



May 17th, 2026

To: Interested Parties
From: Stephen Clermont, Change Research
Re: Deep Dive into Florida

From May 13 to May 16, Change Research surveyed 2,070 registered voters of which 1,593 say they will likely vote in the upcoming 2026 midterm election.

3 Big Takeaways:

- 1) **70% of Floridians say they are falling behind the cost of living.** 65% do not think Florida is affordable for them or their family.
- 2) **Democrats vote motivation is 13 points higher than Republicans (88% to 75%);** which explains the recent special election wins for Democrats, as well as a Democrat being elected Mayor of Miami by 19 points – the first in 30 years.
- 3) **David Jolly leads Byron Donalds 46% to 42% with registered voters who say they will likely vote.** Jolly is consolidating Democrats and leads the all-important Florida NPA by 18 points (46% to 28%) with apparent room to grow. Byron Donalds lags Donald Trump's performance with Hispanics by 10 points with only 30% of Puerto Ricans and 50% of Cubans currently supporting him.

Yes, it's Florida. The heart and soul of Trump country. So why are Democrats winning elections and currently more motivated to vote in 2026? Also, a close look at NPA's – 3.3 million nonparty affiliated voters – who will have a major say in this election.

- Trump: 44% favorable, 52% unfavorable. With **NPA's Trump has a 28% favorable rating, with 63% viewing him unfavorably.**
- 69% of Floridians are not satisfied with the direction of the country (79% NPA), and 55% of Floridians are not satisfied with the direction of Florida (64% NPA).
- On the question, "how much stress is paying causing?" 81% gasoline, 80% food/groceries, 73% health care, 73% homeowners' insurance, 73% utility costs.
- Voters pick 3: 57% say the top goal of the Florida government should be lowering the cost of living. (61% NPA) 50% say cleaning up political corruption (54% NPA), 41% say eliminating or lowering property taxes (38% NPA).
- 95% of Florida voters say political corruption and unchecked money in politics is leading to higher costs. 79% say most of the bills and executive orders in Tallahassee are influenced by who is giving whom the most campaign money.

You can see a full methodology statement [here](#), which complies with the requirements of AAPOR's Transparency Initiative. Members of the Transparency Initiative disclose all relevant details about our research, with the principle that the public should be able to evaluate and understand research-based findings, in order to instill and restore public confidence in survey results.

To date, there have been many proposals offered by candidates running for Governor and the following are some hot button issues concerning Florida voters:

- **14% of voters support AI centers being built in Florida while 79% oppose it.** Just 25% of voters support the Byron Donalds plan to locate AI data centers mostly in rural areas to create jobs.
- 82% of voters support David Jolly's plan to create a state catastrophic fund to remove hurricane and wind exposure from private insurers.
- 79% support requiring voucher schools to meet the same standards, services, and accountability as public schools. 57% of voters do not believe Florida has a strong education system.
- 77% support Jolly's focus on work, wages, wealth by building an inclusive economy by expanding job access, investing in workforce training, fair pay, and closing the racial wealth gap. Support is 91% among black voters.
- 70% support the completion of Everglades restoration.

Our analysis of the political environment plus certain candidate strengths and weaknesses leads us to conclude that Florida will be very competitive. Currently:

- Donalds leads his primary opponents with 48%, 9% Fishback, 8% Collins, 3% Renner, 28% undecided. **Trump's endorsement of Donalds is 73% persuasive** for likely Republican primary voters.
- Jolly leads his primary opponent Jerry Demings 42% to 27%. **After brief bios are read, Jolly's expands to a 32-point lead (56% to 24%) over Demings.**
 - 19% of Democrats have serious doubts about voting for Jolly when asked about Jolly's former votes as a Republican a decade ago.
 - 12% of Democrats and 30% of NPA voters have serious doubts about Jolly's "as a supporter of gun ownership but is for universal background checks, licensing for gun owners" position.
 - 9% of Democrats and 35% of NPA voters have serious doubts about Jolly's position that "illegal immigrants strengthen our communities and state and want a path to legal status for people who might be here illegally but play by the rules."

As highlighted before, Trump's seal of approval for Donalds likely wins the primary election, but his support becomes a double-edged sword in the general election. Coupled with Donalds's own negatives that his fellow Republicans have only been tweeting, puts Donalds in real electoral jeopardy.

- 52% of Republican voters and 79% of NPA's have serious doubts about voting for Donalds when they learn about his volume of stock trades and Donalds failure to report \$1.6 million in stock trades while in Congress.
- 42% of Republican voters and 68% of NPA's have serious doubts about voting for Donalds when they learn about **Donalds arrest records and selling drugs as an adult.**
- 39% of Republican voters and 74% of NPA's have serious doubts about voting for Donalds when they learn **Donalds is against releasing the Epstein files.**
- 71% of NPA's and even 25% of Republicans have serious doubts about voting for Donalds for his support of Trump's war in Iran. 63% of NPA voters have very serious doubts about voting for Donalds when learning **Donalds gave Trump an "A" rating on the economy.**
- The DeSantis factor: Yes, Governor DeSantis is more popular than Trump in Florida.
 - 86% of likely voters support Governor DeSantis AI Data center plan; which dramatically slows down the approval process.
 - 38% of likely voters want a Governor like Ron Desantis to continue his policies. 27% want an independent voice with a record of bipartisanship to solve problems. 24% want a Democrat to bring balance to one-party rule in Tallahassee. **Just 6% want a strong ally of Donald Trump as Governor.**

After learning more about each candidate **"Jolly, the Democrat" leads "Donalds, the Republican," 48% to 41% with likely voters.** Furthermore, the issue environment is positive for other statewide Democrats.

- Democrat Alex Vindman leads incumbent Republican Senator Ashley Moody 47% to 45% with likely voters.
- Democrat Jose Javier Rodriguez leads against incumbent Republican Attorney General 45% to 41% with likely voters.