

Wilton Simpson is a Republican senator who represents the 18th district, which takes in Hernando and parts of Pasco and Sumter counties. He has represented this district since 2012.

Sen. Simpson was given control over the reform of the Florida Retirement System by the Florida Senate president. He announced that he would either accept a plan proposed by the House of Representatives, "a sweeping plan that would close the FRS pension system to all new employees who became eligible after Jan. 1, 2014." Or, his plan "which closes the pension plan to senior management and elected officials who become eligible after July 1, 2014." The Florida Senate rejected a plan similar to the House proposal, and Simpson conceded any reforms the rest of the year.

He has had successes, however, with Everglades restoration legislation. He was successful in having taxes maintained on farmers in the Everglades region until 2030. The legislation captures \$880 million for water quality restoration and \$32 million spent annually to reduce the amount of phosphorous that flows into the region. The legislation was approved unanimously. Last year, Sen. Simpson was given FFVA's Legislator of the Year award.

Sen. Simpson serves as head of Simpson Environmental Services Inc. and owns and operates Simpson Farms Inc., an egg-laying operation based in Trilby that is home to more than 1 million chickens that supply eggs to supermarkets throughout the state. Simpson is also a founding board member of Florida Traditions Bank.



Senator Wilton Simpson accepts his award from Butch Calhoun for being chosen as FFVA's 2013 Legislator of the Year.

*The class will travel to California to tour production areas during their next session in June. Look for those stories in the next issue.*



# ELDP ALUMNI

*. . . updates from Class 1 & 2*



## Jennifer Hodges

Class IX (pictured above) of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute recently spent time in Tallahassee and the Panhandle discussing complex issues affecting agriculture and natural resources in Florida. Fellow ELDP Class 1 alum, April Roe Porter, is also in Class IX of the WLI.



## Rob Atchley

Rob recently hosted Adam Lytch of L&M Companies for a turkey hunt, purchased through the annual benefit auction. Adam brought his friend James Weaver (pictured left) who successfully bagged a treasured, double-bearded South Florida Osceola turkey.

## Michael Hill

Southern Hill Farms has started a blueberry u-pick which has been received extremely well throughout the community. It is a family affair with Michael's father, David, and son, Trace (pictured right).

## Tom Mitchell

Tom was recently elected to the 2014-2015 board of directors for Florida Citrus Mutual.



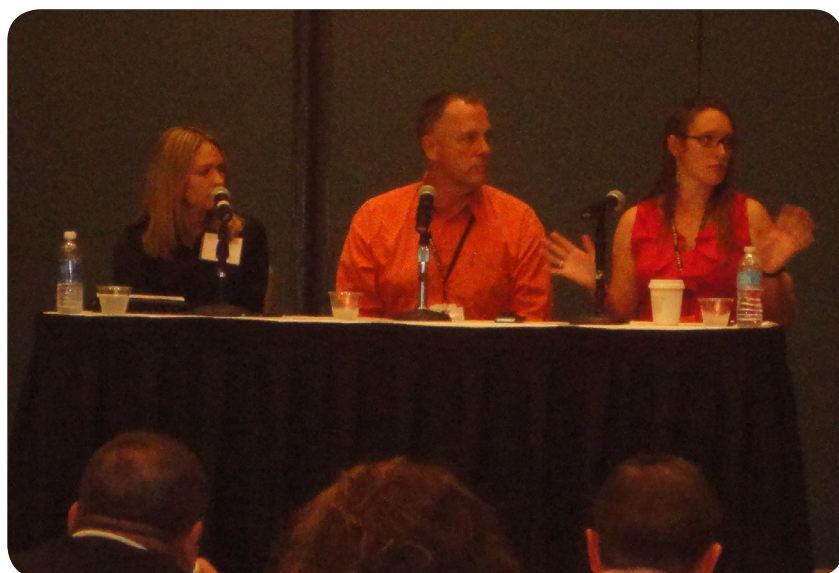


### **Carleton Johns**

Carleton recently hosted a group of nearly 100 National Agri-Marketing Association members who toured Tater Farms as part of the ag tour during their convention in Jacksonville.

### **Amber Kosinsky**

In an effort to develop fresh and relevant content, Wish Farms is launching a series of recipe videos as a component to its consumer outreach campaign. Season how-to berry recipes will be featured on the company's YouTube channel and promoted across all of our social media outlets.



### **April Roe Porter**

April Roe Porter and Quentin Roe recently participated in a panel discussion on "Marketing to Multi-Generationals" at the National Agri-Marketing Association convention. They responded to questions from ad agencies, publications and marketers concerning communications and decision-making in the ag industry.