



Florida Retired Educators Association Questionnaire Submitted by Andrew Gillum, Candidate for Governor of Florida

1. School Safety: Events have put school safety as a priority for all. What suggestions do you have for keeping our students and teachers safe? How would you fund these proposals?

I am the only candidate in this race that has taken on the NRA and won - twice. No parent should be afraid of sending their child to school worrying if this will be the last time because of someone with a gun. After the Parkland Shooting, I marched arm-in-arm with high school and college students on the state capital to demand real action on the national epidemic of gun violence. In order to begin addressing gun violence in Florida, I would sign legislation that would ban assault weapons, large-capacity magazines, and armor-piercing bullets. Furthermore, I would seek to require and strengthen universal background for all gun purchases and close private sale loopholes. I also feel strongly that we need to restrict gun access for the mentally ill and known foreign and domestic terrorists. And I would also close the “boyfriend loophole”, prohibiting gun possession for those with felony and misdemeanor domestic violence and stalking convictions. While the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act represents a start and the biggest legislative defeat to the NRA in decades, much more needs to be done to keep Floridians safe from the continued deadly risk of gun violence. In order to fund my proposals, and increase school safety, I have proposed a \$1 billion investment in our public schools, students, and teachers. This funding would come from adjusting Florida’s corporate income tax rate to a modest 7.75 percent — just over a 2 percent increase, which would raise \$1 billion revenue. In Florida, 97 percent of businesses pay no corporate income tax — and those that do, pay just 5.5 percent, less than conservative neighboring states like Georgia (6 percent) and Alabama (6.5 percent). Through this plan, the 3% of Florida corporations that pay state corporate income tax will still keep 84% of their Trump tax cut — and no Florida worker, family, or small business will pay a dime more in taxes under this plan.

2. Funding: More than 90% of Florida students are enrolled in a traditional public school. However, Florida ranks among the lowest in the US in per/student funding.

A. What will you do to establish full funding for all traditional public-school students?

In order increase funding for public education by \$1 billion, I will increase Florida’s corporate income tax by just over 2%, to 7.75%. Furthermore, I believe we need to stop diverting increasing amounts of funding to non-

traditional public schools. 90% of Florida students attend traditional public schools and it is time our funding mechanisms reflect this.

B. When a non-traditional public school fails, what will you do to ensure public money is returned to the traditional public school?

These issues show the need to add accountability and additional scrutiny to schools that receive state funding. If charter schools wish to take on the opportunity of educating our children, they should have the responsibility of being fully accountable and transparent to local school boards and other governing entities and meet or exceed the same standards as public schools. As Governor, I will hold these institutions accountable and use every measure available to have public funds returned.

3. Testing: The current testing regimen targets college bound students. Students planning a career in a trade are often at a disadvantage with these tests. What are your plans for the mandated tests and what do you envision student evaluations to look like in the future?

Many of Florida's policies have imposed educationally unsound prescriptions on our schools. Students, along with their parents, communities, teachers, paraprofessionals and other school employees, have been forced to live under test-and-punish policies that include sanctions, high-stakes assessments, less time on teaching, mismeasurement of teacher effectiveness and other policies that are counterproductive and have taken the joy out of teaching and learning. We need to make sure the way we measure our students does not inhibit their growth and ability to learn the skills they need to be successful in workforce. With that said, future evaluations need to be constructed in a way that doesn't alter the classroom environment and incentivize educators to "teach to the test".

4. Accountability: Not all schools in Florida are held to the same testing, teacher certifications or record documentation. What will you do to assure equitable accountability among ALL recipients of taxpayer dollars allotted to education?

As governor, I will fully support adding additional accountability and scrutiny standards to any institution that receives state dollars to educate Florida's children. We need to be absolutely sure our kids are receiving a high-quality education from certified teachers, being measured the same way public school students are, and learning in settings that are conducive to an educational environment - not in strip malls or steps away from liquor stores.

5. School Board Autonomy: Will you oppose or veto legislation which removes power from the local school boards? If not please explain.

I will oppose AND veto legislation that removes local control from our school boards. As a mayor, I have seen the disconcerting rise of local preemption bills passed by the state legislature. Local communities are best positioned to make decisions about their schools, their roads, and many more issues that are unique to each part of Florida. While I am glad to see Amendment 8 removed from the ballot, I will work to make sure no additional measures are passed that would take away this needed autonomy.

6. Retirement: There are over 1,000,000 active and retired members of the Florida Retirement System. In recent years benefits have been reduced. What will you do to restore and expand benefits? i.e. Changing the FRS default back to the pension fund, reinstating Cost of Living Adjustment, increasing Health Insurance Subsidy.

Florida has one of the highest rated, lowest cost public pension systems in the nation but it won't be that way for long if we continue to make changes to the system for the sake of politics rather than policy. The Legislature made significant changes to the system in 2011 that shifted cost to the employees and lowered future employer costs significantly. I will work with lawmakers and support rolling those changes back. I support reinstating the Cost of Living Adjustment and increasing the Health Insurance Subsidy. Furthermore, I fully support having the default FRS selection for state workers be the pension fund when workers do not make this selection themselves.

7. Train Bills: Voters would like to see one bill - one number. Will you veto bills that address multiple issues even if they are on the same topic? Please explain.

I sympathize with voters when they say long bills make keeping up with the legislative process a challenge. We should strongly urge legislators to oppose these types of bills in order to encourage a more inclusive way to make laws - only State Senators and State Representatives have the power to craft shorter, single issue legislation. As governor, my choice will be to either approve or veto legislation as it is delivered to me. I feel each piece of legislation deserves careful consideration on a case-by-case basis. I will take a common-sense approach to evaluating legislation on its merits.

8. RECRUIT and RETAIN Florida has serious teacher recruitment and retention problems. What creative strategies do you anticipate implementing to address this educational crisis?

Florida is competing with other states for top-notch public schools' teachers and college and university faculty. Florida must recruit thousands of new K-12 teachers each year to accommodate growth and to replace those who leave the profession or retire. Teachers pay in Florida is not competitive. The average teacher salary in Florida is nearly \$10,000 below the national average and nearly \$6,000 less than Georgia. Education Staff Professionals salaries are also significantly below the national average. I have proposed increasing starting salaries for teachers to \$50,000 in order to recruit and retain the best to this important career. Through a small adjustment of the corporate tax rate, the state can raise \$1 billion to invest in education including raising teacher pay without raising taxes on any Florida workers, families, or small businesses.

Florida Retired Educators Association Questionnaire Submitted to Ron DeSantis, Candidate for Governor of Florida

- 1. School Safety: Events have put school safety as a priority for all. What suggestions do you have for keeping our students and teachers safe? How would you fund these proposals?** No response.
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- 8. 8. RECRUIT and RETAIN Florida has serious teacher recruitment and retention problems. What creative strategies do you anticipate implementing to address this educational crisis?** No response