



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON
Republican President Designate

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Senators and Senate Professional Staff
FROM: Senate President Designate Wilton Simpson
SUBJECT: 2020 Organization Session Protocols
DATE: November 4, 2020

Section 3 of Article III of Florida's Constitution states: "On the fourteenth day following each general election the legislature shall convene for the exclusive purpose of organization and selection of officers." In order to comply with this constitutional requirement, over the last several weeks and in consultation with infectious disease and infection prevention experts at Tampa General Hospital and the University of South Florida, we have continued to develop protocols for the Senate to safely conduct the Organization Session on Tuesday, November 17, 2020, at 10:00 a.m.

Based on professional guidance, and in coordination with the Florida House of Representatives, this memo outlines the protocols the Senate will adhere to during the Organization Session. **These protocols are not permanent and will only apply to the Organization Session.** As the guidance of medical experts is updated based on the status of the pandemic, so will our protocols.

This memo is lengthy, and I encourage you to read it in full as there is important information in the new protocols. The three most important points are:

- 1. Every Senator must be tested for COVID-19 by Monday, November 16.**
- 2. Only newly elected Senators will be allowed to bring a spouse or guest on the Senate Floor.**
- 3. No district staff is approved for travel to Organization Session.**

Schedule of Events

Our activities will be limited to the required election of officers and adoption of rules, as well as the ceremonial swearing in of newly elected Senators. The traditional social activities, family events, and congregate meals, will not happen during the Organization Session. Our families, friends, special guests, and even our professional staff, will not be able to participate in the same way they have in previous years. While this will be a disappointment to many, I am mindful of how Florida families have foregone or postponed celebrating or participating in many significant

November 4, 2020

Page 2

events due to COVID-19. Disruptions to our traditional ceremonies will be small in light of the sacrifices made by so many.

As a reminder, under Florida's Constitution, Senators take office upon election. The formal swearing in that traditionally takes place during the Organization Session is ceremonial. For this reason, only newly elected (first time) Senators will be ceremonially sworn in during the 2020 Organization Session.

The President, the President Pro Tempore, and the Secretary are elected during the Organization Session and take their oaths of office on that day.

Access to Capitol Complex and Senate

The Capitol Complex is closed to the public at this time. The Senate gallery, including the spouses' lounge and the Gardiner Family Learning Center will be closed during the Organization Session, and child care services will be unavailable.

Newly Elected Senators' Guest

Each newly elected Senator may invite a single guest onto the Senate Floor. Senators must register their Floor guest by emailing Reservation@flsenate.gov **by no later than noon on Friday, November 13.**

Please indicate "Senate Floor Guest" next to the individual name in the email. All Floor guests must be tested for COVID-19 by Monday, November 16. Please see the "testing" section of this memo for instructions. Newly elected Senators may invite additional family members or special guests to the remote viewing area. See instructions below for guests who will not be seated on the Senate floor.

Returning Senators' Families and Special Guests

All guests, including spouses, must be registered with the Senate in order to be admitted to the Capitol.

Families and special guests will be able to view the Organization Session remotely in the newly renovated 412 Knott Building Committee Room. Households may sit together for viewing, but please keep in mind space is limited due to social distancing guidelines. **All family members and guests must be preregistered for admittance.**

Senators may reserve seating for family members and guests by emailing Reservation@flsenate.gov by no later than noon on Friday, November 13. Seating is limited and priority will be given to immediate family.

November 4, 2020

Page 3

Guest check-in will be located at the main floor entrance to the Knott Building, which is easily accessible from the Senate parking garage. Guest check-in will be available from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. on Monday, November 16, and from 8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, November 17. All family members and guests must pick up their Organization Session credential from the Guest check-in, and must wear their credential while visiting the Capitol Complex. Any person who tests positive for COVID-19 will not be admitted to the Organization Session.

Testing

All Senators as well as the floor guest of each newly elected Senator must be tested for COVID-19 by Monday, November 16. Testing for guests in the remote viewing area is also available, but not required. Standard health screening questions for guests in the remote viewing area will be emailed prior to Organization Session.

There will be an onsite testing location available on Sunday, November 15 and Monday, November 16. Please allot 30 minutes for the rapid result PCR test. Testing instructions will be sent in a confirmation email after Senators and guests are registered for Organization Session via Reservation@flsenate.gov.

Senate Floor Access

Access to the Senate Floor will be strictly limited to Senators, a floor guest for each newly elected Senator, and specific members of the Senate professional staff who test negative for COVID-19 by Monday, November 16.

Temperature checks will be in place for all Senators, floor guests, and staff accessing the Senate Floor on Tuesday, November 17. Senators and the floor guest of newly elected Senators are asked to enter the Chamber through the front doors. Staff are asked to enter through the front door of the President's Office.

Due to the Senate Floor space restrictions and social distancing requirements, the only officials that will be admitted to the Senate Floor will be the Governor and First Lady, Lt. Governor, President Galvano, Cabinet members, and one Justice of the Florida Supreme Court. We will also extend an invitation to the Speaker of the House. One media photographer, who tests negative for COVID-19 on Monday, November 16, will be admitted to serve as a pool photographer for the press corps.

November 4, 2020

Page 4

Senate Professional Staff

Senate professional staff, with the limited exception of those who are specifically identified as having a role that requires their presence on the Senate Floor during the Organization Session, are asked to remain in their designated offices and work spaces, to avoid visiting other offices, and to refrain from scheduling in-person meetings on Monday, November 16, and Tuesday, November 17.

Professional District Staff

Professional district staff based outside of Tallahassee are not approved for travel to the Organization Session. This applies to everyone, regardless of whether or not staff are seeking reimbursement for travel.

Like other Tallahassee-based staff, district staff assigned to Tallahassee are asked to remain in their designated offices and work spaces, to avoid visiting other offices, and to refrain from scheduling in-person meetings on Monday, November 16, and Tuesday, November 17.

CDC Guidelines to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

Senators, Senate professional staff, family members, and special guests, are asked to adhere to current CDC guidelines designed to reduce the spread of COVID-19. These guidelines include:

- **Wear a face covering.** Face coverings should not be placed on young children under age 2, people who have trouble breathing, or anyone who is unable to remove the covering without assistance.
- **Avoid close contact with people who do not live in your household** (6-feet).
- **Wash your hands often.** If you cannot wash your hands, use alcohol-based sanitizer.
- **Monitor your health daily.** COVID-19 can cause a range of symptoms, ranging from mild illness to life threatening pneumonia. Symptoms of the disease are fever, cough, sore throat and headaches, among others. If you exhibit any of the symptoms please stay home and seek appropriate medical care as needed.

Face Coverings

Face coverings worn on the Senate Floor must be solid-colored with no pattern or logos, other than the Senate Seal. For those wanting an added layer of protection, clear face shields will be available upon request for all Senators and staff. Clear shields do not replace cloth masks. Please contact Senate Sergeant At Arms at (850) 487-5224 or Senate.Sergeant@flsenate.gov to request a face shield.

Office Assignments

Should you require the use of an office during your time in Tallahassee for the Organization Session, please utilize your previously assigned office. New Senators will use the office of the Senator they replaced. Permanent office assignments will be made in December.

November 4, 2020

Page 5

Parking Assignments

Please park in your previously assigned parking space in the Senate Parking Garage. New Senators will receive a temporary parking assignment. Permanent parking spaces will be assigned in December.

Capitol Complex Identification Cards

As noted above, the Capitol Complex is closed to the public. Please ensure that you have your Capitol Complex identification card visible and your family or approved guests display their guest credentials. All registered guests will receive information on where to pick up their credentials in a confirmation email.

Photography

Newly elected Senators may request an appointment with Senate Multimedia on Monday, November 16 to take your official Senate photo and to capture family photos. The Senate Floor and gallery will be closed for formal family photography on Tuesday, November 17.

All photographs taken by the Senate professional photographers during the Organization Session will be available via the Florida Senate Photo Shelter website. The Senate's public online photo gallery is located at <https://flsenate.photoshelter.com/galleries>.

Private family photos will not be available on the public site. From the public gallery link above, Senators and each Senator's district staff can login to the Senator's private photo gallery using your Senate email address and password.

If you have any questions regarding this service or to schedule an appointment with a Senate professional photographer, please contact Senate Multimedia at (850) 487-5922.

Scheduling for Interim Committee Weeks and the 2021 Regular Session

The Senate will not hold December Interim Committee meetings. By waiting until January to resume formal committee meetings, we will have more information about the status of COVID-19, and thus the most up-to-date facts to formulate protocols for Senators, Staff, and members of the public who participate in the legislative process.

To be clear, the Senate resumed fulltime on-site operations when the Governor's Safer at Home Order was lifted in early May. The Senate remains fully functional with staff working diligently to serve Senators and their constituents in preparation for the upcoming Session.

November 4, 2020

Page 6

Further Protocols Not Addressed Above

- Additional hand sanitizing stations are being installed throughout the Senate.
- Senate bathrooms are cleaned many times each day.
- The Senate Chamber and other communal areas are routinely cleaned and sanitized
- Due to the 2016 renovation, the Senate Chamber has a state of the art air conditioning and air filtration system, which already exceeds recommendations for air quality controls needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. As an added layer of protection, portable HEPA filters will also be installed for the Organization Session.
- All district offices, which have not been in use over the last several months, will be cleaned and sanitized in advance of the Organization Session.
- Individual hand sanitizer will be placed on each desk in the Senate Chamber.
- Desks in the Chamber have been rearranged to provide for social distancing.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work together to deal with the challenges of public service in the midst of a pandemic. Together, we will make the necessary adjustments to serve our constituents safely, transparently, and with as little disruption as possible.