



# Florida at the Forefront

Senator Jeffrey Brandes

**FLORIDA SENATOR, DISTRICT 24**

I have the honor of representing much of the Tampa Bay area in the Florida Senate as I am one of 40 members of the Senate and one of 160 members representing the most dynamic state in the U.S. Each day presents new challenges, new opportunities, and on occasion new threats. Our job as members of the Legislature is to represent those who send us to Tallahassee, to set policy goals to make Florida the most

prosperous state possible, and to create a climate to provide the most opportunity for hardworking citizens to flourish.

Over the next decade, roughly five million new residents will move to Florida, bringing the state's population to nearly 25 million. The growth Florida is experiencing is driven by shifting national demographics, the economic climate created here, and the catastrophic policy and fiscal decisions of

other states. As Milton Freedman said, “People vote with their feet.” Florida has become a home for economic freedom. From 1997-2017, more than \$185 billion in adjusted gross income has migrated from high-tax states to Florida.

While each of us elected come into office with diverse backgrounds, none of us are policy experts in every issue with which we are tasked. I am grateful to organizations like JMI who work alongside policymakers and provide platforms for thoughtful policy discussions across the state. My legislative colleagues and I, with the help of JMI’s world-class research, continue to build on Florida’s economic successes as we prepare for upcoming sessions.

While we must deal with the policy challenges of the day and address real-time issues, we must also be cognizant of emerging technologies. More and more, this means ensuring that our great state can serve as a hub for technology and innovation. No other aspect of life will determine the future prosperity of Floridians more than our ability to adapt to, embrace, and cultivate innovation and technological advances. Florida policymakers must focus on maximizing our options for the future.

With top-ranked public universities and a K-12 system climbing in the national rankings, we lead the nation in education policy, focusing on accountability while offering the most school choice options in the country. As the state’s population and the need for ever-more efficient commerce grows, the legislature is embracing next-generation mobility with technological innovations in automated, electric, and connected vehicles. Just one of several

examples of the legislature’s lead occurred in this past session with the development and deployment of transformational technology called SunTrax, a world class transportation R&D facility, connected with and located next to Florida Polytechnic University.

We possess all the elements to be a global leader in the 21st century economy – the entire playing field has been set in our favor, through the setting of conservative free-market principles. Florida continues to set the standard for disciplined fiscal responsibility, highly ranked by the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. By almost all metrics, our state government is leaner, more efficient, and with greater accountability and transparency than any other state in the nation.

Florida’s policy leadership in these and other areas has developed thoughtfully over the years and is largely driven by two prominent components: we have had the ability to sustain a shared vision over legislative cycles and have had champions, both in legislative leaders and passionate advocates, that have driven bold policy despite a term-limited legislature.

The Florida Legislature is focused on keeping Florida at the forefront. We are blessed to call this great state home and my legislative colleagues and I are fortunate to work with JMI and other groups that educate and enlighten the champions of the past, present, and future.

*Senator Jeff Brandes represents Floridians of District 24 in the Tampa Bay/ St. Petersburg area*