

The LeRoy Collins Platform:

10 Keys to Florida's Future

1. Clean, Efficient, Economical Government at All Levels:

I will not tolerate graft, corruption or dishonest practices of any kind or degree.

I will not hesitate to suspend, on grounds specified in the Constitution, state or county officials whose suspension appears justified after full and fair public hearings. To protect any such officials against abuse of the executive power of suspension, such hearings will be required except in cases of great emergency.

I will work with the Attorney General and local law enforcement officials in the development of an effective program, free of politics, for combating crime which crosses county lines or requires technical help beyond local resources. The establishment of inter-county systems of communications for anti-crime work also will prove of great value. I will see to it that state agencies play their proper roles in a coordinated law enforcement program, with competent and adequate manpower.

I will oppose legalization of any new form of gambling. I will insist that presently legalized pari-mutuel wagering be conducted under the cleanest possible conditions, with the return to the state maintained at a fair and adequate level through sound tax laws and strict enforcement of laws against illegal betting.

Our government must be clean, by both legal and moral standards. Where loopholes lower our legal standards and make prosecution difficult, I will seek to have the laws strengthened. This applies to the "numbers" or bolita racket which is still a very real problem in some sections of our state. It also applies to a wide range of other criminal statutes, including the law against sale of liquor to minors. I will join in seeking solutions to juvenile delinquency and sex crimes.

I will not tolerate waste. A bill which I sponsored to passage by the Senate last year proposed creation of a State Governmental Reorganization Council with the purposes of reducing expenditures and increasing efficiency through consolidation of state agencies having similar functions and abolishment of non-essential agencies. Elimination of overlapping is needed particularly

in the fields of state tax collections, inspection services, conservation of natural resources, agricultural services, and penal administration. I will cooperate with the Legislative Council and other appropriate bodies in achieving concrete results along these lines.

Boards regulating the professions and other occupational groups in our state should serve these groups but also protect the public. It is this obligation to the public which alone can justify their existence. Members of these boards should be qualified by experience and training and not political favoritism.

I favor the sound use of the Purchasing Council, established by the last Legislature, to determine standards and maximum prices for state purchases and require competitive bidding. I will oppose the use of public funds for propaganda promoting office holders or political programs.

For public employment to attract and hold efficient personnel, the pay must be fair. I naturally will pursue a Budget Commission investigation looking to establishment of a uniform personnel system for our state. This investigation was authorized by a bill which I sponsored. State employees who are performing needed services and doing their jobs well should have merit system protection against political reprisals. I will continue my work for improvement of our retirement systems.

I will seek the abolishment of the fee system as a basis for compensating county officials and the establishment of a salary schedule reasonable to officials and taxpayers.

Government is no better than the people who administer it. All appointments made by me to serve in state or local office will be men or women of the highest character and ability.

2. Constitutional Revision

Our Constitution of 1885 badly needs a general overhauling. Any such revision, however, should be subject to a final approval vote of the people and our Constitution as it now stands does not so require.

I offer this plan to get the job done in the two-year term:

(a) Passage by the 1955 Legislature of an emergency amendment to the present Constitution proposing creation of a Constitutional Commission to be appointed jointly by the Governor, Chief Justice, Senate President and House Speaker;

(b) A special election on this amendment in the fall of 1955;

(c) The drafting of a new Constitution by the Commission within approximately six months, and at least as long for public study;

(d) A vote by the people at the general election in November 1956 on the Constitution thus proposed.

The amendment creating the Commission must provide for retention of such basic policies of the state as homestead exemption, the prohibitions against state bonds and income tax, legislative authority to distribute pari-mutuel tax revenue to the counties as at present, and constitutional security for school building bonds and other existing obligations.

No Governor should attempt to dictate a new Constitution, but there are certain fields in which the needs for revision are clear. These include—and I favor:

(a) A new plan for successorship to the office of the Governor in the event of the Governor's death or disability;

(b) Legislative reapportionment with a fairer distribution of representation to the more populous areas;

(c) Elimination of the local bill evil from the Legislature and establishment of a sound system of Home Rule;

(d) Restriction of executive sessions of the Senate and a clear statement of the broad policy of the state requiring open meetings of all public bodies;

(e) Reorganization of our courts, now under continuing study by the Judicial Council, the establishment of which I sponsored in the 1953 Session;

(f) Removal of pardon powers from politics and the development of a coordinated penal system;

(g) Reorganization of executive departments, where constitutional revision is necessary to achieve consolidations, economy and efficiency;

(h) Creation of a State Tax Authority to eliminate inequities in assessments; and

(i) Creation of a State Department of Labor, especially now that the Federal Government is considering abrogating to the states some of its jurisdiction in dealing with labor relations matters.

To me it seems establishment of the elective office of Lieutenant Governor—the officeholder to preside over the Senate—should be considered with relation to both legislative and executive reforms, as well as in answer to the successorship question.

The question of a constitutional provision for the Legislature to call itself into session also should be studied with great care. I was the co-sponsor last year of a proposed Constitutional Amendment, which the people will vote on this November, allowing the Legislature to extend its regular sessions by as much as 30 days, not necessarily consecutive. If this amendment is adopted, the Legislature likely will be in session through a large part of legislative years. The alternate years are election years, when legislators seeking reelection might be subject to pressure from special groups wanting special sessions to gain special benefits. The danger, however, might be minimized by excluding appropriation and tax matters from any self-started session.

The emotional view we now take of constitutional confusion, revealed by the loss of a great Governor and

by the dictatorial seizure of power which followed, should not attract us to hurried changes embodying possible greater evils. We must use the interest now aroused to effect sound, carefully planned revision of our Constitution. This I propose to do, with the help of the Citizens Constitution Committee and other interested organizations.

3. Better Educational Facilities and Opportunities

My record proves my conviction that education is one of those foundation fields in which we build a better state, a better future. It is the meeting of a responsibility to our children and a good business investment as well.

Gains under the Minimum Foundation Program must be protected against undermining amendments and extended beyond the minimum. An adequate program should now be our goal. The state and counties must share the financial burden as the ability of each allows.

Adequate funds must provide:

(a) To handle Florida's constantly rising school enrollment;

(b) To pay better salaries so that the teaching profession will attract capable young people and hold good teachers;

(c) To grant sufficient scholarships;

(d) To furnish necessary administrative and clerical services;

(e) To give pupils all the clinical, guidance and other special services necessary for their progress and welfare;

(f) To construct adequate and well designed school buildings;

(g) To make available sufficient textbooks, library materials and other necessary tools for both pupils and teachers; and

(h) To arrange an adequate school lunch program.

I will work with the Board of Control on a long-range program for the development of our universities to meet the higher learning demands of a growing and progressive state. The adequate training of leadership—for industry, agriculture, the professions and government—is essential, and in no sense a luxury. As my record shows, I favor the completion of the Medical School at the University of Florida and state support for the Medical School at the University of Miami.

Full advantage should be taken of our opportunities in the fields of educational television and adult education. Our vocational rehabilitation opportunities also are challenging, and these services should be expanded.

4. Improved Labor, Health and Welfare Standards

In revising the Constitution to make provision for a department of labor, we must not contemplate the state entering into any phase of labor-management relations, with a punitive attitude toward either employers or employees.

I do not regard cheap labor as an attraction to new industries. On the contrary, I think Florida's

industrial and commercial development, its overall growth will come more rapidly and more soundly with payment of good wages, with assurance of safe working conditions, with the promise of life in pleasant, healthy communities offering good schools and the other attractions of good government.

Important to the state as a whole and a proper field for state encouragement and cooperation is the solution of such local problems as planning, industrial waste, sewage disposal and drainage. I provided leadership in the Senate last year for a state program of mosquito eradication and research, and I recognize the importance of carrying this program forward.

We must continue the progressive approach which in recent years has carried Florida to the forefront in public health work, particularly in reducing communicable disease, maternal and infant death rates, and in developing county health departments.

I want Florida to make further progress in other fields, particularly in our cancer clinics; in diabetes control; and in mental health by the operation of regional hospitals for the insane and expansion of our preventive program through district psychiatric clinics and a more intensive program of training and research. I will propose a study looking to humane care of the senile.

As a sponsor of Florida's first old age assistance program, I have long been on record in favor of a sound and adequate welfare program. The state should do its utmost in the four fields of Federal aid—to the aged, to the blind, to dependent children and to the disabled. In the 1953 Legislature I sponsored the bill which sought to bring Florida for the first time into the aid-to-disabled program. These programs should be administered soundly, courteously and with fairness to both the individuals entitled to assistance and the taxpayers.

5. Conservation and Restoration of Natural Resources:

No state has a greater stake in this field than Florida.

As the legislative sponsor of the State Board of Parks and Historic Memorials, I naturally favor making more parks enjoyable to more people. I favor expansion of the Everglades National Park to its fullest useful extent, with a West Coast as well as an East Coast entrance.

We have a two-fold water problem—too much and too little. I will exert every effort to get completion of the South and Central Florida flood control project. I will urge scientific development and conservation of our fresh water supply.

Our forest opportunities should be developed effectively, not only for beauty but also to keep wood-consuming industries adequately supplied.

The state should heed local public interest in the disposition of submerged lands. The beauty of our inland

waterways should be protected, their usefulness developed. The maintenance of adequate public beaches is of prime importance.

I will make appointments assuring non-political handling of the work of the Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission. I advocate the bringing of millions of additional acres under game management, opening more lands and more lakes to public hunting and fishing. Hyacinth control must be expanded.

Our opportunities in the field of salt water conservation and development are practically unlimited. I am hopeful that the interim study of this field authorized by the last legislature will point the way to sound, far-reaching progress.

The field of conservation offers one of our greatest opportunities for consolidation of activities, for settlement of conflicts. We must recognize the economic value of commercial fishing to the state and encourage its development short of interference with sports fishing, which is one of our greatest pleasures and greatest assets.

6. Agricultural and Industrial Research and Development:

We must step up and coordinate our efforts to make more land more profitably productive and to provide more jobs for more people.

I will look to those actively engaged in such agricultural pursuits as citrus, vegetable and livestock growing for leadership and advice on policies affecting their interests.

I will urge adequate financing of practical research and experimentation in both agricultural and industrial fields.

I will cooperate with the Inter-American Council in the development of a cultural and trade center and with any similar groups sponsoring projects which give promise of adding strength and balance to our state.

7. Highways Adequate to Meet Proven Needs:

Florida faces no greater, no more urgent problem than the inadequacy of its primary or arterial highways. Promises alone will not make them wider, smoother or safer. In fact, we must make an entirely new approach, eliminating political considerations and spending our road money where established needs require.

I recommend that the state discontinue the policy of dividing primary road money according to Road Board district lines, based on old congressional districts which have little or no relation to existing requirements. I will urge legal designation of a state arterial system joining population centers. Provision should be made for ultimate reasonable limited access features on highways within this system.

I also will seek to insure long-range programming of road construction by having terms of Road Board mem-

bers staggered so that an entire board is not displaced at the start of each Governor's term and by protecting career personnel from political pressures. Staggered terms are also important in view of various bond programs, including those for the Lower Tampa Bay Bridge, the Jacksonville Expressway, the Manatee, Sarasota, Martin and Broward bridges.

Such reforms will correct abuses which have made it necessary for us to look to a toll road for early solution of at least our north-south through traffic problem. The results of changing our ways will not be felt in time to enable us to delay the turnpike. The authorized part of it should be started now, and, realizing that any toll road financing rests on a determination of feasibility, I will urge the Legislature to authorize full-length extension. The route of a turnpike of any length is not for the Governor to decide, but I believe a Central Florida route offers the best overall solution. I favor a cross-state spur to the Tampa Bay area—free if possible.

I do not see a turnpike as eliminating the need for adequate free highways. I favor it only as the earliest possible answer to an urgent problem, and as an ultimate generator of additional traffic. I naturally prefer free highways. I will pursue the McCarty Administration program of full four-laning of U. S. 1, the need for which is obvious. Four laning is a necessity on many other highways in all sections of the state. There are other equally clear needs including completion of the Jacksonville Expressway and closing of the gap between the Gulf Coast Highway and the Lower Tampa Bay Bridge. I will carry forward as speedily as possible these and similar programs to which the state has been committed. All such commitments can be met within a reasonable time only by adopting reforms such as I propose or such as will result from a current study by the Legislative Council.

The need for a sound farm-to-market or secondary road program is vital. These roads serve not only our agricultural and commercial needs but also serve as essential feeders for our arterial system. I favor continuing the policy of allowing county commission review of secondary road projects.

A completely revised State Road Department law should prohibit the letting of contracts in excess of cash available within the construction period. I will oppose any general state-wide bond program for highway construction.

8. Effective Highway Safety Program:

We must do more than deplore deaths and injuries in automobile accidents. We must develop a positive program around the three E's of highway safety: Enforcement, Education and Engineering.

I propose expanding the Highway Patrol sufficiently to assure complete and effective patrol

work. Lower automobile insurance rates would more than offset the cost.

I will advocate uniform traffic regulations and devices, not only to avoid confusion but also to combat speed traps. I will advocate periodic reexaminations to get unsafe drivers off the highways and strict law enforcement to eliminate the repeaters and drunken drivers from the highways.

Instruction in safe driving should be given every boy and girl in our public schools.

Our roads should be carefully engineered for safety.

9. Aggressive Campaign to Promote Florida's Tourist Business:

The appropriation for the State Advertising Commission must be regarded as insufficient as long as the state can get more than an offsetting return on its investment.

We must be alert to new and proper ideas for attracting and entertaining visitors, summer and winter. Our accommodations, our activities, our parks, our roads, our government, our hospitality must not disappoint them. Wherever possible, we must coordinate our appeals and our events. In this, I will provide leadership and encourage active state participation when practicable.

I will devote active attention to programs designed to attract retired persons to Florida and to regulations aimed at protecting them against abuses and disappointments.

10. No Additional Taxes

We can make the progress envisioned in this platform without adding to the tax burden because Florida is a growing state. Especially since enactment of the sales tax—as unpleasant as the necessity for this broadening of our tax base was—our revenue from existing sources has grown apace with the demands of a bigger and better state.

We can—and we should—always consider correction of inequities in our tax structure, thereby easing the burden where it is unfair.

Just as we must protect state tax sources against federal encroachment, we must assure fair and adequate sources of revenue to our cities and counties. The property tax field has been left to them. In view of their present heavy reliance on state aid for certain functions, the state has a duty to all its taxpayers to make provisions for the use of standard uniform assessment policies by the respective counties.

Especially with the achievement of economy and efficiency in state government and with home rule offering the same opportunity in local government, I am confident we can carry Florida forward without additional taxes. With all the energy and ability at my command, with constructive leadership, with stable government, I will do just that.