2026 CATHOLIC VOTER GUIDE · FLORIDA · LETTERS FROM LEO

Governor

Open seat (Gov. Ron DeSantis is term-limited). Rated Lean Republican by Cook Political Report, Inside Elections and Sabato's Crystal Ball (Oct. 2026).



Byron Donalds

REPUBLICAN · OPEN SEAT

U.S. representative for Florida's 19th District since 2021; former state legislator.



David Jolly

DEMOCRAT · OPEN SEAT

Former Republican U.S. representative from Pinellas County (2014–2017) and political commentator; now a Democrat.

Where the candidates stand on the issues Pope Leo XIV has raised, in their own words and votes. Bracketed numbers link to sources. We do not rate, score, or endorse candidates.

WAR & PEACE

POPE LEO XIV *Leo invited citizens of every country involved in the war with Iran to contact their leaders and members of Congress "to work for peace and to reject war and violence."* Remarks at Castel Gandolfo, Apr. 7, 2026 (Vatican News via The Good Newsroom)

BYRON DONALDS

After the 2026 U.S. strikes on Iran, said the president "has acted decisively against Iran's nuclear threat and terrorism."

[1] WUSF: Florida politicians react to Iran strikes

VOTING RECORD

Iran war powers resolutions, Mar.–Sept. 2026 (six House votes): **No** Mar., Apr., May, June, July · **Other**Sept.

No Ukraine Support Act (H.R. 2913), June 2026 — authorizes support for Ukraine

DAVID JOLLY

After the 2026 U.S. strikes on Iran, said the president "enters war without the broad confidence of the American people."

[1] WUSF: Florida politicians react to Iran strikes

AI & THE DIGNITY OF WORK

POPE LEO XIV *"No one can be reduced to productivity, to cognitive performance, or to mere data."* Magnifica Humanitas presentation, May 25, 2026

BYRON DONALDS

Says AI is already part of daily life and "the question is, how do we protect families?" Says counties, not governors, permit data centers.

[1] News4JAX: Jolly vs. Donalds on AI and data centers

VOTING RECORD

Did not vote Protect America's Workforce Act (H.R. 2550), Dec. 2025 — nullifies the executive order ending union bargaining for many federal workers

No Faster Labor Contracts Act (H.R. 5408), June 2026 — sets deadlines for reaching first union contracts

DAVID JOLLY

Calls himself an AI optimist but says "AI should not replace a teacher"; would issue a day-one moratorium on hyperscale data centers.

[1] News4JAX: Jolly vs. Donalds on AI and data centers
[2] Jolly campaign: Data Centers

THE POOR & THE SAFETY NET

POPE LEO XIV *The preferential choice for the poor is "a source of extraordinary renewal both for the Church and for society."* Dilexi Te, Oct. 4, 2025

BYRON DONALDS

His health plan centers on price transparency — posted cash prices for common procedures, three-day insurer approvals and exposing pharmacy-middleman markups. It does not address Medicaid.

[1] Donalds campaign: Healthcare

VOTING RECORD

Yes One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), final passage July 2025 — tax cuts with Medicaid and SNAP changes

No Breaking the Gridlock Act (H.R. 1834), Jan. 2026 — extends enhanced ACA premium tax credits through 2028

DAVID JOLLY

Would expand Medicaid "to cover hundreds of thousands of uninsured Floridians" and proposes a five-year pilot to expand community health centers in every Florida county.

[1] Jolly campaign: Health Care

ELECTIONS & CIVIC LIFE

POPE LEO XIV *Authentic democracy, "far from being a mere procedure," "recognizes the dignity of every person and calls each citizen to participate responsibly in the pursuit of the common good."* Message to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, Apr. 9, 2026

BYRON DONALDS

In 2024 said that in 2020 Pennsylvania, Arizona and other states "did not follow election procedures passed by the state legislature."

[1] The Hill: Donalds spars with CNN's Bash over 2020 claims

VOTING RECORD

Yes Objection to counting Arizona's 2020 electoral votes, Jan. 6, 2021 — a Yes vote supported the objection (failed, 121–303)

Yes Objection to counting Pennsylvania's 2020 electoral votes, Jan. 7, 2021 — a Yes vote supported the objection (failed, 138–282)

No For the People Act (H.R. 1), Mar. 2021 — automatic and same-day voter registration, expanded mail and early voting, campaign-finance and ethics rules

No Presidential Election Reform Act (H.R. 8873), Sept. 2022 — says the vice president's role in counting electoral votes is ministerial and raises the threshold for objections

Yes SAVE America Act (House amendment to S. 1383), Feb. 2026 — requires documentary proof of citizenship to register and photo ID to vote in federal elections

DAVID JOLLY

Would make it easier for voters to place constitutional amendments on the ballot and says the governor should work to enact amendments that win more than 50%.

[1] Jolly campaign: Home Rule

LIFE OF THE UNBORN

POPE LEO XIV *Abortion "cuts short a growing life and refuses to welcome the gift of life."* Address to the Diplomatic Corps, Jan. 9, 2026

BYRON DONALDS

Praised the 2022 Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade and supported cutting Medicaid funding to Planned Parenthood.

[1] Orlando Weekly: Donalds picks up anti-abortion endorsement

VOTING RECORD

Yes Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act (H.R. 21), Jan. 2025 — requires care for infants born alive after an attempted abortion

Yes Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Women and Families Act (H.R. 6945), Jan. 2026 — lets states use TANF funds for pregnancy centers

DAVID JOLLY

Says he is "explicitly pro-choice"; would replace Florida's six-week ban with a state law permitting abortion until fetal viability, about 23 to 24 weeks.

[1] Jolly campaign: Reproductive Freedom
[2] Orlando Weekly: Donalds picks up anti-abortion endorsement

THE DEATH PENALTY

POPE LEO XIV *Someone who opposes abortion but favors the death penalty "is not really pro-life."* AP via PBS NewsHour, Sept. 30, 2025

BYRON DONALDS

His campaign says he "firmly supports the death penalty"; he says he would review cases individually and has not said whether he would continue DeSantis's pace of executions.

[1] On the ballot: Will Florida remain the nation's death penalty capital?

DAVID JOLLY

Expects to impose a moratorium on executions while the issue is studied and says he would never sign a death warrant without a unanimous jury verdict.

[1] On the ballot: Will Florida remain the nation's death penalty capital?

IMMIGRANTS & REFUGEES

POPE LEO XIV *"Defending human life also includes welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

BYRON DONALDS

Would cut state benefits that "encourage illegal immigration," require all Florida businesses to use E-Verify, and coordinate with federal authorities to "quickly deport noncitizens who commit crimes."

[1] Donalds campaign: Law and Order

VOTING RECORD

Yes Laken Riley Act (S. 5), Jan. 2025 — requires detention of undocumented immigrants charged with theft and certain crimes

Yes Secure America Act (S. 2), June 2026 — reconciliation funding for ICE and Customs and Border Protection

No Haiti TPS bill (H.R. 1689), Apr. 2026 — requires temporary protected status for Haitians

DAVID JOLLY

Says "immigration has always been part of Florida's story" and that every person, "regardless of where they were born," deserves respect and opportunity; his platform does not detail enforcement or ICE cooperation.

[1] Jolly campaign: A Florida for Everyone

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY & EDUCATION

POPE LEO XIV *Religious freedom is "the right of every person to worship according to conscience."* Letter on the 250th Anniversary of the United States, June 25, 2026

BYRON DONALDS

Would "let education money follow the student so parents can choose the best school for their child."

[1] Donalds campaign: Education

VOTING RECORD

Yes One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1), July 2025 — created a federal tax credit for donations to K–12 scholarship organizations

DAVID JOLLY

Says Florida's school-choice system has shifted education "into the hands of for-profit institutions" while public schools are underfunded; would raise teacher pay and invest in public schools.

[1] Jolly campaign: Public Education

CARE FOR CREATION

POPE LEO XIV *"We cannot love God, whom we cannot see, while despising his creatures."* AP, Oct. 1, 2025

BYRON DONALDS

Would stop data centers from passing "massive electric and water bills" onto households and protect fresh water through existing permits; his platform does not otherwise address environmental policy.

[1] Donalds campaign: Affordability
[2] News4JAX: Jolly vs. Donalds on AI and data centers

VOTING RECORD

Yes Resolution overturning EPA approval of California vehicle-emission rules (H.J.Res. 87), Apr. 2025

Yes Homeowner Energy Freedom Act (H.R. 4758), Feb. 2026 — repeals home-electrification rebates from the 2022 climate law

DAVID JOLLY

Calls for "honest climate planning in state policy" and would "unleash clean and renewable energies across Florida," requiring utilities to integrate clean energy at scale.

[1] Jolly campaign: Environment
[2] Jolly campaign: Clean Energy

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