



REV UP Florida! Questions for Candidates for '18 Florida Attorney General's Race

1. In 2017, the state legislature [passed a law](#) requiring the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to establish an employment training component related to autism awareness. *As Attorney General, how will you ensure that state law enforcement is appropriately trained and equipped to interact with people with disabilities – including those who may be non-verbal, who use a communication device, or who are hearing impaired or deaf – to prevent unnecessary incarcerations and injuries?*

As a member of the Florida Cabinet which oversees FDLE, I will be a leading voice and will work with local law enforcement to ensure the enforcement of this legislation. Furthermore, the Florida Crime Prevention Training Institute is housed in the Office of the Attorney General that was created to develop and provide ongoing training for law enforcement personnel and other criminal justice leaders. I will make sure that new curriculum includes autism awareness and sensitivity.

2. Under [legislation](#) passed in 2016, crimes evidencing prejudice based on either mental or physical disability may be reclassified in a manner identical to the state's "hate crimes" statute. *As Attorney General, what would you do to protect people with disabilities from prejudice and other forms of prejudicial discrimination, either in terms of necessary outreach, education, and victim assistance efforts, or in terms of possible additional criminal justice reform? Would you utilize your authority under Chapter 760, Florida Statutes, to actively pursue civil actions for violations of the state's Civil Rights Act and Fair Housing Act evidencing disability discrimination?*

Advocating for and protecting victims is of top priority. As Attorney General, I will hold anyone accountable who violates Florida law. Through the Office of Civil Rights, I will ensure equal protection under the law for all Floridians and will vigorously investigate claims of discrimination.

3. According to data reported by the U.S. Department of Justice's [Bureau of Justice Statistics](#), in 2015 the rate of violent victimization against persons with disabilities was 2.5 times higher than the rate for persons without disabilities. From 2011 to 2015, the rate of reported rape or sexual assault committed against persons with disabilities was 3.5 times higher than the rate for persons without disabilities. *As Attorney General, how will you work to combat this increased vulnerability to victimization experienced by persons with disabilities, and what assistance and resources would you offer to persons with disabilities who have been victimized?*

As Attorney General, I will hold sexual predators, especially those who prey on our most vulnerable accountable by working with local prosecutorial offices and through the AG's Office of the Statewide

Prosecutor to ensure justice is served and reduce recidivism by these offenders. I will support legislation that expands victim support and fully utilize the Division of Victim Services within the Attorney General's Office.

4. In recent years, the state has been grappling with an opioid epidemic disparately affecting Floridians in several important regards. *As Attorney General, what measures would you advocate for the state to take in response to the growing opioid epidemic? What approaches towards state regulation or intervention into the sober home (recovery residence) and related treatment markets do you support, especially in terms of efforts to curb patient marketing, referral kickbacks, and other deceptive marketing practices of these businesses?*

For too long, we've attempted to use the criminal justice system to address substance abuse and mental health issues which have caused far greater consequences. As AG, I will advocate for increased resources for recovery facilities and will hold insurance companies accountable who attempt to exploit their coverage.

5. When the state legislature passed Senate Bill 7026 (2018) following the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the legislation included "mental health assistance allocations" to assist school districts in establishing or expanding school-based mental health care. *As Attorney General, how will you work to expand the provision and coordination of mental health service delivery in the state's school system without worsening the stigma of mental illness for the students in need of these services? How will you work to fight this stigmatization?*

As a State Legislator, I fought to expand public school funding to ensure services such as mental health assistance were made available to our students. If the Legislature continues to strip away support for our education system that is a dereliction of constitutionally adequate levels, I will argue in support of a lawsuit alleging the same.

6. According to a [recent report](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Florida has the third highest percentage of uninsured adults in the United States at 20.1 percent. If the state were to expand Medicaid, an estimated 384,000 people would be eligible for coverage. *As Attorney General, would you support or oppose the expansion of Medicaid coverage in the state as prescribed in the Affordable Care Act of 2010, or through a similar federal participation initiative? Do you support or oppose proposals to block grant Medicaid spending or to convert this funding to a per-capita cap system in Florida? Why or why not?*

I do support the expansion of affordable healthcare coverage and I will fight to expand Medicaid coverage to those who can't otherwise afford insurance, fight to preserve insurance for people who gained coverage under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and fight to improve standards so the coverage they receive in Florida is of the highest quality.

7. The phenomenon of youth being pushed out of school through exclusionary discipline policies and thereafter swept into the criminal justice system by the criminalization of typical adolescent behaviors is referred to as the "School-to-Prison Pipeline". According to [data](#) compiled by the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, this trend has a significant disparate impact on youth struggling with disabilities or trauma – Florida's students with disabilities are nearly 3 times as likely to be suspended and more than 17 times as likely to be expelled than students without disabilities. *As Attorney General,*

how would you work to address the state's School-to-Prison pipeline, especially for students with disabilities? Would you support efforts for in-school, restorative behavior interventions in place of seclusion, restraint, and other exclusionary discipline practices?

There is an overrepresentation of juveniles in our criminal justice system, especially people of color and students with disabilities. During my time in the Florida Legislature, I sponsored HB 509 which would have eliminated the requirement for direct filing juveniles as adults for certain offenses. I have been a long-time advocate for restorative justice and do believe that by fully funding our education system, we can allocate more resources to support specialized instructors for restorative discipline in lieu of automatic suspension and exclusion.

8. Large portions of the disability community adhere to the proverb "nothing about us, without us" as a guiding or foundational tenet of sorts. *What work have you done with disability-led organizations? What is your prior experience addressing and responding to disability issues, and how will you ensure that people with disabilities play an active role in your administration? As Attorney General, how would you make or approach new investments in consumer- or advocate-led organizations to further the leadership of those with disabilities and the movements for freedom and self-determination in Florida?*

My entire career has been dedicated to being a consumer advocate -- fighting for our most vulnerable and fully support inclusion in the policy decision making process. I've been a leading voice in ensuring the designated use of the Sadowski Trust Fund that provides affordable housing programs to low-income families and people with disabilities. Unfortunately, the Florida Legislature continues to raid this fund for general revenue allocations. American Association of People with Disabilities has been a leading voice for and I look forward to working with AAPD and other disability led organizations to implement solutions to the complicated problems that face our state.