

Comparative Reference Guide

Florida Governor



About this guide: Summarizes the publicly stated positions and documented actions of candidates running for Governor, representing candidates of political parties that have more than 1% of registered voters [Source: CD-4]. Their positions were compiled from campaign materials, official voting records if applicable, official actions/decisions when applicable, and independent news current as of September 2026.

A note about voting records of the candidates:

- David Jolly (D), voting records available for two terms as US congressman (Republican) 2015-2017
- Byron Donalds (R), voting records available for multiple terms as US congressman (Republican) 2021-present, and Florida House of Representatives (Republican) 2016-2020
- Scott Jewett (L), no voting records available as candidate has not had an elected government position

A note on references: Because the most information available came from candidate campaign websites, citations are used to reference non-campaign sources. Links to these sources as well as the candidates' campaign websites are located in the References section.

Positions in Bold = When a candidate's position is in bold, it is broadly aligned with IJR's position.

1. Pillars of Democracy

Area / Component	David Jolly (D) / Gwen Graham (D)	Byron Donalds (R) / Bryan Avila (R)	Scott Jewett (L) / Nicole Skelly (L)
Protect Elections	Jolly's campaign explicitly says every eligible voter should be able to cast a ballot easily and have it counted, and says it will oppose measures that make voting harder. He calls for easier access to constitutional-amendment initiatives and implementation of amendments approved by Florida voters. His campaign says that after leaving Congress he spent several years organizing around democracy protection, ending gerrymandering, opening primaries, and campaign-finance reform.	Donalds focuses primarily on election security and eligibility controls. His voting record as a US house representative is as follows: [Source: BD-1] • In April 2025 he voted for the federal SAVE Act, which includes citizenship verification and photo-ID requirements. He has said he would pursue similar measures in Florida. • In January 2021, he voted to object to counting Arizona's electoral votes, and on January 7 he voted to object to Pennsylvania's electoral votes. • In September 2021, he voted against the 2022 Presidential Election Reform Act to make congressional	Jewett's platform doesn't reference election certification, voting access, voting administration or gerrymandering. His campaign more generally emphasizes individual liberty, decentralization, constitutional rights and limiting government power. It is unclear how he would apply these principles to protecting elections.

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		objections to presidential electoral votes substantially more difficult.	
Defend Rule of Law	Jolly's campaign explicitly connects rule of law with equal treatment and voting rights. His civil-rights platform says courts and policing should treat people fairly and every eligible voter should have access to the ballot. His immigration platform likewise emphasizes a system that is both secure and lawful, including functioning courts and a lawful path for immigrants. His campaign also presents him as someone who has worked across party lines and describes his congressional record as including bipartisan work on campaign-finance and other issues. [Source: DJ-1]	Donalds's campaign explicitly uses “law and order” as one of its principal policy themes, saying the government should enforce immigration and criminal laws. His campaign also proposes greater governmental auditing and transparency.	Jewett makes rule of law and equal application of law an explicit part of his platform. His immigration plan says legal residents and citizens should not be asked to follow rules that others are allowed to ignore, while his public-safety platform emphasizes due process and accountability for government officials. His surveillance policy is particularly explicit: he supports requiring warrants before government searches travel data and opposes warrantless mass tracking.
Fight Corruption	This is one of Jolly's most developed democracy-related policy areas. His campaign proposes: • limits on corporate political contributions; • disclosure of campaign funding; • banning lobbyist gifts; • closing the revolving door between public office and lobbying; and • stronger enforcement of ethics rules. Jolly was a Republican congressman from 2014-2017, which he says he was focused on campaign finance reform and cross-party governance. In 2016, he refused the congressional “call time” fundraising system and co-sponsored the 2016 STOP Act, which sought to prohibit members of Congress from	Donalds's 2026 campaign has a substantial government-transparency and auditing program. It calls for annual independent audits, expanded watchdog audits, searchable online government contracts, public salary information and clearer disclosure of government spending. However, as a Florida legislator, In 2017 he co-sponsored legislation that would have created exemptions from public-records and public-meeting requirements for certain university executive searches and meetings. [Source: BD-2, BD-3]	Jewett's campaign makes government transparency a central component of its platform. It calls for government spending to be publicly visible, government contracts and expenditures to be transparent, and government to operate within tighter budgets.

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	personally soliciting campaign contributions. [Source: DJ-1]		
Civic & Media Space	Jolly's campaign emphasizes bringing people with different backgrounds and beliefs into the same political coalition and ending what it describes as divisive culture-war politics. His campaign describes hundreds of town halls and community forums and explicitly frames the campaign as involving people with different beliefs. Jolly also has a media background: after Congress he worked for years as a political analyst at NBC/MSNBC. His campaign doesn't appear to have a campaign addressing structural issues like press freedom or social media regulation.	Donalds has spoken directly about the changing media environment. In a June 2026 Florida Association of Broadcasters appearance, he discussed the "five-minute news cycle," social-media consumption and the difficulty of correcting information once it spreads. He advocated communicating through multiple media channels. [Source: BD-4] His campaign doesn't appear to have a campaign addressing structural issues like press freedom or social media regulation.	Jewett's campaign emphasizes individual rights and explicitly says that the campaign is open to all parties. It also highlights interviews with independent Florida media as an important part of giving voters access to its views. His campaign doesn't appear to have a campaign addressing structural issues like press freedom or social media regulation.
Pluralistic Governance	Pluralism is prominent in Jolly's campaign language. His civil-rights platform says rights should be protected regardless of race, faith, gender or sexual orientation , and his campaign explicitly argues for a Florida in which people with different backgrounds and beliefs participate together. His home-rule proposal argues that decisions should be made by local communities rather than routinely preempted by Tallahassee. He also supports easier citizen initiatives.	Donalds's published platform is organized around conservative policy priorities like parental rights, religious/conservative constituencies and individual responsibility rather than an explicit theory of pluralistic governance. There is some evidence of willingness to work across different constituencies in his legislative record, but his current campaign rhetoric is principally organized around a conservative governing agenda. [Source: BD-1]	Jewett explicitly describes his campaign as being for every individual's rights, including regardless of party. His FAQ says the "smallest minority is the individual," and his platform repeatedly emphasizes individual rather than group-based rights.
Counter Disinformation	Jolly's campaign repeatedly invokes "truth", saying democracy depends upon voters being able to participate and have their votes counted. We did not find any proposals for specific policies or government interventions.	Donalds continues to spread election fraud disinformation. In 2024, he argued that certain states had not followed their election procedures. [Source: BD-5] As a newly elected congressman in the 2020 election, Donalds stated he would object to the certification process on January 6th, and "ask legitimate questions to restore faith in our election system." [Source: BD-6]	Jewett's campaign stresses transparency, individual responsibility and access to information, but does not appear to propose a specific government disinformation program.

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Make Democracy Deliver	Jolly's campaign connects democratic responsiveness with housing, healthcare, education, insurance affordability and economic security. His home-rule and direct-democracy proposal argues that when voters approve a constitutional amendment, government should implement it rather than obstruct it.	Donalds's campaign makes affordability and government performance major themes. His agenda includes healthcare price transparency, property-tax relief, economic development, infrastructure, government audits and reducing bureaucratic delays.	Jewett's entire campaign is built around the proposition that government should do less but work more effectively. His platform focuses on reducing taxes and regulations, lowering housing and insurance costs, improving healthcare affordability, and requiring government to justify spending.

2. Civil & Human Rights

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Women's Rights	Jolly's campaign is explicitly pro-choice. He says reproductive-health decisions should be made by women and their doctors rather than politicians and proposes replacing Florida's six-week abortion restriction with a framework based on <i>Roe v. Wade/Planned Parenthood v. Casey</i> : abortion access before fetal viability, with later restrictions subject to health/life exceptions. He also says he supports implementing the reproductive-freedom language voters approved in Amendment 4.	Donalds describes himself as consistently pro-life. In 2026, he said he would maintain Florida's existing abortion law rather than make it more or less restrictive, while supporting pregnancy-resource centers and community pregnancy clinics. His congressional voting record [Source: BD-1]: 2021 Women's Health Protection Act (nay) 2022 Ensuring Access to Abortion Act (nay) 2022 Right to Contraception Act (nay)	Jewett's campaign states that abortion "should be a decision between a woman and her doctors, not the government."
Immigrant Rights	Jolly's campaign says said Florida should "welcome the immigrant community, welcome the refugee: - support immigration reform that secures the border while treating immigrants with dignity - create a lawful pathway to legal status and work - protect Dreamers	Donalds takes a substantially more enforcement-center approach: - securing the border - ending state-funded benefits for unauthorized immigrants - mandatory E-Verify for Florida employers	Jewett's campaign slogan "Secure Borders. Legal Opportunity.": peaceful immigrants who want to work and build a life should be welcomed legal immigration should be made simpler and faster

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	• welcome immigrants and refugees • oppose state policies that punish immigrant working families • keep local police focused on public safety rather than immigration enforcement • ensure due process	• cooperation between state/local police and federal immigration authorities • rapid removal of noncitizens who commit crimes • Remove elected officials who obstruct federal immigration enforcement His congressional voting record [Source: BD-1]: • 2026 Secure America Act (yay) • 2026 Stop Illegal Entry Act (yay) • Special Interest Alien Reporting Act (yay)	• enforcement should focus on criminals, traffickers and genuine security threats • the lawful pathway should be made easier
Freedom of Religion	Jolly explicitly identifies himself as a person of Christian faith while arguing that government should protect religious liberty for people of all faiths, and constitutional rights should apply regardless of faith.	Donalds' "Faith Leaders for Byron" coalition says he would protect every congregation's ability to "preach, teach, hire and serve according to conscience," and calls for those protections to be established in statute.	Jewett's position is the most explicitly separation-of-government-and-religion oriented of the three, with his stated approach "keep government out of religious decisions altogether."
LGBTQ+ Rights	Jolly's equality platform promises equal protection regardless of "who you love" and says LGBTQ+ Floridians should be able to live openly and without fear, explicitly supporting marriage equality. He has said he would not change Florida's current law concerning women's sports, instead emphasizing parental/local decision-making in youth sports.	Donald's campaign has made opposition to transgender participation in women's sports and gender-affirming medical treatment for minors a prominent issue.	We could not find a position specifically referencing LGBTQ+. As mentioned previously, he approaches individual liberty broadly, but it's unclear how that plays out with LGBTQ+ rights. His education platform says there should be "no identity politics in the classroom" and that curriculum decisions should remain close to families, which again does not explain how to protect LGBTQ+ or other minorities.

3. Kitchen Table Issues

Area / Component	David Jolly (D) / Gwen Graham (D)	Byron Donalds (R) / Bryan Avila (R)	• Scott Jewett (L) / Nicole Skelly (L)
Cost of Living & Inflation	Jolly makes affordability a central theme, arguing it is particularly driven by housing, property insurance, utilities, and healthcare. His plan includes: • a statewide catastrophe insurance fund intended to lower property and auto-insurance costs; • expanding workforce and affordable housing; • down-payment assistance for first-time buyers; • capping utility-company profits at approximately the national average; • no-interest state-backed loans for condominium special assessments	Donalds's campaign makes "Affordable Florida" one of its three overarching themes. His proposals emphasize reducing insurance premiums, fees, taxes and regulatory costs rather than increasing government spending. His plan includes: • limiting insurance-related litigation and regulatory costs; • reducing state fees when reserves are sufficient; • storm-hardening grants intended to reduce premiums; • keeping Citizens Property Insurance as a backstop rather than the dominant insurer; • speeding permitting for rebuilding; • keeping property taxes under control; • preventing large data centers from shifting electricity and water costs to ordinary households.	Jewett's platform treats cost of living as an umbrella issue encompassing insurance, property taxes, housing, utilities, healthcare, energy and regulation. He says Floridians should "keep more of what they earn". His plan includes: • cut rules and fees that increase prices; • stop shifting government costs onto household bills; • require agencies to estimate the effect of new rules on households and small businesses; • eliminate property taxes on homesteaded homes; • reduce regulatory barriers to construction and employment.
Healthcare Affordability	Jolly categorizes the problem as a lack of public investment and too many people going uninsured. His plan includes: • expanding Medicaid to cover hundreds of thousands of currently uninsured Floridians; • increasing the number of primary-care clinics; • a five-year pilot to expand community health centers in every Florida county; • making care available regardless of income.	Donalds categorizes the problem as excessive costs, red tape and lack of transparency. His "Your Doctor, Your Price" plan proposes: • requiring hospitals and providers to post cash prices for common procedures; • increasing transparency about insurance claims; • reducing prescription-drug costs; • eliminating some prior-authorization requirements; • addressing surprise billing;	Jewett categorizes the problem as excessive regulations, lack of transparency, and too much government involvement. His plan includes: • reducing regulations; • clearer upfront healthcare pricing; • more insurance choices for individuals and small businesses; • fewer barriers for doctors and patients; • greater ability for individuals to select coverage suited to their circumstances.

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		allowing patients greater freedom to choose licensed providers.	
Affordable Housing	Housing is one of Jolly's three central economic priorities. His campaign proposes direct public investment in increasing housing supply, particularly workforce and affordable housing. His plan includes: - scaling up workforce and affordable housing construction; - down-payment assistance for first-time buyers; - expanding affordable rental housing; - reducing insurance costs - no-interest state-backed loans for condominium owners facing major special assessments	Donalds's housing policy is focused on reducing the costs of owning a home. His plan includes: - keeping property taxes in check; - reducing homeowners-insurance premiums; - speeding permitting and rebuilding; - reducing litigation and regulatory costs; - keeping large infrastructure costs from being transferred to household utility bills. His congressional voting record [Source: BD-7]: - Housing Is a Human Right Act (failed to cosponsor) — addresses root causes of homelessness and transitions toward guaranteed housing for all - McKinney-Vento grants (failed to cosponsor) to build 410K homes and end homelessness - Housing for the 21st Century Act (voted yes) - Low-Income Housing Tax Credit expansion (failed to cosponsor) - HOME program funding (failed to cosponsor) for affordable housing construction and rehabilitation - Comprehensive housing (failed to cosponsor): homebuyer credits, LIHTC expansion, and renter credits	Jewett's plan emphasizes reducing government barriers to increase supply. He argues that: - permitting delays and layered approvals increase housing costs; - Florida needs more starter homes and rentals; - local governments should facilitate construction; - insurance, taxes and fees should not be allowed to push monthly housing costs beyond working families' means; - government should not pick winners among developers

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Public Education	Jolly has stated that traditional public schools should be the foundation of Florida's education system. His plan includes: - substantially greater investment in public schools; - higher teacher pay; - investment in school infrastructure and resources; - stronger schools regardless of ZIP code; - accountability requirements for private schools receiving voucher money; - requiring voucher schools to provide specialized services comparable to public schools; - means-testing vouchers so public funds are directed toward families with demonstrated economic need His congressional record [Source: DJ-2]: 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (yay), which replaced No Child Left Behind and reduced some federal prescription over state education systems 2015 A-PLUS amendment (yay) which would have given states greater flexibility over federal funds	Donalds puts school choice and parental control at the center of his education platform. His plan includes: - a “Read to Succeed” program emphasizing phonics and reading science; - early identification of struggling readers; - free state-funded tutoring for struggling third-graders; - bonuses for high-performing reading teachers; - apprenticeships connecting high schools/community colleges with employers; - career pathways intended to allow students to enter skilled employment without substantial college debt. His congressional record [Source: DJ-2]: 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (yay), which replaced No Child Left Behind and reduced some federal prescription over state education systems	Jewett's education platform is explicitly parent-choice oriented. He says funding should follow the student and parents should be able to choose among: - traditional public schools; - charter schools; - private schools; - homeschooling; and - other educational options. His plan includes: - reducing administrative requirements on teachers; - keeping curriculum decisions closer to families; - requiring schools receiving public money to demonstrate results; - opposing what the campaign calls “identity politics” in classrooms.

References:

All sources cited by marker throughout this guide, grouped by section. An asterisk (*) marks a general campaign platform page rather than a discrete, dated action. Rows noting that no detailed public position was found are not separately footnoted below.

CD-4: <https://files.floridados.gov/media/711267/5-party-by-congressional-district.pdf>

DJ-1 [“Rep Jolly: Change the rules and stop members of Congress from asking you for money”](#), Fox News, January 21, 2016

DJ-2 ["Race to the Top grants "require participating states to adopt the Common Core standards as a condition for receiving federal funding", Politifact, April 4, 2016](#)

BD-1 [Byron Donalds US Congressman Voting Record](#)

BD-2 [CS/HB 351: Pub. Rec. and Meetings/Postsecondary Education Executive Search](#)

BD-3 [CS/HB 843: Pub. Meetings/Meetings Between Two Members of Board of Commission](#)

BD-4 ["Byron Donalds sketches a 'decentralized' media future - and his own communications playbook", Florida Politics, June 20, 2026](#)

BD-5 [Dana Bash interview with Byron Donalds, CNN, October 12, 2024](#)

BD-6 ["Southwest Florida Republican Rep. - Elect Byron Donalds says he will vote to decertify election", Daily Kos, January 2, 2021](#)

BD-7 [Your Reps Record: Byron Donalds](#)

Candidate Campaign Websites

[Jolly Believe for Governor](#)

[Byron Donalds for Governor](#)

[Scott Jewett for Governor](#)