



# I WANT YOU!

## The Family Café CHANGE AGENT NETWORK THEY NEED YOU!

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.

### The 2019 Legislative Session is Coming – Are You Ready?

Well it's that time of year again! The 2019 Legislative Session will officially begin on March 5<sup>th</sup>, and is scheduled to run through May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Legislators from all over the state will converge on Tallahassee to discuss and debate issues that are critical to Florida's families. It's important that we, as advocates for Floridians with disabilities, pay attention to and participate in this democratic process that takes place for a brief but intense 60 days each year.

Prior to the start of session, the legislature will hold interim committee meetings nearly every week up until the session officially opens. It's important to pay attention to these committee meetings, as a large number of bills will have their first and even second hearings by the time the "regular" session begins. Although there will be committee meetings taking place outside the legislative session, all official business, such as passing or changing our laws, may only take place during the "regular" session.

Here's the schedule for this year's session:

#### Key Dates for 2019 Legislative Session

January 22-25	Interim Committee Week
Early February	Governor issues FY 2019/2020 budget recommendations
February 4-8	Interim Committee Week
February 5 <sup>th</sup>	Deadline for submission of appropriations projects
February 11-15	Interim Committee Week
February 19-22	Interim Committee Week
March 1 <sup>st</sup>	Senate deadline for approving final drafts of bills
March 5 <sup>th</sup>	Regular session convenes
April 23 <sup>rd</sup>	50th day rule (Senate) – Last day for committee meetings
May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	60th day – End of Regular Session



This year's legislature looks very different from prior years, and it's important for advocates to get to know their state elected officials. If you are a constituent, please introduce yourself to these lawmakers as part of our family here at The Family Café!

We have a new Senate President, Bill Galvano (Bradenton) and a new Speaker of the House, Jose Oliva (Hialeah). Each has chosen new leadership teams: In the Senate, President Galvano has selected Senator David Simmons (Longwood) as President Pro-Tempore and Senator Kathleen Passidomo (Naples) as Majority Leader. On the House side, Speaker Oliva has chosen Representative MaryLynn Magar (Hobe Sound) as Speaker Pro-Tempore and Representative Dane Eagle (Cape Coral) as Majority Leader. The Democrats have elected Senator Audrey Gibson (Jacksonville) and Representative Kionne McGhee (Cutler Bay) as their respective Minority Leaders.

One of the more notable changes from prior sessions is that over the Organizational Session, the Senate President and Speaker of the House swore in 51 brand new members of the legislature. There are 42 freshman House members and 9 freshman Senators. The makeup changed slightly as well, with the House Democrats picking up 5 seats, making the breakdown 73-47. In the Senate, the number changed only slightly, with a Republican Majority now standing at 23-17.



Committee makeups have also changed, so please keep that in mind if you have been speaking to certain legislators based on their membership in a particular committee, they may not be on those committees anymore! For us here at The Family Cafe, the Education Committees and their respective Appropriation Committees are critical. We have new Chairs in all of them. On the Senate side, the Chair of the Education Committee, which sets policy, is Senator Manny Diaz (Hialeah Gardens) and the Chair of the Appropriation Subcommittee on Education is Senator Kelli Stargel (Lakeland). On the House side, the Chair of the Education Committee is

Representative Jennifer Sullivan (Eustis) and the Chair of the PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee is Representative Chris Latvala (Clearwater). These members will be critical for The Family Café's continued success and we very much appreciate their service.

If you would like to contact any of these members to let them know about your feelings about The Family Café, or any other issue that's important to you, here is their contact information:



**President Bill Galvano**

1023 Manatee Avenue West, Suite 201  
Bradenton, FL 34205  
(941) 741-3401



**Senator Kelli Stargel**

2033 East Edgewood Drive, Suite 1  
Lakeland, FL 33803  
(863) 668-3028



**Speaker Jose Oliva**

3798 West 12th Avenue, Suite A  
Hialeah, FL 33012-4126  
(305) 364-3114



**Speaker Pro-Tempore MaryLynn Magar**

11700 Southeast Dixie Highway  
Hobe Sound, FL 33455-5457  
(772) 545-3481



**President Pro-Tempore David Simmons**

220 Crown Oak Centre Drive  
Longwood, FL 32750  
(407) 262-7578



**House Majority Leader Dane Eagle**

1039 Southeast 9th Place, Suite 310  
Cape Coral, FL 33990-3131  
(239) 772-1291



**Senate Majority Leader Kathleen Passidomo**

3299 Tamiami Trail East, Suite 203  
Naples, FL 34112  
(239) 417-6205



**House Minority Leader Kionne McGhee**

Cutler Bay Town Hall Center, Suite 225  
10720 Caribbean Boulevard  
Cutler Bay, FL 33189-1218  
(305) 256-6301



**Senate Minority Leader Audrey Gibson**

101 E. Union Street, Suite 104  
Jacksonville, FL 32202  
(904) 359-2553



**Representative Jennifer Sullivan**

2755 South Bay Street, Unit D  
Eustis, FL 32726-6587  
(352) 742-6275



**Senator Manny Diaz**

10001 Northwest 87th Avenue  
Hialeah Gardens, FL 33016  
(305) 364-3073



**Representative Chris Latvala**

2963 Gulf to Bay Boulevard, Suite 206  
Clearwater, FL 33759-4200  
(727) 724-3000



One of the key drivers for the legislative session is the state budget. Each year, the State of Florida estimates how much revenue it will have available to expend in its upcoming fiscal year. This time around, it appears that the upcoming fiscal year will be a good one thanks to a surge in sales and corporate income tax collections. There will be another revenue estimating conference prior to the start of the 2019 session, but the news so far has been good. Estimates just prior to the start of the year show that the state should collect an additional \$1.48 billion in general revenue this year, which is a nearly 5% increase over collections from the 2017/2018 fiscal year. The projections for next year continue to be rosy with an additional 1 billion or 3% increase for the 2019/2020 fiscal year. The bottom line is that despite signs that the national economy is slowing down slightly, Florida continues to grow at a modest level. This means that the large budget cutting exercises like we have seen in prior years will not be necessary.

Of course, there are also likely to be significant policy changes that result from this year's legislative session. At this point in the process, it's too early to know exactly what issues may come to the fore. As in previous years, The Family Café will be here to keep you informed on any developments that are likely to impact Floridians with disabilities and their families. You can look forward to the return of our annual "Let's Talk!" Conference Call series, with calls being held weekly on Friday afternoons throughout the course of the 60 day session. We will once again have legislative experts and insiders on hand to share their insights into the latest developments, and their potential implications.

Until then, please do what you can to get to know your legislators, and get ahead of the legislative process. A phone call or visit now, before the session opens, can be the thing that gets you in the door later, when an issue that matters to you and your family comes up for debate!





## Online Registration for The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Family Café Opens February 14<sup>th</sup>

February is here, and that means it's time to register for The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Family Café! Here at The Family Café, we love holidays, so we try to line up special events on our calendar with important dates that are easy to remember. That's why online registration for The Annual Family Café always opens up on Valentine's Day, February 14<sup>th</sup>.

This year will be no different, with the online registration form becoming available on familycafe.net at 9:00 AM EST on Thursday, February 14<sup>th</sup>. The link to the online form will be prominently displayed on our homepage, and the whole online registration process will be easy to complete. If you have registered online before, you will be able to log in to your existing account, and the system will remember your contact information.

You will also be able to apply for financial assistance to cover the cost of hotel accommodation at the event when you register. Just make sure to check the box labeled "I require Financial Assistance" on the form. Financial assistance recipients will be selected through a lottery process.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Family Café is set for June 7-9 at the Hyatt Regency Orlando. Everyone at The Family Café is hard at work putting together an informative, engaging event for Floridians with disabilities and their families to enjoy. It should be another amazing year, as The Family Café turns 21. We can't wait to see you there!



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