



I WANT YOU!

The Family Café
CHANGE AGENT NETWORK
THEY NEED YOU!

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This Newsletter Is A Project Of The Family Cafe

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The Change Agent Network is a project of The Family Café and offers an opportunity for advocates and change agents to work collaboratively to transform the system by: combining abilities, skills, ideas, and talents; standing together for meaningful system reform measures; taking the lead in our communities and neighborhoods; sharing information to help families become effective players within their communities; developing statewide networks to organize and discuss the issues that are most important to families and persons with disabilities; and creating a united position on critical disability policy issues.

2018 Election Update . . . Well that was Fun!

With the dust settling and Florida once again in the national spotlight, we would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our new Governor Ron DeSantis and new United States Senator Rick Scott. After razor thin victories on election night and a lengthy statewide recount, both held on to their close leads and were officially declared winners nearly two weeks after the election. Despite some frustrations and rhetoric, there were no actual signs of voter fraud, as opposed to a very close race in a very large state.



On the Cabinet side, we are pleased to welcome our new Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried, our new Attorney General Ashley Moody and our (sort of) new Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis. In the Florida House, Democrats picked up a total of six seats, and on the Senate side, Democrats picked up one, with former Democratic Leader Janet Cruz defeating incumbent Dana Young.

In the Florida House 5 incumbents lost re-election: Rep's Bobby Olszewski (R), Bob Cortes (R), Patrick Henry (D), Robert Asensio (D) and Shawn Harrison (R). Democrats picked up six (6) seats this cycle, making the total breakdown 47 Democrats and 73 Republicans. Just as a point of reference, in 2016 the breakdown was 41 D's and 79 R's, and in 2014 there were 38 D's and 81 R's. Still down 16, the Democrats have a long way to go to be the majority party in the Florida House, but have been trending upward. It remains to be seen if the Democrats could ever take the majority back, considering how the districts are drawn. With a Republican majority and governor overseeing the



drawing of new maps, it's unlikely that reality will change much. Also, there were 31 "open seats" this cycle, which means that for various reasons there was no incumbent in the race. This, combined with the 5 new members that defeated an incumbent, means that there will be 36 freshman members of the Florida House. This is a historically high number and translates to 30% of the state house being brand new.

Fortunately, there is not quite as much math involved in the Florida Senate. There were 6 open seats in the Florida Senate, and combined with the upset by Rep. Janet Cruz of Republican incumbent Dana Young, that means that there will be 7 freshman in the Senate. Six out of the seven freshman are recent House members, so the learning curve will not be high. Democrats picked up one seat, and the new total will be 23 Republicans and 17 Democrats.

On the congressional side, there were 3 open seats and 1 incumbent defeated (Rep. Gus Curbelo). Democrats picked up 2 seats this cycle, making the new makeup of Florida's delegation 14 Republicans and 13 Democrats. On a national level, the U.S. House went from a 235 (R)/193 (D) Republican majority to (as of this writing) 232 (D) to 199 (R) with Democrats retaking the majority. There are still 4 seats outstanding.

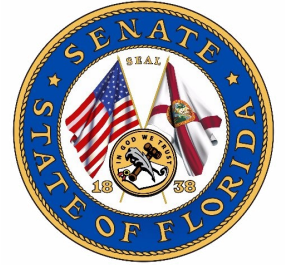
The Governor's races on a national level were some of the most followed, and were very much of a mixed bag. In Florida and Georgia, both states will stay under the control of the GOP, but five other states that were "open" but were previously held by Republican Governors were won by Democrats: Kansas (Kelly), Maine (Mills), Michigan (Whitmer), New Mexico (Grisham) and Nevada (Sisolak).

Also all four Democratic incumbents on a national level who were on the ballot won: New York (Cuomo), Oregon (Brown), Pennsylvania (Wolf) and Rhode Island (Sununu). Heading into the election, 16 Governors were Democrats and 33 were Republicans. After this cycle there will be 23 Democrats and 26 Republicans.

With the exception of Amendment 1 (which would have been an additional homestead exemption for homes worth more than \$100,000) ALL constitutional amendments on the ballot passed. This includes: a limitation on property taxes (Amendment 2), voter control of gambling (Amendment 3), voting restoration for felons (Amendment 4), a supermajority vote required to authorize or increase state taxes (Amendment 5), rights of crime victims (Amendment 6), first responder/military survivor benefits and public universities (Amendment 7), a prohibition of off-shore oil drilling and vaping indoors (Amendment 9), local government structures (making all local constitutional officers elected positions), (Amendment 10),



property rights (Amendment 11), lobbying by former public officials (Amendment 12) and to end dog racing in Florida (Amendment 13). Of all of the ballot initiatives that passed, Amendment 4 is very likely the most impactful. This will restore voting rights to well over a million Floridians who were convicted of and served their time for non-violent offenses.

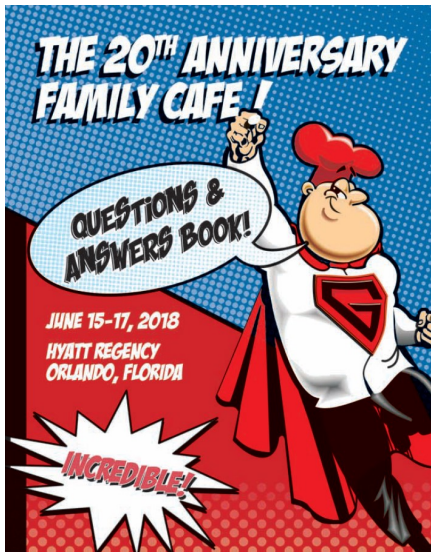


Lastly, we will see a new leadership team in the Florida legislature this year, with Senator Bill Galvano taking the helm as Senate President. Senator David Simmons will serve as the President Pro-Tempore and Senator Audrey Gibson will serve as the Democratic Leader. On the House side Rep. Jose Oliva will take over as Speaker of the House and has named Rep. Marylyn Magar as Speaker Pro-Tempore. Rep. Kionne McGhee will be the Democratic Leader.

All in all it was a bruising election season. Thank God it's over. Neither side can claim a mandate in Florida. Democrats did well in general in picking up some legislative seats, but not well enough to take over the Governor's mansion. Republicans convincingly won several seats in the Florida Senate despite a spirited challenge to a number of incumbents.

We look forward to working with Governor DeSantis and offer him our full support as we head toward the 2019 Legislative Session. We at The Family Café are very excited about the prospect of Senator Galvano as Senate President, and look forward to working with all of the great leaders that work very hard on behalf of individuals with disabilities and their families.

The 2018 Questions & Answers Book is Here!



We're happy to announce that the latest edition of The Family Café Questions & Answers Book is here! Every year at The Annual Family Café, we collect questions and comments from our attendees. We then distribute them to the relevant state agencies, and put together their responses to create this unique resource guide. If you have a question about a service or policy here in Florida, or about The Annual Family Café itself, chances are it's mentioned in the Q&A book. And if not, we encourage you to reach out to the agencies that serve you and make your voice heard!

You can find The Family Café Questions & Answers Book for 2018 online at <https://familycafe.net/images/stories/pdffiles/QA-Book-Final-compressed.pdf>. And if you were on hand at The 20th Anniversary Family Café this past June, a copy is on its way in the mail to you. We hope you enjoy it!