



2023 SUNSHINE STATE POLICY PRIORITIES

For tens of millions of Americans, day-to-day reality has been a roller coaster of catastrophic events and economic tumult. From 9/11 to Middle East wars to the financial sector collapse to the Great Recession to COVID and the economic times of the present – there seems to be little progress toward anything resembling normalcy. In all of this, Americans know two things – it was not the way our founders intended us to be, and that Washington politicians and bureaucrats are wholly incapable of fixing what years of neglect of the founding principles have wrought.

The state of Florida stands apart as a contrast to that reality and presents the vital alternative – freedom, opportunity, and economic liberty for all.

The James Madison Institute, Florida’s leading think tank in America’s most influential state, is at the tip of the spear in the fight for freedom. In both cementing progress for Floridians and serving as the north star for 49 other states in desperate need of idea leadership, our purpose is to advance ideas that make Florida the best place to live, work, and raise a family. From entrepreneurs starting and expanding businesses, to parents tailoring education settings to best fit their children, to everyday Floridians interacting with their healthcare providers – the ideas we champion protect and advance opportunity and prosperity here and offer a path to export these cherished ideals beyond Florida’s borders.

As the rest of the nation looks to the Sunshine State, we present our 2023 Policy Priorities.



ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Florida will be the single best state in the U.S. to start and grow a business.

Florida's economy – at over \$1 trillion a year – places the state in the top 15 globally. As high-tax high-spend states continue to hemorrhage people and income, Florida continues to expand its economic footprint. This will continue to present both opportunities and challenges. We can continue to illustrate to the rest of the country that our economic agenda is the most prosperous set of policies possible. We also must be vigilant about protecting Florida from big-government policy influence. As Florida grows, there will be a growing need to address the needs of millions of new residents. That will best be accomplished via a commitment to limited government principles and economic liberty.

2023 Entrepreneurship Priorities

- ▶ **Anti-ESG** – protect the 2.6 million participants and \$202 billion in Florida's retirement system from the destruction of ESG (Environmental Social Governance) measures.
- ▶ **Property Insurance** – restore sanity to Florida's \$60 billion property insurance market through necessary reforms to our litigation environment, providing necessary relief to Florida's 9.5 million homeowners.
- ▶ **Separation of Powers** – ensure Florida's 2.5 million small businesses and job creators are free from the unnecessary regulatory hurdles too often inflicted by local governments seeking to extort money for growth.

SUNSHINE STATE STAT: *over the past 25 years, as Florida has become a beacon for entrepreneurialism, more than \$225 billion in annual income has migrated from high-tax/low-growth states – more than \$1 million every hour.*

EDUCATION

Florida will be the premier education destination in the world.

No state delivers better bang-for-buck in K-12 education than Florida. And the key to our success can be summed up in two words: education choice. Robust school choice programs – which began in the late 1990s with Gov. Jeb Bush’s “A+ Plan” – have spurred significant learning gains among charter, private, homeschooling, and (yes, even) public school students. Moreover, a similar appreciation for diversity – specifically, viewpoint diversity — has earned Florida’s higher education system national recognition, proving once again that education quality is about far more than how much, or how little, public money is spent.



While there is much to celebrate about education in Florida, there are also some significant policy holes that still need to be plugged, quickly, lest we lose our national standing and fail to provide high quality learning opportunities uniquely suited for every student.

2023 Education Priorities

- ▶ **K-12 Choice** – adopt a “New A+ Plan” in K-12 Education that provides flexible-use scholarships for all Florida families (that’s the A), coupled with weighted funding for special populations, including those living in Title I neighborhoods (that’s the Plus).
- ▶ **K-12 Federal Funding** – advance a resolution calling for new federal policy aimed at making Title I monies portable so that “money follows the student” ensuring Florida (and any state) can use Title I to “fund students, not systems.”
- ▶ **Higher Education** – provide performance funding “bonuses” to state universities that earn a Top 25 ranking for campus free speech and viewpoint diversity.
- ▶ **K-12 Civics** – require subject-specific content knowledge for social studies instructors — rather than general certification — similar to existing subject-specific content knowledge requirements for science teachers.

SUNSHINE STATE STAT: *Currently, more than 1.7 million children use some form of school choice in Florida — more than any other state, including those with universal education savings accounts.*

GOVERNANCE

Florida will be the model of limited government efficiency for every other state to emulate.

A good government is one that operates efficiently, effectively, and avoids unnecessary burdens on taxpayers. Throughout the past 25 years, Florida has adhered to this strategy for managing growth. Despite the state growing by approximately seven million residents over that period (a 50 percent increase), Florida has held the line on the size of state operations. Florida's state budget remains among the leanest in the United States – owing to a constitutional commitment to being a no-income tax state. In addition, voters passed an amendment to the state's constitution requiring a 2/3 supermajority of both chambers of the legislature to raise any state tax or fee. These protections mean greater emphasis and pressure can be placed on other areas of state government – mission creep can turn into bureaucratic bloat without a proper check and balance.



2023 Governance Priorities

- ▶ **Budgeting** – support the concept of the Florida Conservative Budget model as an effective limitation on government growth, retaining Florida's role as the state with the leanest state government per capita in the United States.
- ▶ **Federal Overreach** – establish safeguards for individuals, businesses, and non-profits from unwarranted harassment by the IRS.
- ▶ **Public Employment** – protect all 500,000 public sector employees from direct and indirect coercion tactics used by government unions.
- ▶ **Public Safety** – promote sensible public safety policies that protect communities and safeguard public dollars.

SUNSHINE STATE STAT: *with roughly 419 state employees per 100,000 residents, Florida's state operations are among the leanest in the United States – trailing only Nevada and Arizona.*

HEALTHCARE

Florida will be the benchmark of choice, competition, and patient-provider access in healthcare.

Over the past ten years, Florida has made a policy commitment to run in the opposite direction of Washington DC and many of the states with regard to both health insurance and healthcare delivery.

Florida remains one of only a handful of states that have refused to expand Medicaid to working-aged able-bodied adults – saying no to increasing federal government control over health insurance. At the same time, policymakers have sought to address supply side delivery – expanding telemedicine, repealing most Certificate of Need (CON) laws, allowing advance practice nurses to operate independently, expanding the ability of pharmacists to test and treat for several routine conditions, and a host of other reforms. As a result, Florida is trending in the right direction – new facilities are being built, new practices are being established, and care is growing. There is more to do, and the lure of “free money from Washington” will remain, and we will continue to push for additional measures to address our unique healthcare needs.



2023 Healthcare Priorities

- ▶ **Transparency** – promote policy reforms to healthcare costing that promote transparency and decrease pressure on cost of services.
- ▶ **Telemedicine** – expand the ability of healthcare providers to leverage innovations and deliver services via telemedicine.
- ▶ **Pharmaceuticals** – ensure that state policy is both effective and efficient in addressing drug costs, availability, and distribution at all junctures of the process.
- ▶ **CON** – repeal all remaining healthcare Certificate of Need regulations in Florida.
- ▶ **Scope of Practice** – continue to expand the ability of highly qualified nurses, physicians’ assistants, and pharmacists to practice at the highest level of their training.

SUNSHINE STATE STAT: *Florida’s population is expected to increase to 25 million by 2030. The state will need an additional 5,000 primary care physicians – just to keep pace with population growth.*

INNOVATION

Florida will beat all comers as the center of innovation and tech entrepreneurship.

As states such as New York and California drive innovators and entrepreneurs away by imposing burdensome regulations and high taxes, Florida can cement its status as a national and global hub for technology and innovation. Yet, it can only capitalize on this opportunity if the legislature and state agencies continue to implement free market policies and a light-touch regulatory agenda that fosters innovation. As the state moves into the 2023 legislative session and lawmakers grapple with increasingly complex questions, they must resist the urge to embrace big-government solutions or heavy-handed regulation that would deny Floridians the numerous benefits tech and innovation can offer or cost the state its status as a tech and innovation hub.



2023 Innovation Priorities

- ▶ **Data Privacy** – ensure that any data privacy policy reforms proposed include adequate protections for consumers and do not impose excessive compliance costs for businesses or force them into expensive litigation.
- ▶ **Communication Services Tax (CST)** – lower or abolish the Communications Service Tax, which disincentivizes investment and raises costs for Floridians. Abolish/ Impose an upper limit on what municipalities can charge residents.
- ▶ **Broadband Equality, Access, and Deployment (BEAD)** – Establish clear guidelines to ensure BEAD money is spent effectively and efficiently to connect the more than half a million Floridians that do not have access to fixed or wired broadband, opposing any use of funding to establish Government Owned Networks.
- ▶ **Regulatory Sandboxes** – Expand the use of regulatory sandboxes to promote innovation and further diversify Florida’s economy, increasing the number of tech start-ups compared to 2021 and retaining its status as the best state for innovators.
- ▶ **Cybersecurity** – update cybersecurity rules for state agencies and municipalities to ensure that Floridian’s data remains out of the hands of nefarious actors.

SUNSHINE STATE STAT: *The State of Florida ranked second in tech job growth in 2021, adding 10,522 new tech jobs.*



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