



Before You Vote

**The Race for Florida's Future**

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# Partners Plan Historic Debates in Races for Governor, U.S. Senate

*Leadership Florida, Florida Press Association to produce "Decision 2010: Before You Vote" Series for Statewide Broadcast  
Nova Southeastern University to host General Election debates in both races.*

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**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – In what's shaping up to be the most exciting year in Florida politics in generations, the successful statewide partnership that produced historic candidate debates in 2004, 2006 and 2008 is back – this time to help Floridians choose their next Governor and U.S. Senator.

**Decision 2010: Before You Vote**, a project created by **Leadership Florida** in partnership with the **Florida Press Association**, will produce a new debate series for the 2010 election cycle featuring the candidates in both the primary and general elections for Florida Governor and the U.S. Senate. The General Election debate in both races will be hosted by **Nova Southeastern University** and will be held on its campus in Broward County.

Former Florida governors **Bob Martinez (R)** and **Bob Graham (D)** have joined the project as honorary Co-Chairs, and letters of invitation have gone to the announced candidates for Governor and U.S. Senate. The partnership expects that all candidates will agree to participate. **Attorney General Bill McCollum** and **Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink** are members of Leadership Florida, and both have confirmed their interest in the project.

"As a long-time supporter of Leadership Florida and member of Class XX, I look forward to this unique opportunity to discuss the important issues facing our state and to share my vision for a new way up for Florida," McCollum said.

"It is very encouraging that Leadership Florida is partnering with the Florida Press Association to create opportunities for citizens to learn more about the candidates running for office in 2010," Sink said. "While the election is still 19 months away, we look forward to working with Leadership Florida to ensure voters will have the opportunity to hear the candidates discuss the issues and challenges facing our great state."



The **Primary Election debates** will be held in **August of 2010**, in advance of the vote scheduled for **August 24, 2010**. The **debates for the General Election** will be hosted by **Nova Southeastern University** in Broward County in **October of 2010** before the **November 2, 2010** vote.

“Nova Southeastern University is proud to assert its leadership role in hosting the critical debates for Governor of Florida and U.S. Senate, before millions of Floridians vote in the 2010 general election,” said **Ray Ferrero**, president of **NSU**. “This election is the most important one in modern Florida history and we are pleased to be an integral part of the 'Decision 2010' team that will help our citizens make informed decisions at the polls.”

“The debates of **Decision 2010: Before You Vote** will provide every Florida voter the opportunity to learn more about the candidates and issues in these critical races,” said **Mario Trueba**, **chairman of Leadership Florida, and President and CEO of Mellon United National Bank**. “Democracy flows from an informed electorate, and we’re confident that millions of Floridians will tune in to these lively, spirited and substantive debates.”

The debates will be broadcast statewide on network television stations in each of Florida’s 11 designated media markets. Anchoring the productions and broadcasts will be Florida’s three Post-Newsweek stations: **WPLG-TV Ch. 10 (ABC)** in **Miami**, **WKMG-TV Ch. 6 (CBS)** in **Orlando** and **WJXT-TV Ch. 4** in **Jacksonville**. The debates will also be broadcast on at least eight other commercial stations to be selected by the partnership, to be announced in the media markets of **Fort Myers, Gainesville, Panama City, Pensacola, Tallahassee, Tampa Bay, Sarasota** and **West Palm Beach**.

“We’re proud to have an anchoring role in partnering to produce these important debates for Governor and U.S. Senate to enable Floridians to get to know the candidates and where they stand on the critical issues facing our state,” said **Dave Boylan**, **General Manager of WPLG-TV**, on behalf of Florida’s **Post-Newsweek stations**.

With open races in all five of Florida’s elected statewide offices, the 2010 election cycle promises to be the wildest and most memorable in modern Florida political history. Gov. Charlie Crist has jumped into the race for the U.S. Senate seat left by retiring Sen. Mel Martinez, and Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink and Attorney General Bill McCollum are both vying to replace him – leaving vacancies at their own current positions. The seat for Commissioner of Agriculture is also open as incumbent Charles Bronson faces term limits.

In addition to the commitment for broadcast debates in the U.S. Senate and Governor races, the partnership is actively considering also producing forums or debates in the Florida Cabinet races of Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Agriculture.

**Jim McGauley**, chairman of the **Florida Press Association**, said “the association believes that voters need information about the candidates to make a good decision on Election Day. While most newspapers dedicate considerable resources to providing coverage of the candidates and their views, there is significant value in a vigorous debate. We are glad to participate in this worthy event.”

Indeed, Florida newspapers will devote substantial space in print and online to covering the races involved and, through the Florida Press Association, also will promote viewership of the live



statewide debate series through the donation of prominent advertising space in print and online.

In 2004, Leadership Florida produced broadcast debates in the U.S. Senate race ultimately won by the now-retiring Mel Martinez. In 2006, as the partnership expanded to include the Florida Press Association, broadcast debates were produced in the Governor's race ultimately won by Crist and for the U.S. Senate seat in which incumbent Bill Nelson was reelected. In advance of Florida's January, 2008 Presidential primary, the partnership included the NBC network for a nationally broadcast debate among Republican candidates for President.

The partnership in the "Decision 2010: Before *You* Vote" project demonstrates its deep reach, significance, balance and non-partisanship.

*Leadership Florida has developed a reputation for 25 years as a builder of a stronger, diverse statewide sense of community. A respected non-partisan convener, Leadership Florida has taken the lead in training and developing leaders with a statewide, rather than parochial, view of our state's needs.*

*The **Florida Press Association** is a nonprofit corporation designed to protect the freedoms and advance the professional standards of the press in Florida, with a membership that includes most of Florida's daily and weekly newspapers.*

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