

BLUEPRINT FLORIDA

SUNSHINE STATE
SOLUTIONS FOR
THE OTHER 49



K. EARLE DURDEN CENTER *for*
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at The James Madison Institute

INTRODUCTION

The nature of what America is and what it will be is currently on trial – each and every day. That trial is being held in every state – in our schools, in our small businesses, and in our legislative chambers. It is conducted on social media, in the news, and in our courts. At stake are two fundamentally opposed ways of life – one in which economic reality, the rule of law, and the separation of powers matter and one in which mob rule and economic and cultural Leftism dictate the conduct of every second of our lives.

Florida has, over the past 25 years, proven that concentrating on limiting the footprint of government, fiscal conservatism, and ceaseless pushback against Leftism results in economic prosperity and growth unlike anything ever seen.

During that time, millions of people have migrated from states like Illinois, New York, and California to Florida. They've brought with them more than \$225 billion in annual income. And they've solidified Florida as a conservative policy state.

INTRODUCTION (CONT.)

Those economic refugees have made Florida the third most populous state, and they have also made the Sunshine State more conservative – a once 250,000 Democratic voter registration advantage (in 2008) is now a 275,000 Republican advantage. As the state has become more diverse, it has become more conservative.

This has profound implications for the other 49 states, especially those that have the potential for conservative policy wins. While a state like California may be a generation away from abandoning failure, the same cannot be said for Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. We see before us a once-in-a-century opportunity, in collaboration with on-the-ground partners around the country, to provide replicable policies and programs to other states toward the goal of freedom and prosperity nationwide.

PILLARS OF PROSPERITY

The past quarter century has provided a roadmap of success for Florida. That path consists of five distinct, yet correlated, commitments that comprise what The James Madison Institute has coined The Five Pillars of Prosperity.

1 Liberty-Minded Entrepreneurship

2 Good Governance

3 Education Freedom

4 Affordable Healthcare Access

5 Embracing Innovation

With our help, The Florida roadmap is making its way across the country.

LIBERTY-MINDED ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Florida's economy – at over \$1 trillion a year – places the state in the top 15 economies globally. As high-tax high-spend states continue to hemorrhage people and income, Florida continues to expand its economic footprint. Nevertheless, the success of our commitment to being the best state to start and build a business is not unique to Florida – it's a recipe any state can achieve with the right mix of policymakers and political will. To replicate the Florida model, states need an understanding and appreciation of the truth that job creators fuel job creation and economic growth. Cronyism in all its forms must be avoided – choice leads to competition and competition spurs growth.

POLICY SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ **Lessen the tax burden on small businesses wherever possible**
- ✓ **Reduce overly burdensome business regulations often imposed at the municipal level**
- ✓ **Reform occupational licensing requirements imposed at the state and local levels**
- ✓ **Oppose efforts to infuse anti-market ideas like ESG wherever possible**

Sunshine State Stat: with an economic footprint of approximately \$1.2 trillion (and growing), Florida's economy is the 15th largest in the world – roughly the size of Mexico or Spain.

GOOD GOVERNANCE

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, and has enjoyed success unlike any other state. Despite growing by approximately seven million residents, Florida has held the line on the size of state operations. The state budget remains among the leanest in the U.S. – 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.

POLICY SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ **Promote conservative budgeting model**
- ✓ **Encourage state policy to preempt local overreach**
- ✓ **Protect public employee retirement through pension reform**
- ✓ **Protect public employees from coercive labor unions**

Sunshine State Stat: Over the past 25 years, Florida’s population has grown by more than seven million. At the same time, more than \$220 billion in annual income has migrated to Florida from other states.

EDUCATION FREEDOM

There is a renaissance at work in many states – more and more, policymakers are listening to their constituents and recognizing that when investing tax dollars into education, the funds should follow the student, not the system. Florida has led the nation in this effort – establishing a tax credit scholarship program in 2001 and expanding school choice programs ever since. Today, more parents use school choice in Florida than in any other state. And the results have been overwhelming – Florida has closed achievement gaps faster – and delivered greater bang-for-buck in K-12 education – than every other state. No wonder the Heritage Foundation recently named Florida #1 in the nation for Education Freedom!

POLICY SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ **Implement universal Education Savings Accounts for every Florida family**
- ✓ **Adopt weighted scholarships for special populations, including those living in Title I school districts that need revitalization**
- ✓ **Change federal policy to permit states to use Title I monies to fund students, not systems.**

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.

AFFORDABLE HEALTHCARE ACCESS

Florida made a policy commitment to run in the opposite direction of Washington, DC regarding both health insurance and healthcare delivery. Our state remains one of only a handful 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 proactively addressed 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 direct result, new facilities are being built, new practices are being established, and access to care is expanding.

POLICY SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ **Expand telemedicine**
- ✓ **Promote direct healthcare
(Direct Primary Care) arrangements**
- ✓ **Expand scope of practice reform**
- ✓ **Repeal Certificate of Need Laws**

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.

EMBRACING INNOVATION

As states such as New York and California drive innovators and entrepreneurs away by imposing burdensome regulations and high taxes, Florida has cemented its status as a national and global hub for technology and innovation. The key to this success has arisen from policymakers and state leaders implementing market-centered policies with a light-touch regulatory agenda that fosters innovation. At the same time, data does not recognize state boundaries. Policymakers in state capitols and also in Congress will continue to grapple with increasingly complex questions and should resist the urge to embrace big-government solutions or heavy-handed regulation that would deny citizens and consumers the benefits offered by technology and innovation.

POLICY SOLUTIONS:

- ✓ **Embrace a “permissionless innovation” attitude toward innovation in the marketplace**
- ✓ **Establish and expand regulatory sandboxes to encourage innovation**
- ✓ **Oppose government-owned networks for broadband**
- ✓ **Promote strong cybersecurity rules at the state level**
- ✓ **Protect both the marketplace and consumers in state-level data privacy policy reforms**

Sunshine State Stat: Of the three million “likely employer” applications filed since March 2020, more than 384,000 (13 percent) were new businesses in Florida.



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