



Ron DeSantis
U.S. Representative



Andrew Gillum
Mayor of Tallahassee

What have Florida's candidates for governor said about guns and school safety?

*candidates are listed by party and current ranking in pre-primary polling at the time of publication (Aug. 16, 2018)

"I think we should harness our retired military and law enforcement to be a part of a program so that the schools are taken off the table ... To do a blanket ban on firearms I think is a mistake ... I'm going to stand rock solid behind our Second Amendment rights ... I will focus the attention of law enforcement on individuals, convicted felons, people who are mentally ill or dangerous to society, and worry about denying them firearms."

"(Teachers) are already doing the most difficult job that exists on Earth, the making the shaping, the molding, the inspiring of the minds of our most precious gifts, and now, we want them to be not just the teacher but ... the security guard ... No parent wants to send their kids away for school worried about whether or not they'll have to pick them up in a body bag ... We're going to adopt the kind of common sense laws that put people before guns."

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 to 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.

Ron DeSantis Position Paper on Education:

Boost Classroom Spending for Students and Teachers, Expand Choice, Vocational and Technical Education, and Hold the Line on College Tuition

As a product of Florida's public-school system and a parent of two future Florida students, Ron DeSantis knows the importance of ensuring all Florida students have the opportunity to attend a great school and get a world-class education. Ron DeSantis believes that every student, regardless of their zip code or family circumstances, should have the opportunity to get a great education.

Twenty years ago, decades of taking a cookie-cutter approach to educating our diverse youth culminated in a systemic failure across Florida's education system. The system's refusal to innovate and change resulted in scores of Florida's children being robbed of the opportunity to improve their future and maximize their opportunities through getting a high-quality education.

Back then, Florida ranked 38th on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) and had an abysmal 52% high school graduation rate. After two decades of Republican-led education reforms, we now rank 5th in the nation on the NAEP and have a graduation rate of 82.3%. Florida also ranks 4th in the nation for K-12 achievement and was the only state in the country in 2017 to significantly improve in the key areas of grade 4 mathematics, grade 8 reading, and grade 8 mathematics. As Governor, Ron DeSantis will set the ambitious goal of achieving top 3 status in both the NAEP and K-12 achievement rankings.

In Higher Education, Florida now boasts five of the top 100 public universities in the country, including one in the top 10. We have the 2nd best 2-year college graduation rate in the country and the 8th best 4-year college graduation rate in the country – while maintaining the 2nd lowest tuition in the country and 6th lowest percent of students with debt at graduation. On day one, Ron DeSantis will challenge our university system to do even better by setting a goal of having a top five public university.

Florida's education success story was made possible by allowing for innovation in education coupled with choice for families and public accountability.

Ron DeSantis will build on these successful reforms and not allow our education system to slide backwards. Ron DeSantis will work tirelessly to make Florida a world-class leader on education.

To build a world-class education system & prepare all Florida students for the future, Ron DeSantis will:

1. Boost Classroom Spending for Students and Teachers with the 80% Classroom Spending Plan
2. Emphasize Career & Technical Education
3. Encourage Innovation & Expand Choice in Education
4. Recruit, Reward and Retain Good Teachers
5. Review and Improve Florida's Curriculum Standards
6. Build an Affordable, World-Class Higher Education System

Boost Spending for Students and Teachers by Implementing the 80% Classroom Spending Plan, Putting More Money Directly to the Classroom

Ron DeSantis will boost spending for students and teachers by recommending the 80% Classroom Spending Plan, which will require 80% of K-12 dollars to be spent directly in the classroom. This will ensure no taxpayer money is wasted on bureaucracy and bloat and will put more money where it matters most: with students and teachers.

Spend Funds Directly in the Classroom.

To maximize Florida taxpayers' investment in our students, Ron DeSantis will implement the 80% Classroom Spending Plan, which ensures that 80% of public K-12 education spending goes directly into the classroom. This will cut bureaucratic waste and administrative inefficiency and ensure that money is being spent where it matters most.

Conduct a Full Audit of the Florida Department of Education.

To determine where wasteful spending occurs, Ron DeSantis will direct the Commissioner of Education and the State Board of Education to oversee a complete operational and financial audit of the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) to identify funding that can be put back into the classroom.

Ensure Transparency and Accountability to the Public in School Districts.

To ensure transparency in school district spending and support public accountability in school districts, Ron DeSantis will work with the Legislature to pass legislation requiring local schoolboards to offer an online database where the public can see exactly how the district is spending taxpayer funds. He will also support a constitutional amendment putting term limits on school board members.

Emphasize Career & Technical Education

Ron DeSantis will work to expand vocational and technical education to teach real-world skills to students and help them prepare for the jobs of the 21st century.

Emphasize Career and Technical Education Courses and Apprenticeship Programs.

To improve Florida's "skills gap", Ron DeSantis will work with leaders from K-12 schools, postsecondary education, and the business community to better support career and technical education and apprenticeships, and to make sure Florida's education is meeting the needs of our students and economy. He will make sure that Florida is offering high quality CTE offerings that provide pathways to higher skill and higher wage jobs for Florida's students. Ron DeSantis will work with the Legislature to incentivize and recognize schools leading their communities in career and technical education programs.

Allow Mastery-Based Curricula in Career and Technical Education Classes.

To help students get a job as soon as they are ready, Ron DeSantis will support mastery-based curricula in career and technical education, which will allow students to complete these programs as soon as they demonstrate the proper competency.

Expand Apprentice and Pre-Apprenticeship Programs.

To expand job opportunities for Floridians, Ron DeSantis will work with the Florida Legislature to find ways to support and expand apprenticeships for jobs in high-demand fields.

Encourage Innovation & Expand Choice in Education

Ron DeSantis will work to empower parents to make educational decisions for their children and ensure that all Florida students have the opportunity to go to a good school, regardless of where they live or how much money their parents have. Ron DeSantis will always stand with the 140,000+ mostly minority, poor and uniquely abled students that depend on choice scholarships and against politicians like Andrew Gillum who would take them away.

Support School Choice Options.

To ensure that all Florida students can go to a good school and empower parents to make educational decisions for their children, Ron DeSantis will support school choice options such as public magnet schools, district & non-district managed public charter schools, Florida Virtual School, home education, and the various other choice options. DeSantis will also look at the possibility of creating Education Savings Accounts for more Florida students including those from low-income and working-class families.

Expand Choice Scholarship Programs.

To support the more than 140,000 diverse Florida students that have chosen to utilize and depend on Florida's K-12 scholarship programs like the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship, McKay and Gardiner Scholarships, Ron DeSantis will support policies that expand choice scholarships, including raising the cap on the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship program. The more than 140,000 students that utilize these programs include over 40,000 students with disabilities, nearly 40,000 Black or African American students, over 50,000 Hispanic or Latino students, just over 43,000 White students, nearly 8,000 students of other ethnicities, and over 100,000 students from low-income families. These programs are so popular that tens of thousands of students were turned away last year from these important scholarship programs. Ron DeSantis will fight to ensure every student eligible receives their scholarship, and he will always stand with these students and their parents over bureaucracy and unions.

Ensure Equal Access for Parents Who Home School Their Children.

To support the families of the nearly 90,000 students in Florida that are home schooled, Ron DeSantis will ensure that these children have equal access to resources available to other students, such as dual enrollment and extracurricular activities. The decision on how a child should be educated is best left to their family, as no far-away bureaucrat could ever understand a child the way a parent does. For many Florida families, homeschooling provides the best opportunity to educate their children.

Recruit, Reward and Retain Good Teachers

Ron DeSantis will support policies that reward high-performing teachers and reduce teacher shortages while ensuring Florida students learn from the best.

Reward High-Performing Teachers.

To reward and retain the best teachers, Ron DeSantis will work with the Legislature to simplify and optimize the teacher merit pay evaluation system, so it is based reasonably on classroom performance. He will also look to generate financial savings by reducing unnecessary education bureaucracy and will direct the Legislature to use excess funds to provide more funding for merit pay bonuses for outstanding teachers.

Address Teacher Shortages.

To help recruit the best teachers, Ron DeSantis will work with the Legislature to expand programs that incentivize top educators to teach in Florida and to develop programs that incentivize and reward teachers in more demanding or specialized positions, such as teaching Florida's special needs students.

Review & Improve Florida's Curriculum Standards

Ron DeSantis will direct a complete review of Florida's curriculum standards and will propose policies that put emphasis on civics and America's founding constitutional principles.

Review Florida's K-12 Curriculum Standards.

To ensure Florida's schools have the best possible standards while not being dictated to by the federal government, Ron DeSantis will direct a complete review of Florida's curriculum standards to ensure that we are not rubber-stamping Common Core or any other one-size-fits-all standards. The review will include safeguards that ensure there are no demonstrable political biases in our students' textbooks, such as anti-Israel bias.

Require a Section on American Constitutional Principles in Civics Classes.

To equip Florida students to be well-rounded citizens, Ron DeSantis will work with the Legislature to develop and pass policies that ensure a renewed emphasis on teaching America's founding principles and ensure that the Constitution is put back into the classroom.

Build an Affordable, World-Class Higher Education System

Ron DeSantis will support and expand higher education programs that ensure Florida's state colleges and universities offer students a world-class education at an affordable rate.

Enhance Performance Funding.

To encourage the continued performance of Florida's universities and support the ongoing climb of Florida public universities in major rankings, Ron DeSantis will work with the Legislature to increase performance funding and enhance other programs that have proven effective at improving 4-year graduation rates, increasing student retention rates, lowering student costs, and reducing student debt.

Protect Taxpayers' Investment in Florida's Higher Education System.

To ensure government does not waste taxpayer dollars in Florida's higher education, Ron DeSantis will hold state colleges and universities accountable for wasteful and inappropriate spending.

Hold the Line on Tuition and Student Expenses.

To minimize students' costs and reduce student debt, Ron DeSantis will work with the Legislature to keep tuition as low as possible by looking for administrative spending reduction opportunities while also supporting Bright Futures Scholarships and other programs that reduce the financial burden on Florida's students. He will also look for ways to curb additional costs for students, such as textbooks and other fees.

Support our College System.

To support the success of the Florida College System and the important role it plays in our education system, Ron DeSantis will work closely with the Legislature and college system leaders to ensure that it remains one of the most dynamic and effective systems in the country. Ron DeSantis will also work with the Legislature to increase performance funding for our State College System. Hundreds of thousands of students throughout the state expand their opportunities and brighten their futures by enrolling at our state colleges. We must continuously look for ways to make them more efficient and effective.

Ron DeSantis: Tax Foundation's 2019 Rankings Show Florida's Economy is Working

The Ron DeSantis for Governor Campaign today highlighted The Tax Foundation's 2019 Rankings showcasing Florida's economy is working. According to the Tax Foundation's annual State Business Tax Climate Index, Florida has the fourth best business tax climate in the country and is the No. 1 best climate for individual taxes.

"This report is great news for hardworking Floridians," said DeSantis. "Florida is the No. 1 best state for individual taxes and the fourth state for best business tax climate in the country, which is why our economy is booming and more and more people are moving to our state."

"As Governor, I will build on this success and fight to make Florida the best place in the nation to do business by keeping taxes low, reducing burdensome regulations and helping create more jobs for Floridians," continued DeSantis.

Andrew Gillum's plan to raise the corporate tax rate by 40 percent would be a disaster and would take Florida backward in this ranking. Andrew Gillum has pledged to raise taxes by a billion dollars. Andrew Gillum's policies would turn Florida into a high-tax state, like those at the bottom of the study's rankings, which include New Jersey, California, New York, Connecticut and the District of Columbia.

"Andrew Gillum, wants to reverse Florida's economic success by embracing the far-left policies that made New York and California two of the worst states for taxes. His proposed tax increases of over \$1 billion would be disastrous for our state and would cause Floridians to lose their jobs and small businesses to close their doors. Florida simply can't afford Andrew Gillum's high-tax policies," concluded DeSantis.

The report, which compares each state on more than 100 variables, including corporate, individual, property and sales taxes, validates Florida's economic success:

- Florida's economy has risen over \$1 trillion
- State debt has been reduced by \$10 billion under Governor Scott
- Florida has added over 1.6 million new jobs under Governor Scott
- Florida's unemployment rate dropped under 4% (lower than the national average)
- The report also notes Florida's corporate tax ranking has gone from 19 in 2018 to 6 in the 2019 rankings.