



THE FLORIDA SENATE

Kids Handbook

2023 - 2024





A vibrant LEGO city street scene with a blue sky, white clouds, and a red-and-white striped tower on the right. The street is filled with various LEGO vehicles like cars, buses, and a school bus, along with many small minifigures walking on the sidewalks. Buildings of various colors and styles line the street, including a large domed building on the left.

This Book Belongs To:

My District Number is _____

My Senator is _____

YOUR FLORIDA LEGISLATURE



Have you ever wondered who decides how long a school day can be, when a student can drive without an adult in the car, or how many math credits a student needs before graduation? The responsibility to answer all these questions rests with the Legislature of the State of Florida.

The Florida Legislature, which is divided into two houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives, makes laws that govern our state. Members of the legislature, senators and representatives, are chosen by the citizens of Florida to represent them and the area where they live. These areas are called districts. Senators and representatives are responsible for making sure the people who elected them have a voice in all matters concerning the state.

Senators are elected to serve four-year terms. Representatives are elected to serve two-year terms. Currently, 40 senators and 120 members of the House of Representatives serve the people of Florida. Members of the Senate and House must be at least 21 years old, a resident of the district where they have been elected, and must have lived in Florida for two years before running for election.

Each year, the Senate and House meet in legislative session to resolve issues important to the people of our state. Issues like driving regulations, recycling, and education are debated. In odd-numbered years, the session begins on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March and lasts for 60 days. In even-numbered years, the session begins on the second Tuesday after the first Monday in January and lasts for 60 days. The session typically ends in sine die adjournment with the ceremonial dropping of white handkerchiefs by each chamber's Sergeant at Arms.

During session, legislators work on making new laws or changing existing laws. Each member also serves on several committees where the effects of laws on the people in our state are studied. Any member of either chamber can make suggestions for new laws. These suggestions, called bills, are studied in committees. The committee can change the bill, accept the bill, or reject the bill. If the bill is changed or accepted by the committee, it can then be considered by the full Senate or the full House of Representatives, which in turn votes to accept the bill as it is, change the bill, or reject the bill. Passage of a bill occurs when the bill is accepted, in most instances, by a majority of the members of one chamber.



The passed bill goes to the other chamber of the Florida Legislature for review which means a bill passed in the Senate goes to the House of Representatives for review. The bill goes through the same process in the second chamber as it did in the first chamber. The only bill the legislature is required to pass every year is the state's budget.

When a bill is passed by both chambers, it is sent to the Governor for action. The Governor may sign the bill, allow it to become a law without signature, or veto it. All the bills that are not vetoed become laws that are compiled to form the Florida Statutes.

The Senate has various software applications designed specifically for Senate legislative processes. The core application provides for a variety of functions, including drafting legislation and amendments, bill filing, messaging the House of Representatives, and enrolling bills for the Governor's signature. Overall, these applications ensure that every task involved with legislation, from taking an idea and turning it into a bill to enrolling the bill once it passes both chambers, can be processed electronically and quickly made available to the public.

The Senate Page Program offers participants ages 15-18 the opportunity to learn about the legislative process in Florida through a hands-on approach to civic learning. Pages will role play as Senators, developing ideas for new laws, drafting legislation, and filing bills. The week culminates with a mock session in which bills are debated and voted on by Senate Pages. Additionally, Senate Pages will assist members of the Florida Senate by distributing legislative materials and correspondence in the Senate Chamber while observing the Senators as they discuss and debate legislation. Pages may also lead the Pledge of Allegiance during session, enjoy guest speakers, and participate in educational tours and activities.

This guide to the legislative process was created to help students become familiar with the Florida Legislature. Your participation in the legislative process is essential to the preservation of democracy. You can make a difference!

GETTING INVOLVED

Even though you cannot vote until you are 18 years old, you play an important role in the shaping of Florida laws. You have a responsibility to learn all you can about the legislative process so you can become an informed voter. You can become knowledgeable about the issues affecting the lives of the people of our state and how those issues affect us even on the national level.



You can start by involving yourself in statewide mock government programs such as 4-H, Boys State, Girls State, YMCA Youth in Government, and other such organizations. Involvement in student government programs at your school is also a good way to learn how the legislative process works.

CONTACTING YOUR LEGISLATORS

Legislators enjoy hearing from their younger constituents. You can determine who your legislators are by visiting the Senate's website at www.flsenate.gov. You may also email your legislators using the email address provided on each legislator's web page.

If you wish to meet with your senator or representative during the legislative session, you should call ahead to make an appointment. Groups wishing to make special arrangements to visit on a day when the legislature is in session should contact their legislators as far in

advance of their proposed visit as possible. Your legislator can assist you in making sure your visit to the Florida Legislature is properly scheduled.

We also encourage you to visit other parts of the State Capitol in Tallahassee. The Welcome Center provides educational and fun tours for your family or class year round. You will get to see such sights as the Great Seal of the State of Florida in the Capitol Rotunda and a panoramic view of Tallahassee and its surrounding area from the 22nd floor. You may schedule a tour of the Capitol by calling (850) 488-6167.



YOUR STATE CAPITOL



FIRST CAPITOL BUILDING, 1824

The first Capitol was a log cabin built in 1824 with the establishment of Tallahassee as the territorial capital. In the early 1820s, legislators transferred government business from St. Augustine to Pensacola for alternating sessions. Travel was hazardous and took almost 20 days. As a result, Tallahassee was chosen as the capital of Florida in 1824, primarily because it was the midway point between two principal cities.



CAPITOL BUILDING, 1845

On March 3, 1839, Congress appropriated \$20,000 for construction of the new Capitol. The old structure was torn down immediately, and Florida's government temporarily moved into rented quarters. Builders commenced work on the brick structure in 1839, and it was completed by 1845. This structure still remains the core of the Old Capitol.



THE CAPITOL COMPLEX AND HISTORIC CAPITOL BUILDING, 2019

In 1972, the Legislature authorized money for a new Capitol Complex to include House and Senate chambers and offices, along with a 22-story executive office building, which was completed in 1977.

THE SENATE CHAMBER

The Senate chamber, also known as the “floor,” is the room on the fourth floor of the Capitol where senators debate the merits of proposed legislation. The current chamber is the fifth used since the first session of the Senate was called to order in 1839.

A comprehensive renovation of the current Senate chamber started after the adjournment of the 2016 Legislative Session. Construction crews stripped down the chamber to its concrete and steel bones, incorporating several historical elements as well as new features designed to improve accessibility for people with unique abilities

while preserving history at the same time. The renovated chamber was unveiled during a ceremonial opening on November 22, 2016, for the organization session. The chamber now has a timeless design which accommodates modern technology and reflects the elements of the Florida Historic Capitol.



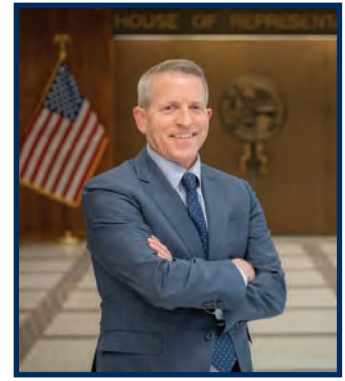
On the floor above the chamber is the gallery. Citizens may sit in the gallery to observe the Senate in session. From the gallery, attention is drawn to the rostrum where the President is presiding. Above the rostrum is the Senate Seal, which was originally adopted in 1972 and revised in 2015 and 2016.

LEGISLATIVE LEADERS



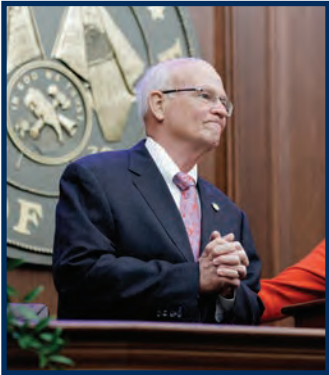
KATHLEEN PASSIDOMO
SENATE PRESIDENT

The President of the Senate presides over the Senate, and the Speaker of the House presides over the House of Representatives. The President and Speaker have many other responsibilities in addition to presiding over the chamber during session, including appointing members to committees and appointing chairs of committees.



PAUL RENNER
HOUSE SPEAKER

The President Pro Tempore and Speaker Pro Tempore preside over their respective chambers in the absence of the President or Speaker.



DENNIS BAXLEY
SENATE PRESIDENT
PRO TEMPORE

NONMEMBER OFFICERS

The Senate elects a Secretary of the Senate and the Speaker of the House appoints a Clerk of the House. These nonmember constitutional officers have various responsibilities including keeping the records of their respective chambers, authenticating each bill passed by the legislature, and publishing the journals and calendars of their respective chambers. During session, each day's official actions are recorded and published in a journal. The Senate Journal is considered the official record of the Florida Senate as overseen by the Secretary of the Senate. Daily journals are provisional. Journals are available at www.flsenate.gov. Vote disclosure records are also available.



CHUCK CLEMONS
HOUSE SPEAKER
PRO TEMPORE



TRACY CANTELLA
SECRETARY OF THE SENATE

SERGEANTS AT ARMS

Each chamber has a Sergeant at Arms who is in charge of keeping order in the chamber, gallery, and committee rooms. Each sergeant also maintains that chamber's property. The recorded history of the Office of Sergeant at Arms dates back to the 1400s, though it likely existed well before that because preserving order was essential to the conduct of business in even the earliest legislative chambers. The first Florida Senate Sergeant at Arms was appointed in 1839 when Florida was still a territory.



JEFF TAKACS
CLERK OF THE HOUSE



DAMIEN KELLY
SENATE SERGEANT AT ARMS



RUSSELL HOSFORD
HOUSE SERGEANT AT ARMS

SENATORS



BEN ALBRITTON (R) 27
MAJORITY LEADER



BRYAN AVILA (R) 39



DENNIS BAXLEY (R) 13
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE



LORI BERMAN (D) 26



LAUREN BOOK, (D) 35
MINORITY LEADER



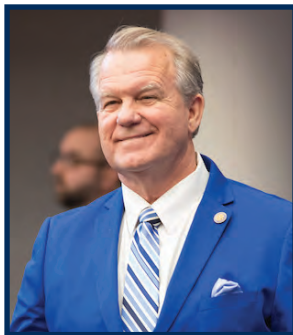
JIM BOYD (R) 20



JENNIFER BRADLEY (R) 6



JASON BRODEUR (R) 10



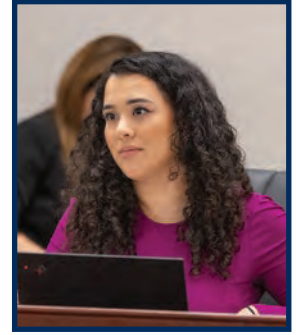
DOUG BROXSON (R) 1



DANNY BURGESS (R) 23



COLLEEN BURTON (R) 12



ALEXIS CALATAYUD (R) 38



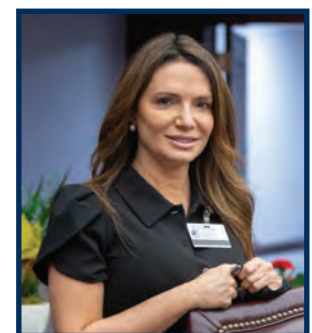
JAY COLLINS (R) 14



TRACIE DAVIS (D) 5



NICK DICEGLIE (R) 18



ILEANA GARCIA (R) 36

SENATORS



ERIN GRALL
(R) 29



JOE GRUTERS
(R) 22



GAYLE HARRELL
(R) 31



ED HOOPER
(R) 21



TRAVIS HUTSON
(R) 7



BLAISE INGOZIA
(R) 11



SHEYRIN D. "SHEV" JONES
(D) 34



JONATHAN MARTIN
(R) 33



DEBBIE MAYFIELD
(R) 19



ROSALIND OSGOOD
(D) 32



KATHLEEN PASSIDOMO
(R) 28 PRESIDENT



KEITH PERRY
(R) 9



JASON W. B. PIZZO
(D) 37



TINA SCOTT POLSKY
(D) 30

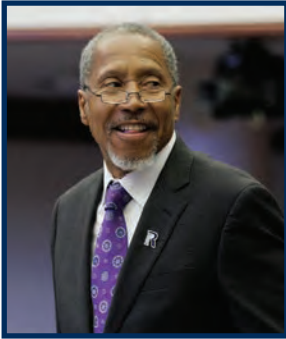


BOBBY POWELL
(D) 24



ANA MARIA RODRIGUEZ
(R) 40

SENATORS



DARRYL ERVIN ROUSON
(D) 16



COREY SIMON
(R) 3



LINDA STEWART
(D) 17



GERALDINE F. THOMPSON
(D) 15



VICTOR M. TORRES, JR.
(D) 25



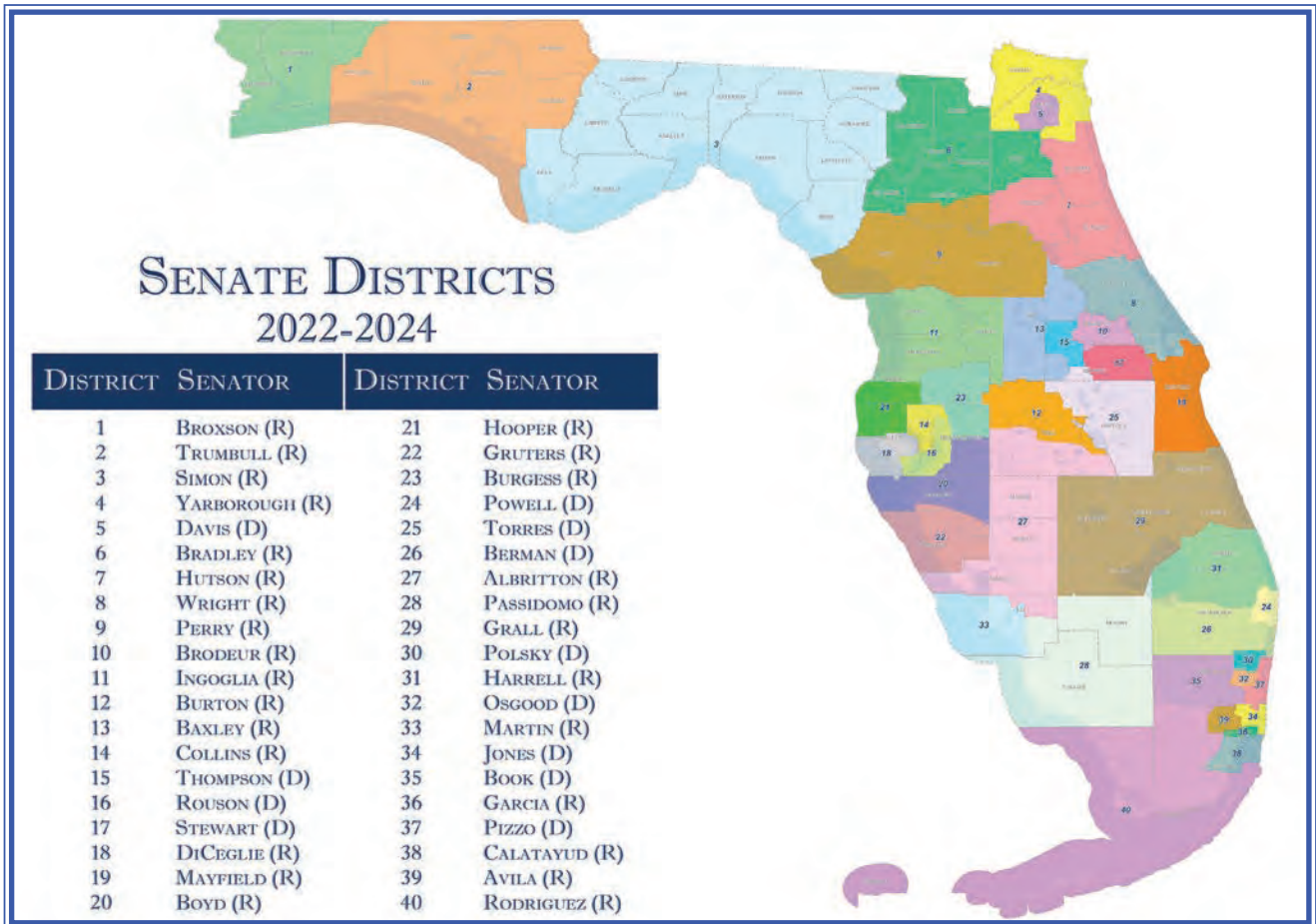
JAY TRUMBULL
(R) 2



TOM A. WRIGHT
(R) 8



CLAY YARBOROUGH
(R) 4



HOW DOES AN IDEA BECOME A LAW IN FLORIDA?

- 1 A concerned citizen, advocacy group, government agency, or legislator has an idea to make the State a better place.
- 2 If the legislator or legislators decide it is a good issue, then the idea is drafted into a legislative bill.
- 3 The new bill is filed, given a “First Reading,” and assigned to one or more committees.
- 4 In each committee, to which the bill is referred, the bill is debated and amended if changes are needed. If approved in one committee, the bill moves on to the next referenced committee.
- 5 If the bill is approved by all assigned committees, then the bill is placed on the calendar to be heard on the floor. When it comes up on the calendar, the bill is debated, amended, and then voted on by the entire chamber.
- 6 If the bill passes one chamber, it must make its way through the other chamber and follow the same process. A bill may go back and forth between chambers until a consensus is reached.
- 7 Once both chambers pass the same bill, it proceeds to the Governor. The Governor can do one of three things:
 1. Sign the bill into law;
 2. Decide to veto the bill; or
 3. Allow the bill to become law without a signature.
- 8 If the Governor signs the bill, allows the bill to become law without his signature, or if the Governor vetoes the bill and both the House and Senate override the veto by a two-thirds vote, then...

*The idea has become a law in
the State of Florida!*

GLOSSARY OF LEGISLATIVE TERMS

ACT – A bill passed by the legislature.

ADJOURN – To end a committee meeting or a day’s legislative sitting.

ADOPT – To vote to accept.

AMENDMENT – A proposal to change the original terms of a bill.

BICAMERAL – Consisting of two houses. All states have bicameral legislatures except Nebraska, which has only one house (unicameral).

BILL – A proposed law.

BUDGET – A bill that states how much money will be spent on government programs and services.

CALENDAR – A publication containing legislative activities or a list of bills awaiting action.

CHAIR – A legislator who presides over a committee meeting or a session.

CHAMBER – Also known as the “floor,” it is the room in which the Senate or the House of Representatives meets.

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – The person designated by the House of Representatives to assist the members of the House in the detailed processes of enacting laws and to record that history.

COMMITTEE – A group of Senators or Representatives appointed by the presiding officer to consider important issues and to report its recommendations for action by the body that originated it.

CONSTITUENT – A citizen who resides in the district of a legislator.

CONSTITUTION – The written instrument, embodying the fundamental principles of the state, that establishes power and duties of the government and guarantees certain rights to the people.

CONVENE – To meet in formal legislative session.

DEBATE – To argue the merits of a bill, for and against.

DECORUM – Appropriate behavior and conduct.

DISTRICT – The area from which a legislator, state or federal, is elected.

GALLERY – The seating area for visitors located above each chamber (on the fifth floor of the Capitol).

GOVERNOR – The chief executive of the State.

JOURNAL – The official record of the proceedings of the Senate or the House of Representatives.

LAW – The final product of the legislative process. It is the end result of the introduction of a bill, its passage by both houses, its approval by the Governor (or the overriding of his veto by the legislature), and its recording by the Secretary of State.



MAJORITY PARTY – The political party having more than half of the seats in a house.

MINORITY PARTY – The political party having fewer than a majority of the seats in a house.

MOTION – A proposal, usually oral, made to the presiding officer and relating to procedure or action before a legislative body.

OATH OF OFFICE – An oath or vow taken by a public official prior to taking up his or her official duties.

ORDER OF BUSINESS – The defined routine of procedure in the legislative body each day. It can be deviated from only by waiver of the rules.

PASSAGE – Favorable action on a measure before the legislature.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE – The presiding officer of the Senate. He or she is designated as President by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the full membership of the Senate for a term of two years.

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE – Literally, president “for a time.” Elected by the Senate, he or she performs specified duties as prescribed by the Senate Rules or the Senate President.

QUORUM – The number of members required for the conduct of business.

REPEAL – The removal of a provision from the law.

ROLL CALL – To determine a vote on a question by the taking of names in favor of and opposed to.

RULES – Provisions for the procedure, organization, officers, and committees of each house of the legislature.

SECRETARY OF THE SENATE – The person designated by the Senate to assist Senate officers, members, and staff in the detailed processes of enacting laws and to record that history.

SERGEANT AT ARMS – The person in each house who is responsible for the security of the legislative house and the maintenance of that house’s property.

SESSION – The period during which the legislature meets.

SINE DIE – Refers to final adjournment of a legislative session. The term is sometimes used to denote the ceremony involving the dropping of white handkerchiefs, which symbolizes the end of a regular session.

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – The presiding officer of the House of Representatives. He or she is designated as Speaker by the majority party in caucus and then elected by the full membership of the House for a term of two years.

VETO – Return by the Governor to the legislature of a bill without his or her signature; the veto message from the Governor usually explains why he or she thinks the bill should not become a law.

VOTE – A decision on a question, either affirmative or negative.



Symbols of FLORIDA

STATE SEAL

In 1985, a revised Great Seal of the State of Florida was presented to the Governor and Cabinet. The previous version of the state seal had several historical errors that were corrected in the 1985 seal. The current seal features a Seminole woman rather than a western Plains Indian, as was depicted on earlier seals. The image of a steamboat has been made more accurate, and the seal now includes a sabal palm, our state tree, instead of a cocoa palm.



Through the years, the appearance of the state seal has changed considerably. The steamboat, for instance, has been depicted in a variety of ways. Also, the earliest official state seal pictured a mountainous background that was later removed because it did not represent Florida's flat terrain. The Indian woman has worn various types of clothing, some of them more historically accurate than others. In one version of the seal, for example, the woman wore a feather headdress of a style worn only by Indian men. Despite the changes in the appearance of the seal, the basic elements of the Great Seal of the State of Florida have remained the same.

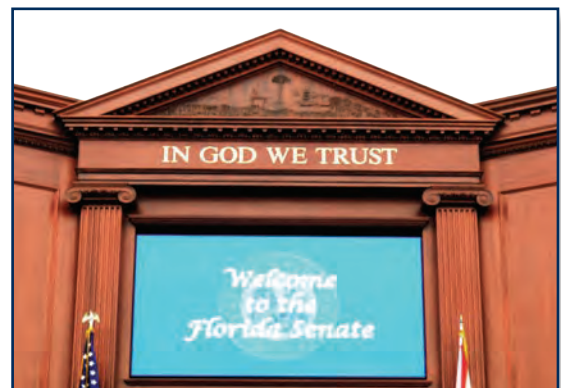


STATE FLAG

The 1899 Legislature adopted a joint resolution that led to the design of our current flag: "The State Flag shall conform with standard commercial sizes and be of the following proportions and descriptions: The seal of the state, in diameter one-half of the hoist, shall occupy the center of a white background. Red bars, in width one-fifth the hoist, shall extend from each corner towards the center, to the outer rim of the seal."

STATE MOTTO

"In God We Trust" was adopted by the Florida Legislature as part of the state seal in 1868. This is also the motto of the United States and is a slight variation on Florida's first state motto, "In God is our Trust." In 2006, "In God We Trust" was officially designated in state statute as Florida's motto.



STATE ANTHEM

Responding to an initiative to find a new Florida state song, the Florida Music Educators Association managed an online contest to find a new song to represent the state. The winning song was "Florida, Where the Sawgrass Meets the Sky," written by Jan Hinton, a music teacher from Pompano Beach. In the 2008 Legislative Session, a compromise was reached that kept the old state song "Old Folks at Home" (with revised lyrics) and designated "Florida, Where the Sawgrass Meets the Sky" as the new state anthem. Sawgrass grows in Florida's coastal marshes and is particularly common in the Everglades, where it stretches as far as the eye can see.

Florida, Where the Sawgrass Meets the Sky

*Florida, where the sawgrass meets the sky,
Florida, where our hearts will ever lie,
Sitting proud in the ocean like a sentinel true,
Always shielding your own, yet giving welcome.*

*Florida, land of flowers, land of light.
Florida, where our dreams can all take flight.
Whether youth's vibrant morning on the twilight of years,
There are treasures for all who venture here in Florida.*

*Mockingbirds cry and 'gators lie out in the sun,
Bridges span southward to the Keys and rockets skyward run,
The orange blossoms' sweet perfume and fireworks fill the air,
And cultures rich our native people share.*

*Florida, where the sawgrass meets the sky,
Florida, where our hearts will ever lie,
Sitting proud in the ocean like a sentinel true,
Always shielding your own, yet giving welcome.*

*Florida, land of flowers, land of light.
Florida, where our dreams can all take flight.
Whether youth's vibrant morning on the twilight of years,
There are treasures for all who venture
here in Florida, Florida.*

STATE HONEY

The 2016 Legislature designated tupelo honey as the official state honey. Pure tupelo honey is commercially harvested in northwest Florida and has a distinctive greenish tint. The honey comes from the Ogeechee Tupelo tree, also known as the White Tupelo. This tree blossoms for a short season, usually only a few weeks in late April into early May.



STATE DESSERT

The 2022 Legislature designated strawberry shortcake as the official state dessert. Florida produces 12% of the U.S. value of strawberries annually. Strawberries are the second highest valued of the berry, potato, vegetable, and watermelon crops in Florida. Strawberry shortcake is a dessert consisting of a base of shortcake, which resembles a biscuit with a touch of cake, a layer of sweet, sliced strawberries, and a healthy dollop of whipped cream.

STATE HORSE

The 2008 Legislature designated Florida Cracker Horse (Marshstackie) as the official state horse. Florida Cracker Horses were a fundamental part of the Florida cattle industry, which began around 500 years ago and is thriving today. It is reported that the ancestors of today's Florida Cracker Horses were introduced into what is now Florida around 1521 when Ponce de Leon brought horses, cattle and other livestock on his second trip to the region.



STATE FRUIT

The 2008 Legislature designated the orange (*Citrus sinensis* and hybrids thereof) as the official state fruit. Florida is a top producer of oranges in the nation and internationally. The state fruit is the ingredient in the state beverage, Orange Juice.

STATE FLOWER

The blossom of the orange tree (*Citrus sinensis*) is one of the most fragrant flowers in Florida. Millions of these white flowers perfume the atmosphere throughout central and south Florida during orange blossom time. The orange blossom was selected as the state flower by the 1909 Legislature.

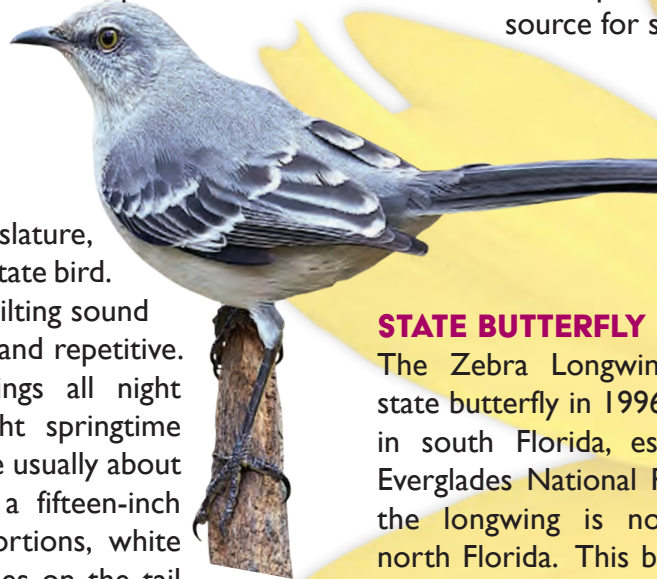


STATE ANIMAL

Students throughout the state of Florida voted the Florida Panther (*Felis concolor coryi*) as our state animal in 1982. Panthers are pale brown and black in color and play a large part in our wildlife ecosystem. They have been on the federal endangered species list since 1967 and on the state endangered list since 1973. Panthers have been protected from legal hunting in Florida since 1958. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is responsible for the management and preservation of the panther.

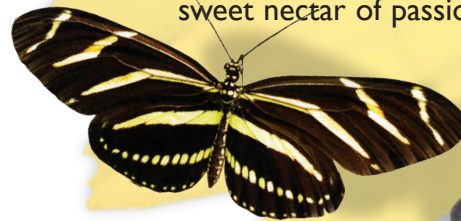
STATE BIRD

Designated by the 1927 Legislature, the mockingbird is Florida's state bird. Its own song has a pleasant lilting sound and is, at times, both varied and repetitive. Often, the mockingbird sings all night long, especially under bright springtime moonlight. Mockingbirds are usually about ten inches in length, with a fifteen-inch wingspan, grayish upper portions, white undersides, and white patches on the tail and wings. The female has slightly less whiteness in its feathers than the male. The mockingbird is helpful to humans because it usually feeds on insects and weed seeds. In the summer and fall, it also eats ripe berries. It lives in Florida year-round and is known for its singing voice and mimicry skills. Its Latin name means "mimic of many tongues."



STATE BUTTERFLY

The Zebra Longwing became the state butterfly in 1996. It is common in south Florida, especially in the Everglades National Park. However, the longwing is not common in north Florida. This black and yellow butterfly is known for dining on the sweet nectar of passion flowers.



STATE WILDFLOWER

The 1991 Legislature named the *Coreopsis* Florida's official wildflower. These colorful flowers are used extensively in Florida's roadside plantings and highway beautification programs. The *coreopsis* is found in a variety of colors, ranging from golden yellow to pink. The flower is a food source for seed-eating birds.



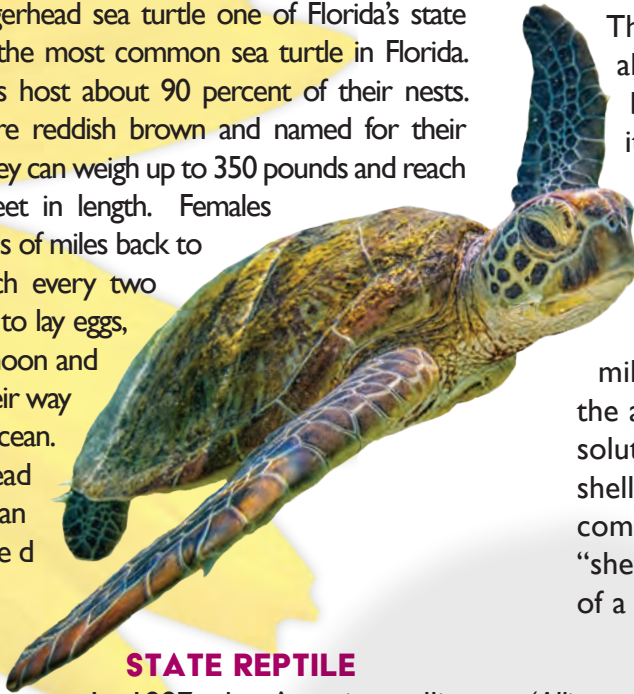


STATE SALTWATER MAMMAL

The 1975 Legislature designated the “porpoise, also commonly known as the dolphin,” our saltwater mammal. The porpoise belongs to the mammalian order Cetacea. It is gray or black with a slightly lighter underside. A system of echos, much like sonar, directs them in their travels. Porpoises have no sense of smell, but they make up for this loss with sharp eyesight and extraordinary hearing. Historically, sailors took the presence of porpoises near their boats as a sign of good luck.

STATE SALTWATER REPTILE

The Loggerhead sea turtle was named state saltwater reptile in 2008. Honors students at Florida State University Middle School worked with State Representative Curtis Richardson to make the Loggerhead sea turtle one of Florida’s state symbols. It is the most common sea turtle in Florida. Florida beaches host about 90 percent of their nests. Loggerheads are reddish brown and named for their large heads. They can weigh up to 350 pounds and reach up to three feet in length. Females travel thousands of miles back to the same beach every two or more years to lay eggs, then use the moon and stars to find their way back to the ocean. The Loggerhead sea turtle is an endangered species.



STATE SHELL

The horse conch (*Pleuroploca gigantea*), also known as the giant band shell, has been Florida’s official state shell since its designation by the Legislature in 1969. This shell is native to Florida and can grow to a length of twenty-four inches. Young horse conchs have orange-colored shells; adults have orange apertures. At least 535 million years ago, mollusks acquired the ability to secrete a carbonate of lime solution that formed a hard, protective shell around them. The word “conch” comes from a Greek word meaning “shell.” The shell is the external skeleton of a soft-bodied animal that inhabits it.

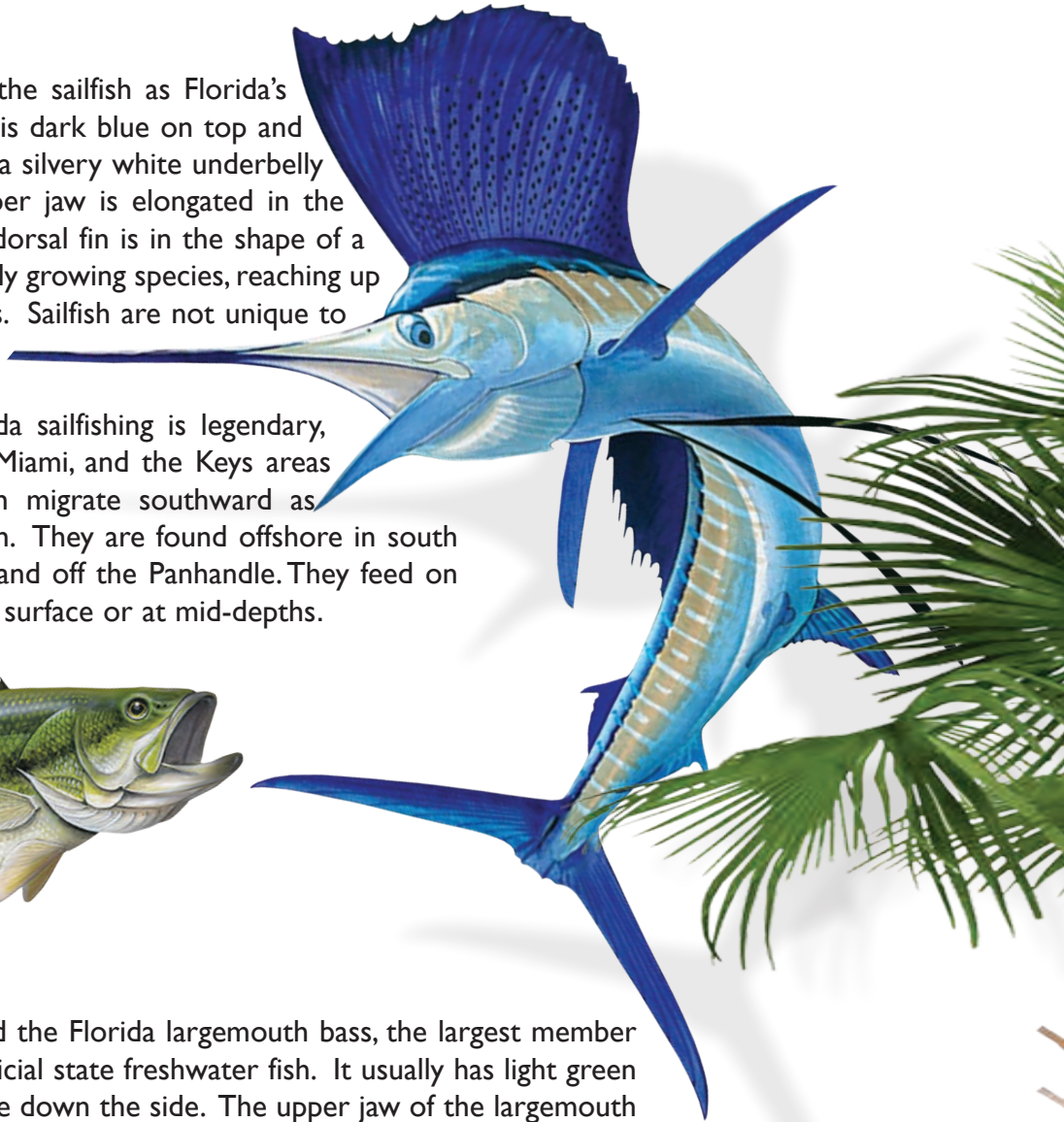
STATE REPTILE

In 1987, the American alligator (*Alligator mississippiensis*) was designated the official state reptile. It has long been an unofficial symbol of the state as the alligator originally symbolized Florida’s untamed lands. Alligators are found throughout Florida and in parts of other southeastern states. They like lakes, swamps, canals, and other wetland habitats. They eat fish, turtles, and many other animals. Alligators should not be fed because this causes them to lose their fear of humans. Feeding alligators is also against Florida law. Alligators are now under controlled management by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. This commission works to preserve the species and the wetland habitats that they and other Florida wildlife inhabit.



STATE SALTWATER FISH

The 1975 Legislature named the sailfish as Florida's state saltwater fish. A sailfish is dark blue on top and brown-blue on the sides with a silvery white underbelly and many black spots. Its upper jaw is elongated in the form of a spear, and the first dorsal fin is in the shape of a large sail. The sailfish is a rapidly growing species, reaching up to 7 feet long and 116 pounds. Sailfish are not unique to Florida; they are found nearly everywhere there is warm ocean water. However, Florida sailfishing is legendary, especially in the Fort Pierce, Miami, and the Keys areas during colder months. Sailfish migrate southward as the weather chills in the north. They are found offshore in south Florida near the Gulf Stream and off the Panhandle. They feed on smaller fishes and squid at the surface or at mid-depths.



STATE FRESHWATER FISH

In 1975, the Legislature named the Florida largemouth bass, the largest member of the sunfish family, as the official state freshwater fish. It usually has light green to brown sides with a dark line down the side. The upper jaw of the largemouth bass extends beyond the rear edge of the eye. It prefers clear, nonflowing water and aquatic vegetation that provides food and cover. Largemouth bass are found in rivers, lakes, reservoirs, ponds, and estuaries, usually at depths of 20 feet or less. The largemouth bass is Florida's most popular freshwater game fish.

STATE MARINE MAMMAL

The manatee became the state marine mammal in 1975. The manatee, which is also known as the sea cow, big beaver, mermaid, or "furnished with hands," is a gray, waterplant-eating marine mammal that reaches eight to fourteen feet in length and can weigh more than a ton. The manatee is on the endangered species list, but chances for its survival are good if we, as citizens of this state, take steps to ensure its safety. The Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act of 1978 and later regulations have limited the speed of boats in waters populated by manatees during winter months, when more than 1,500 of the creatures swim to warm bays and rivers to avoid pneumonia and death.



STATE GEM

United States astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin “Buzz” Aldrin landed on the moon on July 20, 1969, aboard the Apollo 11 spacecraft. Since this and all other astronaut-controlled spaceflights had been launched from the Kennedy Space Center in Brevard County, the Florida Legislature sought to memorialize this “giant step” for humankind. In 1970, lawmakers adopted the moonstone as the official state gem.



STATE STONE

In 1979, agatized coral was designated the official state stone. Coral is the outside skeleton of tiny ocean animals called polyps, which live in colonies attached to hard underwater surfaces. When alive, polyps combine their own carbon dioxide with the lime in warm seawater to form a limestone-like hard surface, or coral. Agatized coral occurs when silica in the ocean water hardens, replacing the limy corals with a form of quartz known as chalcedony. This long process (20-30 million years) results in the formation of a “pseudomorph,” meaning that one mineral has replaced another without having lost its original form. Agatized coral is found in three main Florida locations: Tampa Bay, the Econfina River, and the Withlacoochee/Suwannee River beds.



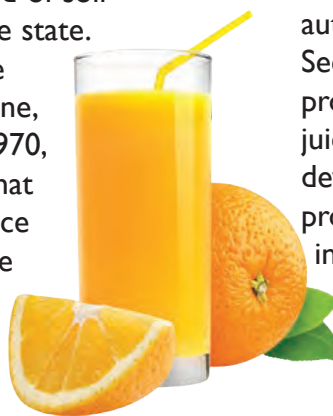
STATE TREE

The 1953 Legislature designated the sabal palm our state tree. The sabal palm grows in any kind of soil and is found throughout the state. There are many uses of the sabal palm, including medicine, food, and landscaping. In 1970, the Legislature mandated that the sabal palm should replace the cocoa palm on the state seal.



STATE BEVERAGE

Whenever the words “orange juice” are read, written, or spoken, many people automatically think of Florida. During the Second World War, scientists invented a process for making concentrated orange juice. Soon, a frozen concentrate was developed that transformed orange juice production into a multibillion dollar industry. In 1967, the Florida Legislature designated orange juice as the official state beverage.



STATE PIE

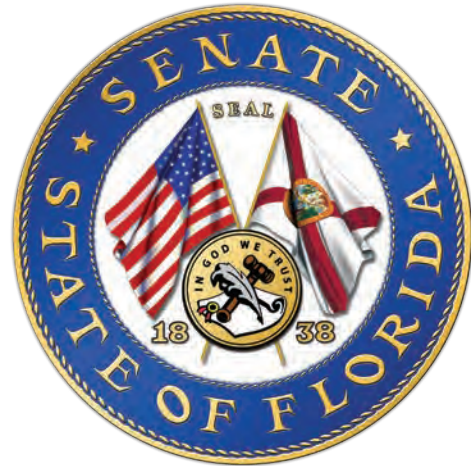
The 2006 Legislature designated key lime pie as the official state pie. The key limes (*Citrus aurantiifolia*, Swingle) used to make this dessert are named after the Florida Keys where the key limes originated in the United States. The first key lime pie was created in the 1850s in south Florida. Made using key limes and sweetened condensed milk, the recipe became popular in early Florida because it did not require refrigeration.



SENATE EMBLEMS

THE SENATE SEAL

The Senate Seal was officially adopted in 1972, revised in 2015 and 2016, and is included in Senate Rule 14. Previously, there were no records in the Senate journals or rules of any official Senate Seal. It seems that before 1972, an unofficial seal or the state seal was used when necessary. The perimeter of the seal contains the words “Senate” and “State of Florida.” The center contains the Florida state flag and the United States flag above a disc containing the words, “In God We Trust,” arched above a gavel, quill, and scroll symbols of the Legislature. The quill depicts the writing of laws, the gavel depicts control or authority in the presiding officer, and the scroll depicts the parchment on which laws are permanently written. It is this body of written law upon which rests the very foundation of this nation’s “rule of law,” as opposed to “rule of men.”



THE SENATE COAT OF ARMS

The Senate Coat of Arms was officially adopted in 1972, revised in 2015 and 2016, and is included in Senate Rule 14. However, variations of the coat of arms as we know it today have made appearances before the coat was officially adopted. The current coat of arms contains the Florida state flag and the United States flag above the Great Seal of Florida. At the base are the words: “The Florida Senate.” The seal used in the Senate Coat of Arms is not the official seal of the State of Florida because it does not include the words “Great Seal of the State of Florida: In God We Trust,” as outlined in section 15.03, Florida Statutes.

DID YOU KNOW...

- Florida has had six Constitutions since it became a state. The first Constitution was drafted in St. Joseph, now known as Port St. Joe. Presently, Florida is governed by the Constitution of 1968, as subsequently amended.
- Florida's first Legislative Council, which was supposed to meet in Pensacola on June 10, 1822, did not meet until 44 days later due to hazardous and time-consuming travel.
- Tallahassee was named the state capital in 1824 by Florida's first territorial governor, William P. DuVal.
- The total land area of Florida is 53,625 square miles. The total water area is 12,133 square miles.
- In 1824, three log cabins were erected in Tallahassee to accommodate the Legislative Council. This was Florida's first Capitol.
- In the 1890s, several efforts were made to move the state capital from Tallahassee. Choices included Jacksonville, Ocala, and St. Augustine.
- Florida's fourth and present Capitol was officially opened on March 31, 1978, by Governor Reubin Askew.
- Construction of Florida's present Capitol required 3,700 tons of structural steel and 2,800 tons of reinforcing steel. The Capitol contains 25,000 cubic yards of concrete, the equivalent of 16 football fields, each one foot thick.
- Florida has been home to such famed writers as Ernest Hemingway, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Tennessee Williams, and Zora Neale Hurston.
- The word "Tallahassee" is of Creek derivation and is frequently translated as "old town" or "old fields." The name may have been taken from the Seminole Indians who occupied the area.
- Juan Ponce de Leon came ashore on the northeast coast of Florida sometime between April 2 and April 8, 1513. He called the area La Florida, in honor of Pascua Florida (feast of the flowers), a popular celebration held in Spain around Easter.
- A prior Constitution in 1868 provided that the Seminole Tribe was entitled to a member in the Florida Senate and House.
- St. Augustine is the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in North America.
- Two women named Beth Johnson served together for five months in the Senate in 1967.

DID YOU KNOW...

- Snow fell in Dade County on January 20, 1977.
- Dr. John Gorrie of Apalachicola patented the process of making ice artificially in 1851.
- The St. Johns River is one of the few rivers that flows north instead of south, and at 273 miles in length, it is Florida's longest river.
- Founded in 1973 by Rhea Chiles as Florida's "embassy" in our nation's capital, Florida House is owned by the people of the State of Florida. Florida is the only state to have such a facility. It enjoys approximately 10,000 visitors a year. Florida House serves as "home base" for tourists as well as the business community (www.floridaembassy.com).
- The Buckman Act of 1905 consolidated the state's public institutions of higher learning into three: the University of Florida at Gainesville, the Florida State College for Women at Tallahassee, and the Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes at Tallahassee. Florida is now home to 12 state universities and 28 state colleges.
- Florida boasts over 4,500 islands or "keys" 10 acres or larger.
- In 1937, Amelia Earhart took off from Miami for an around-the-world flight and was never seen again.
- The first commercial airline service between two U.S. cities was established between St. Petersburg and Tampa in 1914.
- Eight student athletes from Florida universities have won the Heisman Trophy from 1966 to the present.
- The unified government of Florida was established March 30, 1822, when President Monroe signed into law the act which provided for a Governor and a Legislative Council of 13 citizens. Florida was the 27th state to be admitted to the United States (March 3, 1845).
- DeFuniak Springs is home to one of the two naturally round lakes in the world.
- Ft. Lauderdale is known as the "Venice of America" because it has 165 miles of local waterways.
- In anticipation of statehood, 56 commissioners elected from Florida's 20 counties gathered at St. Joseph (Port St. Joe) to draft a constitution. The convention lasted from December 3, 1838, until January 11, 1839.
- Florida's highest natural point is 345 feet, located near Lakewood in Walton County.
- The Florida quarter was released by the U.S. Mint as part of its 50 State Quarters Program in 2004.

Some items were taken from The Florida Handbook (34th ed. 2014), available at <http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/content-Viewer.aspx?Category=PublicGuide&File=FloridaHandbook.html>

DID YOU KNOW...

- The first Cuban American to serve as Senate President Pro Tempore was Senator Roberto Casas, 1996-1998.
- Senator Arthenia L. Joyner was the first African American woman to serve as Minority (Democratic) Leader, 2014-2016.



"Stormsong", the 50-foot long pod of leaping dolphins in front of the Capitol, is made of stainless steel and recycled aluminum and weighs five tons.

- In 2022, Senator Alexis Calatayud (R-Miami) became the youngest Senator in recent history, elected just days after her 29th birthday.
- In 2022, Senator Corey Simon (R-Tallahassee) became the first African American Senator to represent the Capital City since the end of the Reconstruction Era in 1887.
- Senator Victor Torres (D-Orlando) and Senator Tom Wright (R-New Smyrna Beach) both served as law enforcement officers before moving to Florida. Senator Ed Hooper (R-Clearwater) served as a firefighter.
- Senator Corey Simon (R-Tallahassee) played football for Florida State University on the 1999 National Championship Team. He later played football professionally for eight years, including playing in Super Bowl XXXIX for the Philadelphia Eagles.
- Elected to the Senate in April 2015, Senator Travis Hutson (R-St. Augustine) is the Dean of the Senate, an honorary title given to the longest-serving member of the Senate.
- President Pro Tempore Dennis Baxley (R-Eustis) also served as Speaker Pro Tempore of the Florida House of Representatives from 2006-2008, under the leadership of now U.S. Senator Marco Rubio.

INSTANCES OF FAMILY MEMBERS SERVING TOGETHER WITHIN THE LEGISLATURE

- Senator Don Gaetz (2006-2016) and his son, Congressman Matt Gaetz (former representative 2010-2016)
- Senator Larcenia Bullard (2002-2012; former representative 1992-2000), her husband, Representative Edward B. Bullard (2000-2008), and their son, Senator Dwight M. Bullard (2012-2016; former representative 2008-2012)
- Senator Aaron Bean (2012-2022); former representative 2000-2008), his brother-in-law, Senator Rob Bradley (2012-2020), and sister-in-law, Senator Jennifer Bradley (2020-present)
- Senator Rob Bradley (2012-2020) was the first Senator to be succeeded by his wife, Senator Jennifer Bradley (2020-present), both of Senate District 5.
- Senator Victor M. Torres, Jr. (2016-present; former representative 2012-2016) and his daughter, Representative Amy Mercado (2016-2020)

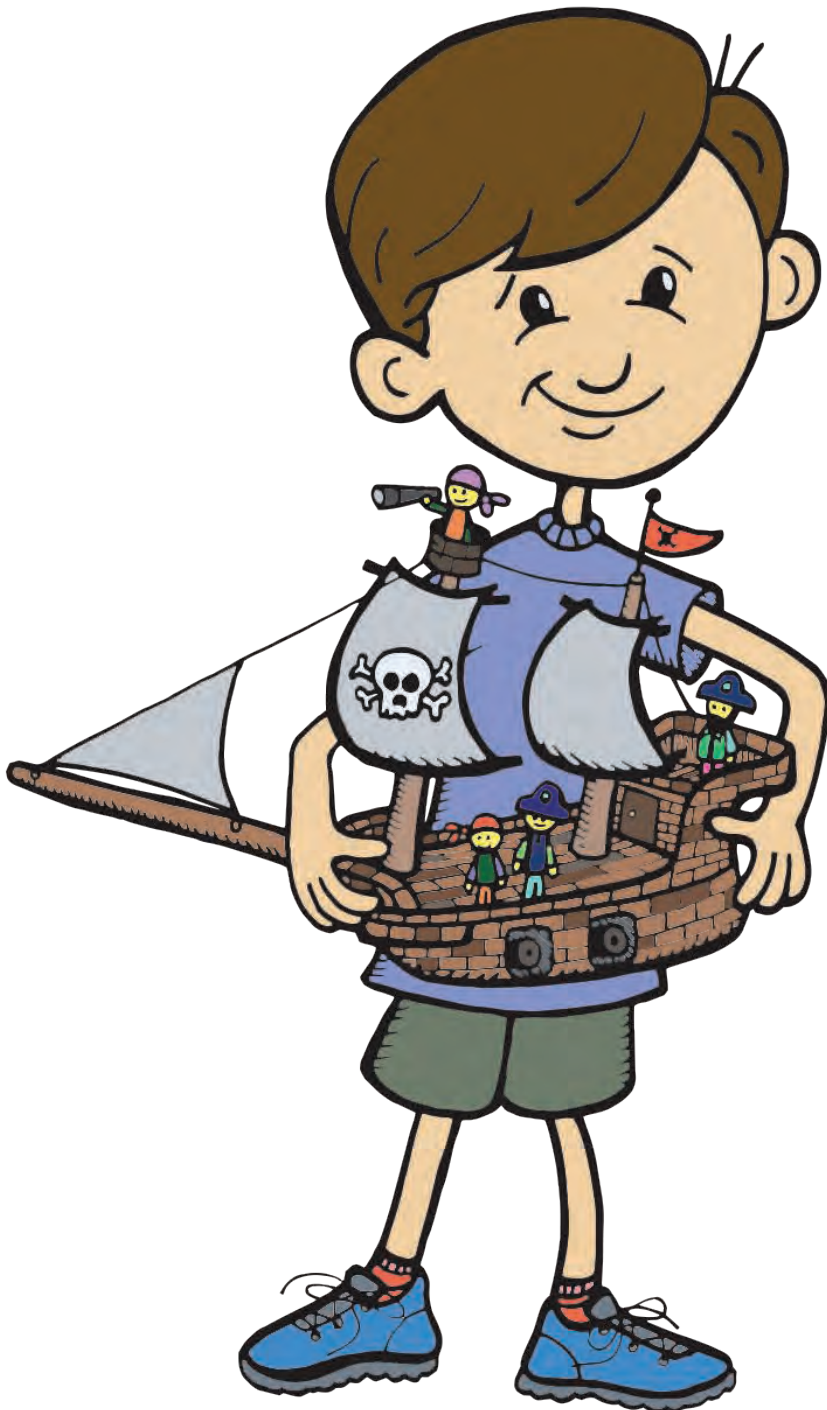
SENATORS WHO SERVED IN OUR MILITARY

- Senator Victor M. Torres, Jr., U.S. Marine Corps, Veteran
- Senator Jay Collins, U.S. Army, Green Beret, Veteran
- Senator Bryan Avila, Florida Army National Guard, First Lieutenant, April 2016-present
- Senator Danny Burgess, U.S. Army Reserve, Major, 2012-present

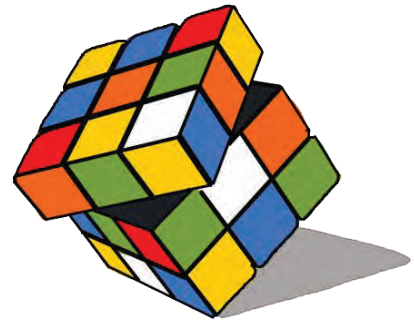


Who is

WILLIAM



William is eight years old and loves to read and play Legos with his grandma and his younger brother Emilio. He also is a wiz at solving a Rubik's Cube!



Speaking of William's grandma, can you guess who she is? First clue is she has a pretty cool job and she is only the third woman, ever, to do that job!

She loves cooking Italian food for her family, especially when William and Emilio come to visit. Turn the page to find out who Emilio's Grandma is....

SURPRISE!

William's grandma is Kathleen Passidomo, Florida's current Senate President! He is pictured with her here along with his little brother Emilio who was featured on the cover of last year's Kid's Handbook! Can you find the rest of the pictures of President Passidomo in this Handbook? Hint: read about the duties of the Senate President on page five!



Let's Cook



BAKED TOMATOES

INGREDIENTS

3-4 large Florida tomatoes, sliced ¼-inch thick

1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded

¼ cup Parmesan cheese, grated

1 tablespoon garlic, minced

3 tablespoons fresh basil, roughly chopped

1 tablespoon olive oil

Sea salt and fresh ground pepper, to taste

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a small bowl combine the oil and garlic. Season with salt and pepper. Place slices of tomato on sheet pan, brush with oil mixture, and sprinkle even amounts of cheese on each tomato slice. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Top with chopped basil and serve warm.



FLORIDA GRAPE TOMATO AND ORZO PASTA SALAD

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 clamshells Florida grape tomatoes, rinsed and cut in half | 1 1/2 lemons, juiced |
| 1 pound orzo pasta, cooked according to directions on package and cooled completely | 1 cup Parmesan cheese, grated |
| 1 cup fresh basil, chopped fine | 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more if desired |
| | Sea salt and fresh ground pepper to taste |

PREPARATION

Cook 1 lb of orzo pasta and let cool. Rinse 2 clamshells of Florida grape tomatoes and cut in halves. Combine tomatoes, basil, lemon juice, Parmesan cheese, and olive oil in medium bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste, mix thoroughly. Serve at room temperature.





FLORIDA SWEET PEPPER CHEESY BUBBLE BREAD

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 large loaf of French bread | 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted or softened at room temp |
| 1 1/2 cups Florida sweet peppers (multicolored) diced small | 1 teaspoon (more if desired) all-purpose seasoning |
| 1/2 cup green onion or scallions, chopped small | 3 to 4 cups shredded cheese (a blend or your favorite) |
| 4 to 6 (more if desired) cloves of fresh garlic, peeled and minced | 3/4 cup blue cheese, crumbled small |
| 2 tablespoons fresh herbs (oregano, rosemary, parsley), chopped fine | |

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. With a serrated knife, cut the loaf of bread in half lengthwise. Evenly spread the softened or melted butter over the cut side of each loaf. Lightly season the butter-topped bread with half of the all-purpose seasoning and all the minced garlic. Top the buttered bread with entire shredded cheese blend. Sprinkle the small diced sweet peppers evenly over the top of the cheese topped bread. Do the same with the crumbled blue cheese and scallions. Evenly distribute the rest of the all-purpose seasoning over the pepper and cheese topped bread. Place cheese-topped bread loaves on a cookie sheet and place in the preheated oven. Cook the cheesy bread for 8 to 10 minutes until the cheese is bubbly and melted. Remove the bread from the oven and let cool slightly. Cut cheesy bread and serve warm.

MATCHING

MATCH THE LETTERS WITH THESE FLORIDA FACTS.

A. UNION

B. NEAR BROOKSVILLE

C. ST. AUGUSTINE

D. MIAMI-DADE

E. TALLAHASSEE

F. 1821

G. OKEECHOBEE

H. ST. JOHNS

I. 1839

J. 1909

K. WALTON COUNTY

L. 1967

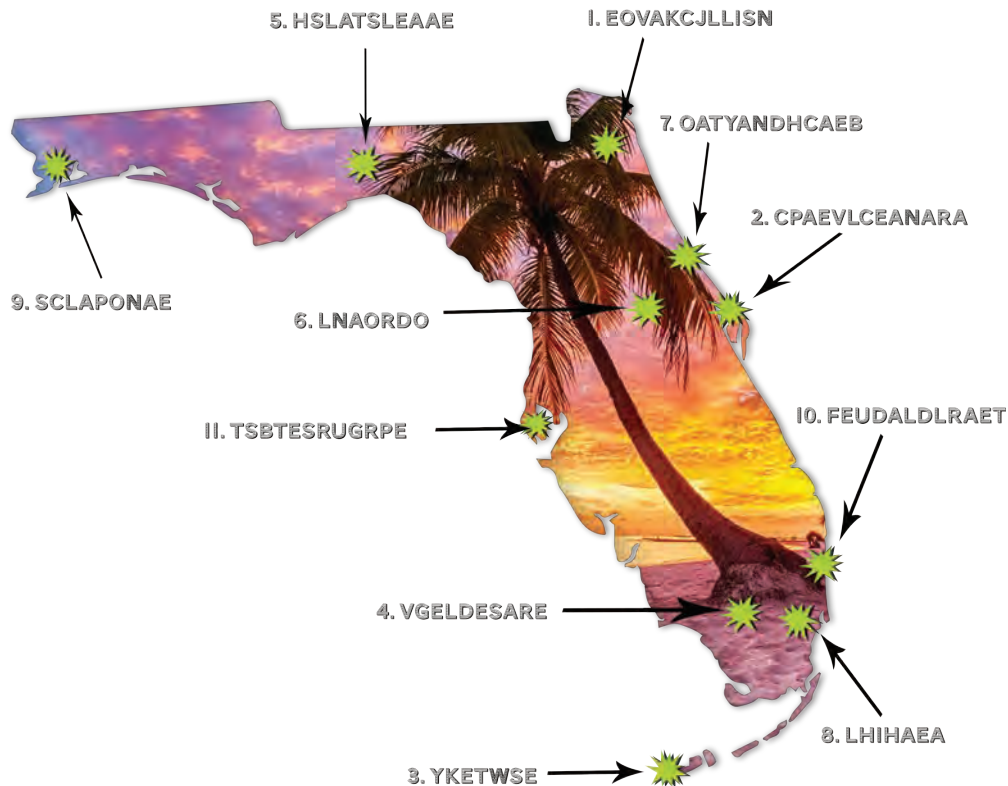
M. 1824

- Florida's Capital city
- Year the State Flower was designated
- Florida acquired as a U.S. territory
- Smallest county in Florida (land and water area)
- First Capitol building erected
- The first Florida Senate Sergeant at Arms appointed
- Year that two women named Beth Johnson served in the Senate
- Largest county in Florida (land and water area)
- Largest lake in Florida
- Florida's highest natural point
- First European settlement in Florida
- Geographic center of Florida
- Longest river in Florida

Answers on page 46

SCRAMBLER

1. Home of the Jaguars Football Team. **EOVAKCJLLISN** _____
2. Home of NASA. **CPAEVLCEANARA** _____
3. Southernmost point of Florida and home of author Ernest Hemingway.
YKETWSE _____
4. National Park. **VGELDESARE** _____
5. Name of our State Capital which comes from a Muskogee Indian word meaning
“old town.” **HSLATSLEAAE** _____
6. Home of Mickey and Minnie Mouse. **LNAORDO** _____
7. Named after its founder, Mathias Day, one of Florida’s most pristine beaches.
OATYANDHCAEB _____
8. “Haiyakpo” and “hili,” Muskogee Indian words, describe this city as a “pretty prairie.”
LHIHAEA _____
9. City known as the birthplace of naval aviation. **SCLAPONAE** _____
10. City named after Major William Lauderdale. **FEUDALDLRAET** _____
11. Known as the “Sunshine City” and also named after a port city in Russia.
TSBTESRUGRPE _____



Answers on page 46

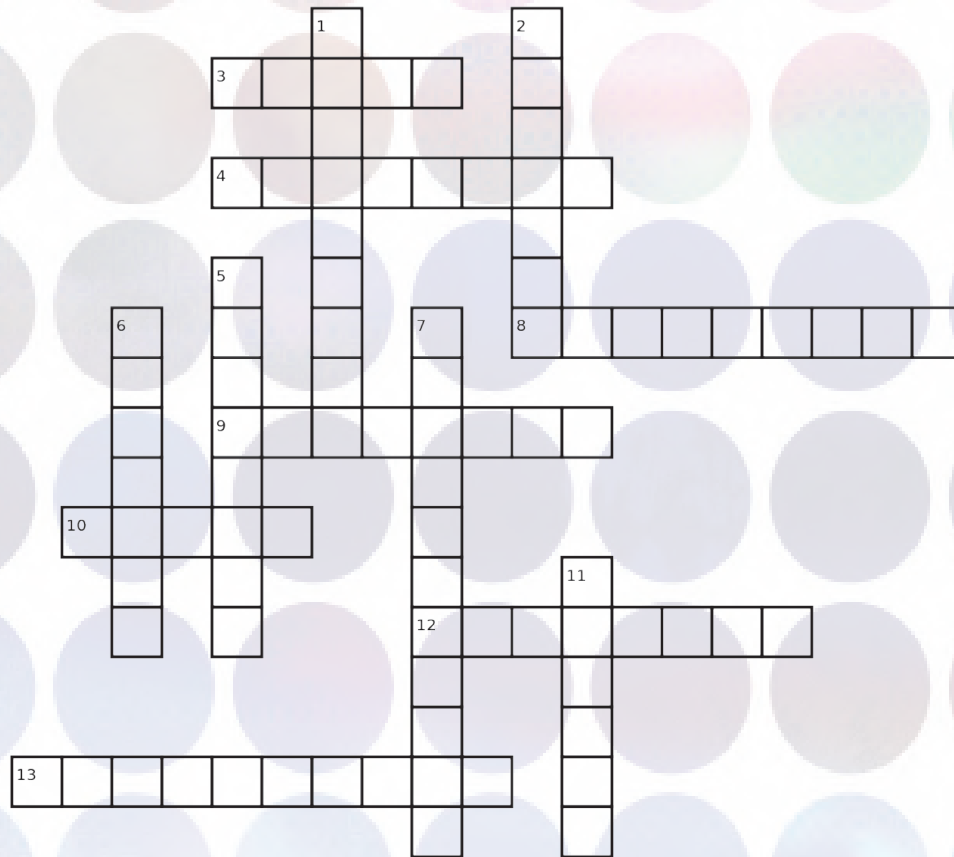
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

DOWN

1. Means consisting of two houses
2. Latin phrase meaning “without day”
5. To pass a bill after the Governor has vetoed it, requiring a two-thirds vote of each house
6. Longest river in Florida
7. This animal’s name means “mimic of many tongues” in Latin
11. To delete a previously passed law

ACROSS

3. Smallest county in Florida
4. A compilation of individual laws which are the official laws of Florida
8. This branch implements the laws
9. An electronic vote
10. Presides over a committee meeting or a session
12. Chief executive of the State
13. Means “for a time”



Answers on page 46

*Help the students find their way
to the Senate chamber!*



Answers on page 47

ABOUT OUR GOVERNMENT

Are you a good code breaker? We need one! In the following paragraph, certain words disappeared, and in their place were left numbers. We know that each of these numbers matches up to a certain letter in the alphabet. We need you to convert these numbers to letters and bring back the missing words. Fill in the blank above the number with a letter. When you think you've cracked the code, check the solution on page 55. We discovered that 12 = L, hope this helps.

Good luck!!

_ _ _ _ _ **L** _ _ _ _ _
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

Florida is the only state in the nation whose _ _ _ _ _ is reviewed every
 3 15 14 19 20 9 20 21 20 9 15 14

20 years. This set of rules determines the State's government and our laws. Our government

has three branches. They are the _ _ _ _ _ , the _ _ _ _ _ ,

and the _ _ _ _ _ branches. The legislature passes _ _ _ _ _ , which are carried
 10 21 4 9 3 9 1 12 12 1 23 19

out by the executive branch. The head of this branch is the _ _ _ _ _ . The judicial
 7 15 22 5 18 14 15 18

branch is a system of _ _ _ _ _ . Judges and justices in this branch determine facts,
 3 15 21 18 20 19

interpret the law, and make rulings on legal cases. The legislature meets _ _ _ _ _
 1 14 14 21 1 12 12 25

to discuss laws, change the law, or make new laws. The two bodies of the legislature are the

_ _ _ _ _ and the _ _ _ _ _ . Together, these houses work to better the lives of the
 8 15 21 19 5 19 5 14 1 20 5

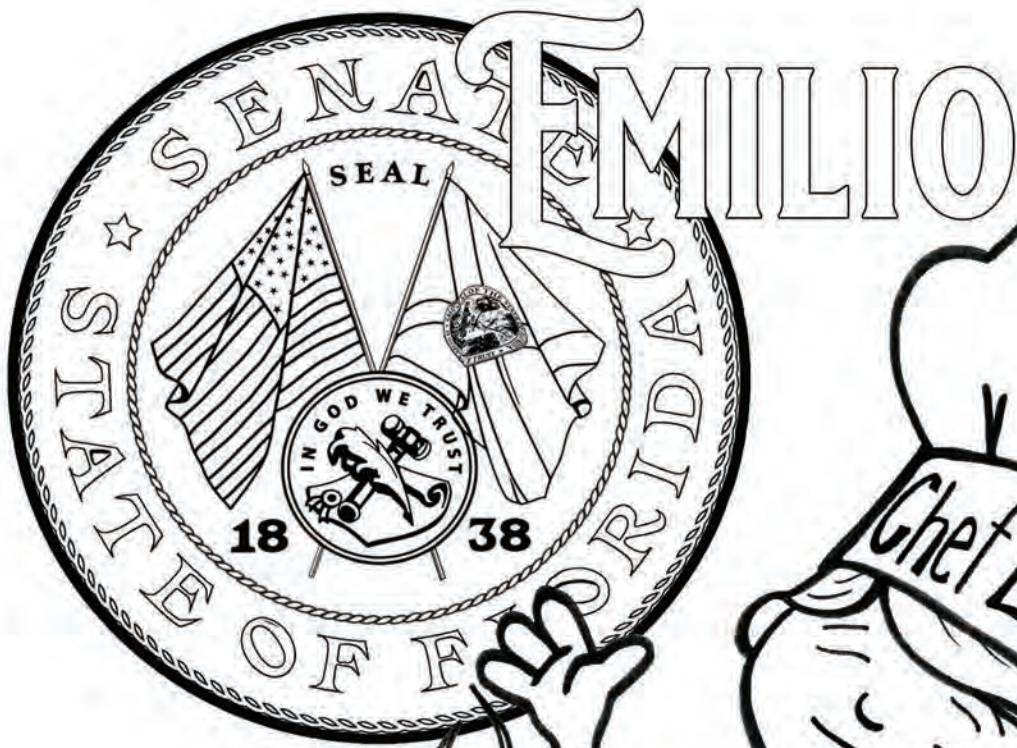
people of Florida.

Answers on page 47



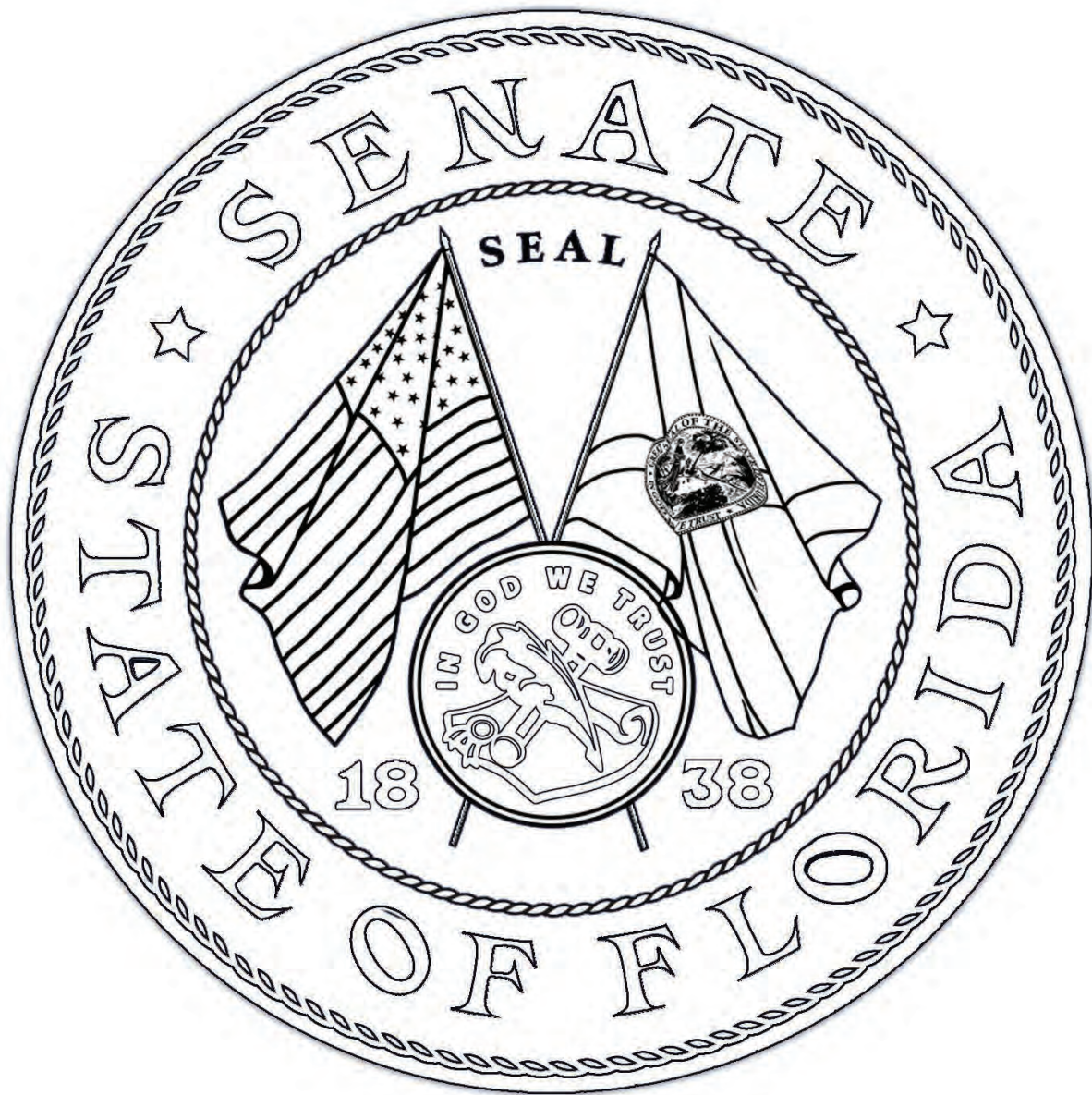


THE FLORIDA SENATE
KIDS
HANDBOOK
2023 - 2024

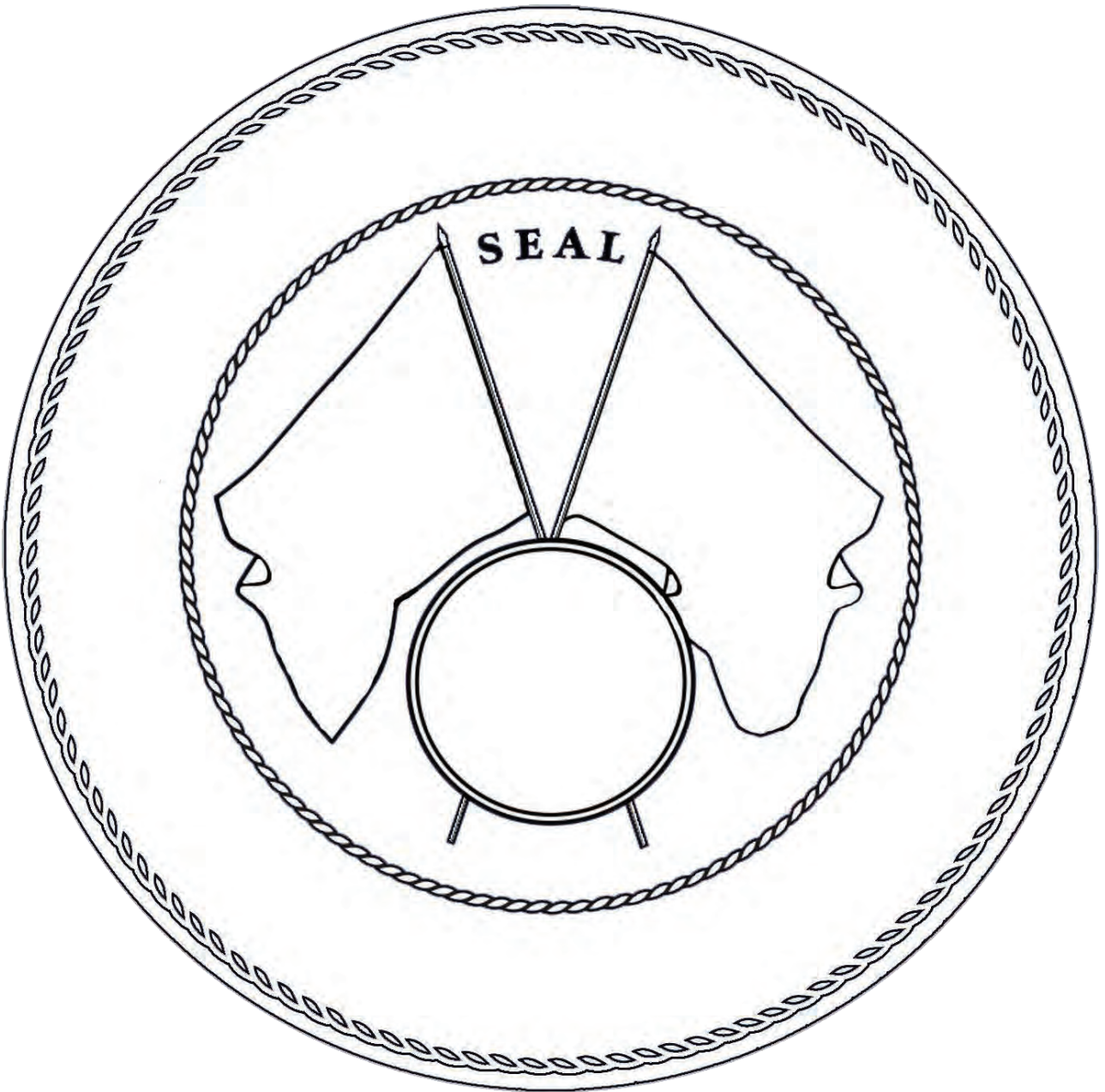


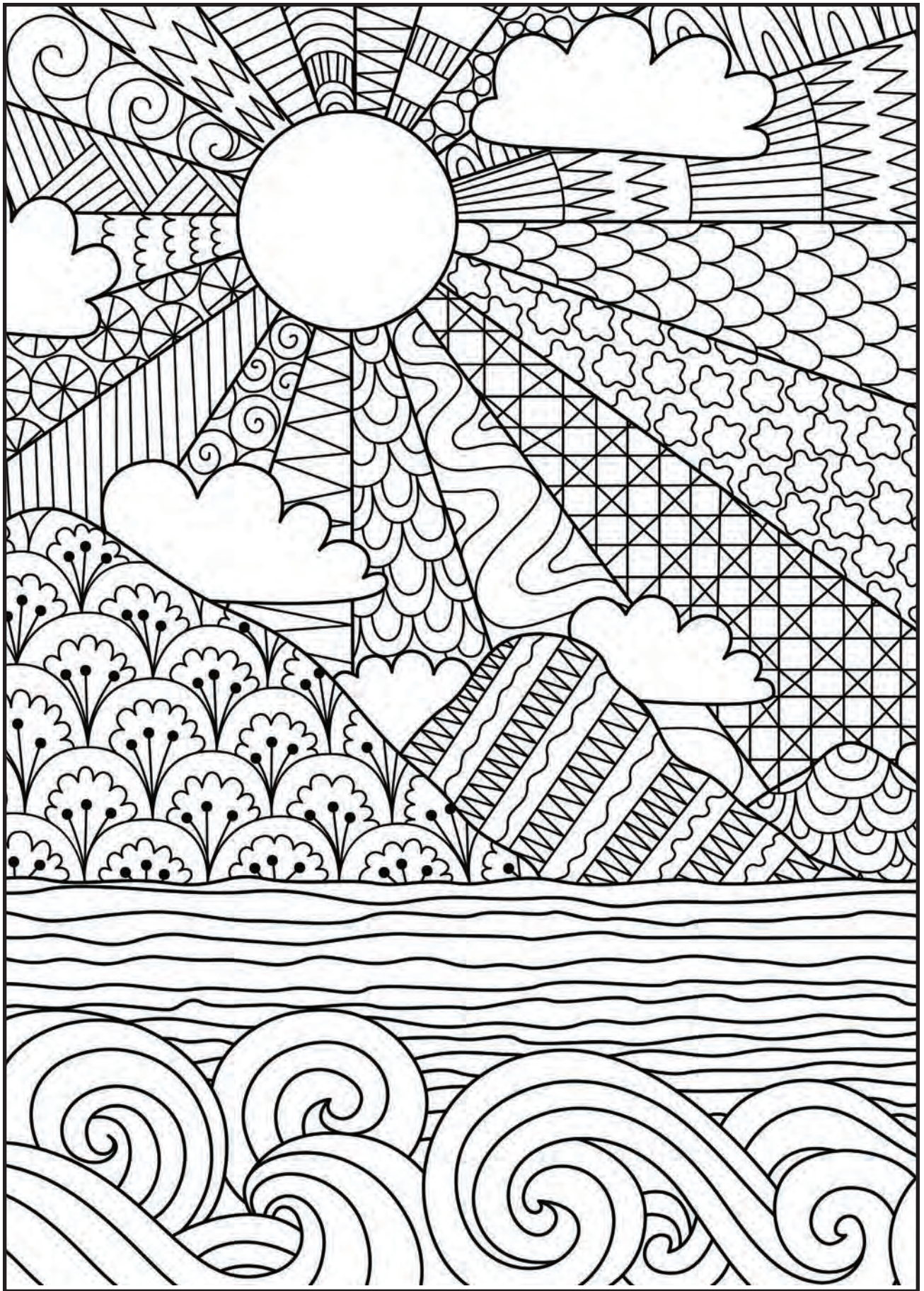
THE FLORIDA SENATE
KIDS
HANDBOOK
2022 - 2023

THE SENATE SEAL



DESIGN YOUR OWN SEAL!





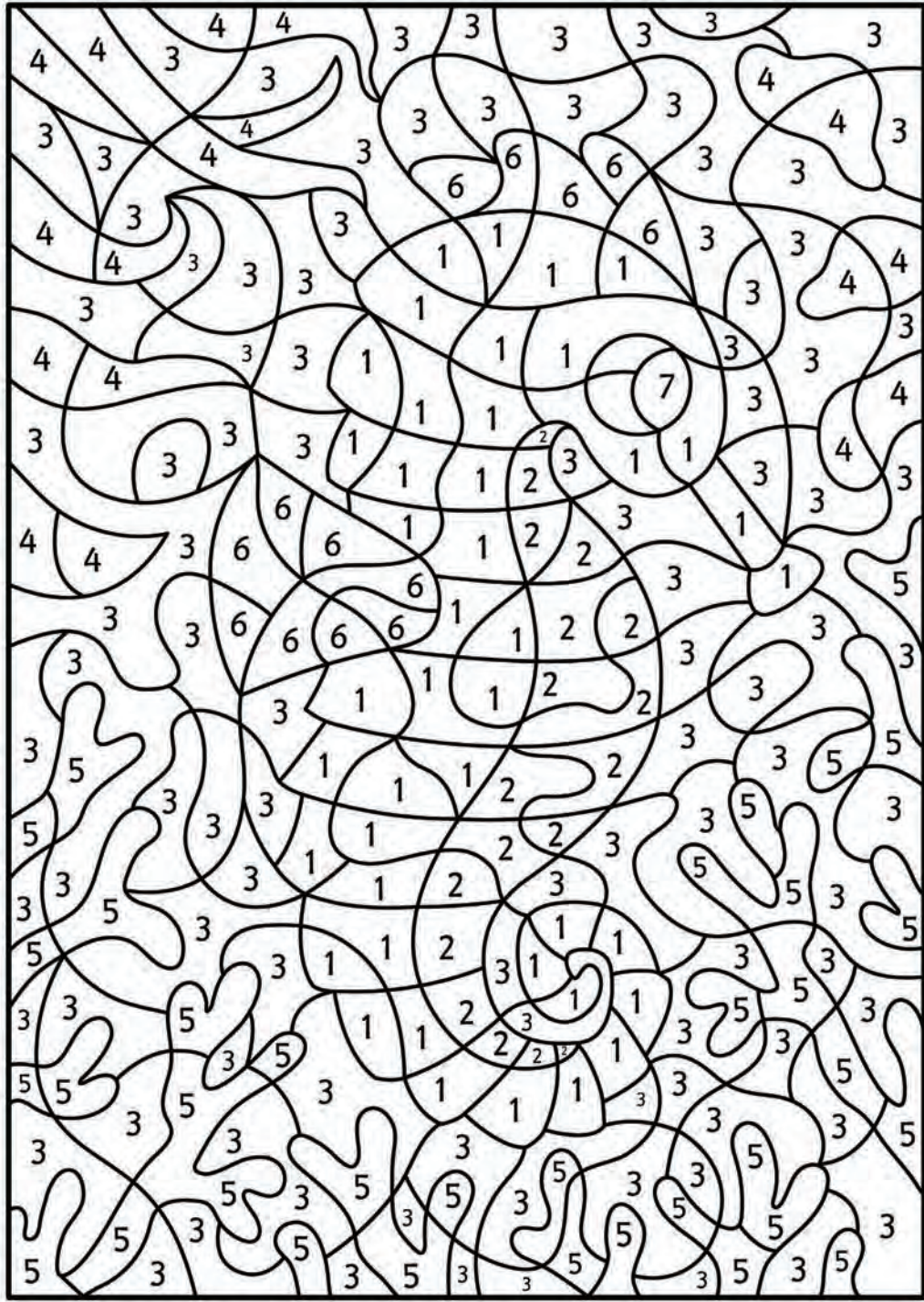
STATE ANIMAL



FLORIDA PANTHER

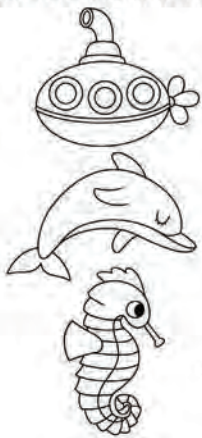


COLOR BY NUMBER

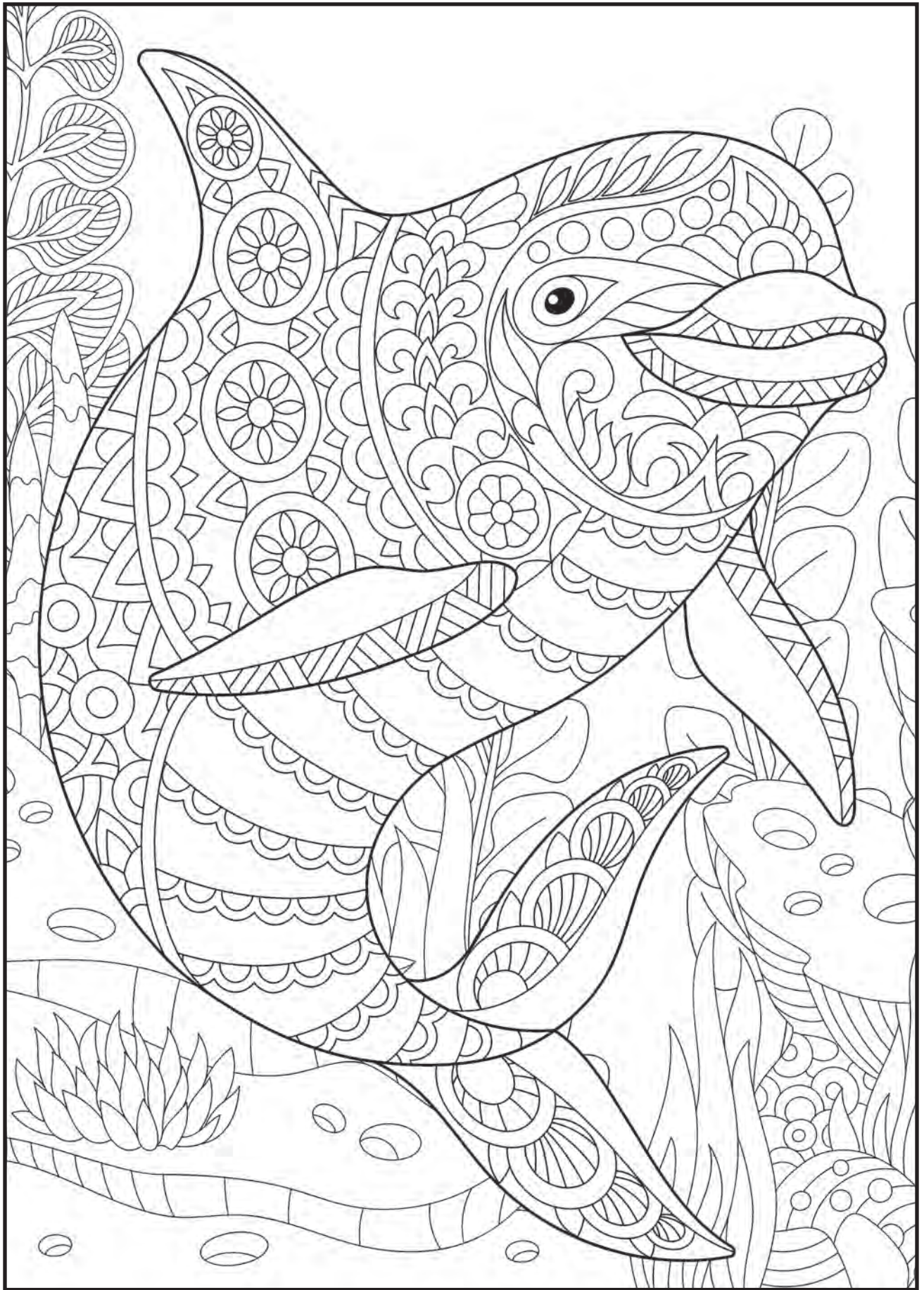


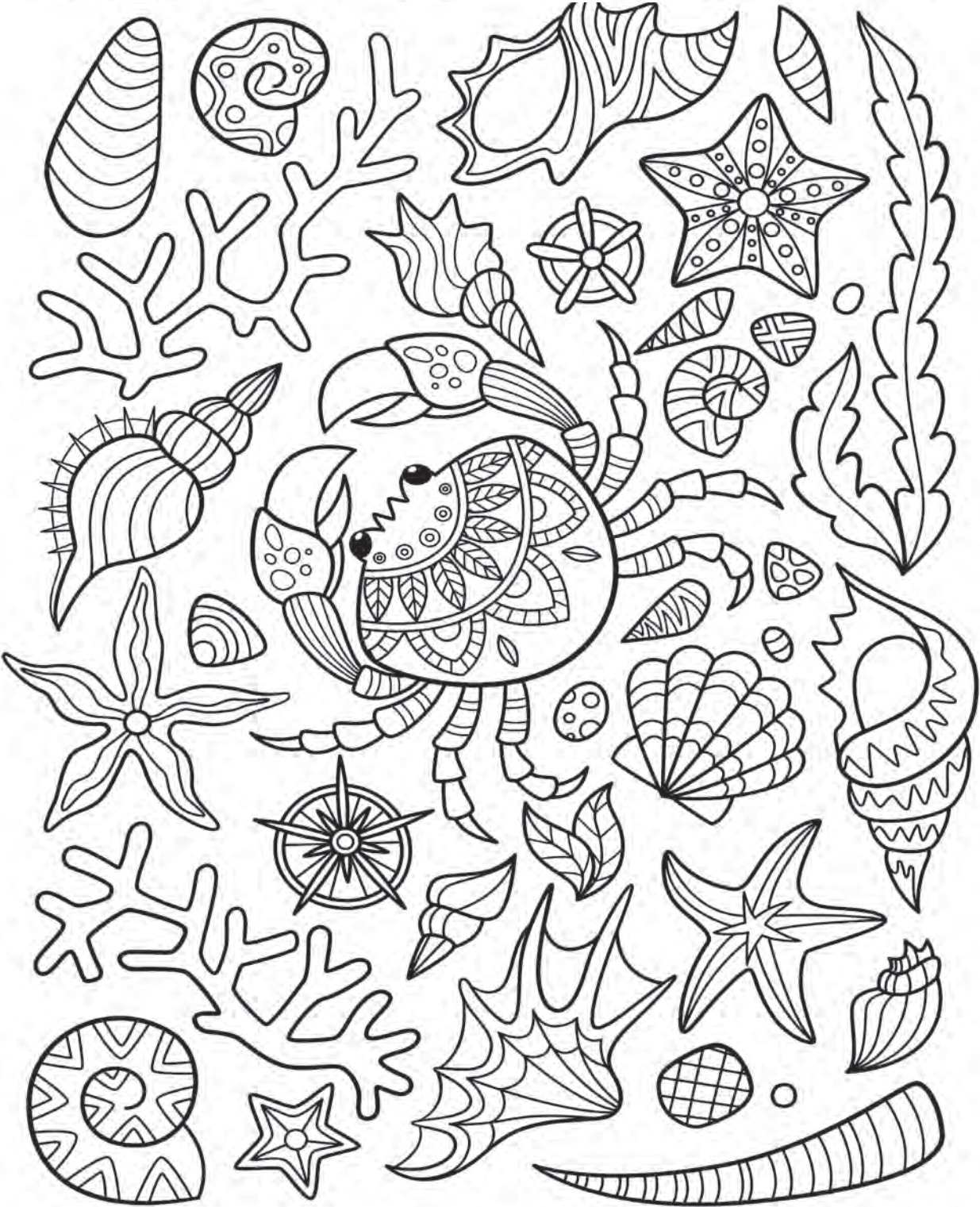
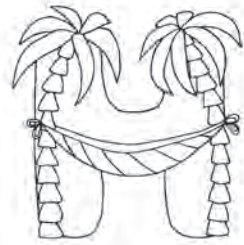


I SPY









ANSWER KEYS

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

MATCHING

Florida's Capital city is
E. Tallahassee

The State Flower was designated in
J. 1909

Florida acquired as a U.S. territory
F. 1821

Smallest county in Florida
(land and water area)
A. Union

Year the first Florida Capitol building
was erected
M. 1824

Year the first Florida Senate Sergeant at Arms
was appointed
I. 1839

Year that two women named Beth Johnson
served in the Senate
L. 1967

Largest county in Florida (land and water area)
D. Miami Dade

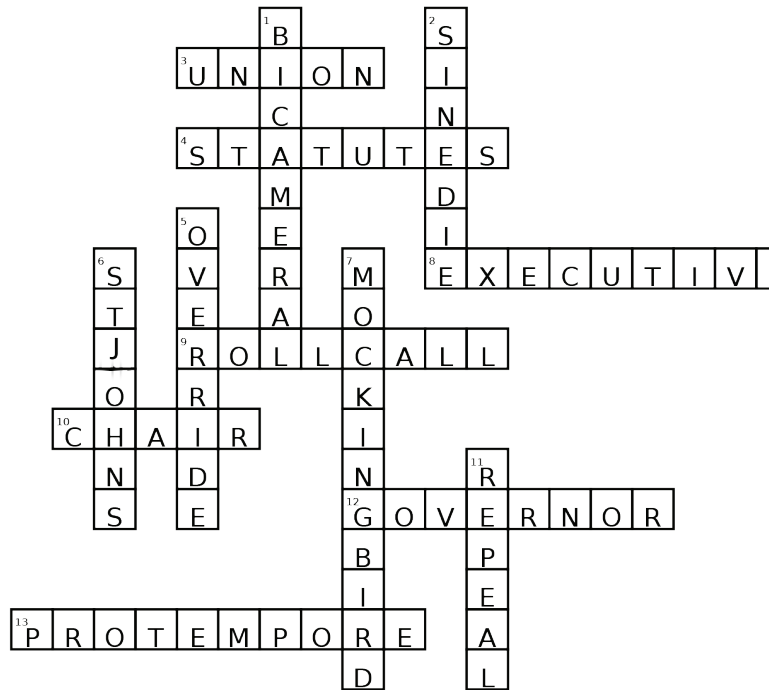
Largest lake in Florida
G. Okeechobee

Florida's highest natural point
K. Walton County

First European settlement in Florida
C. St. Augustine

Geographic center of Florida
B. Near Brooksville

Longest river in Florida
H. St. Johns



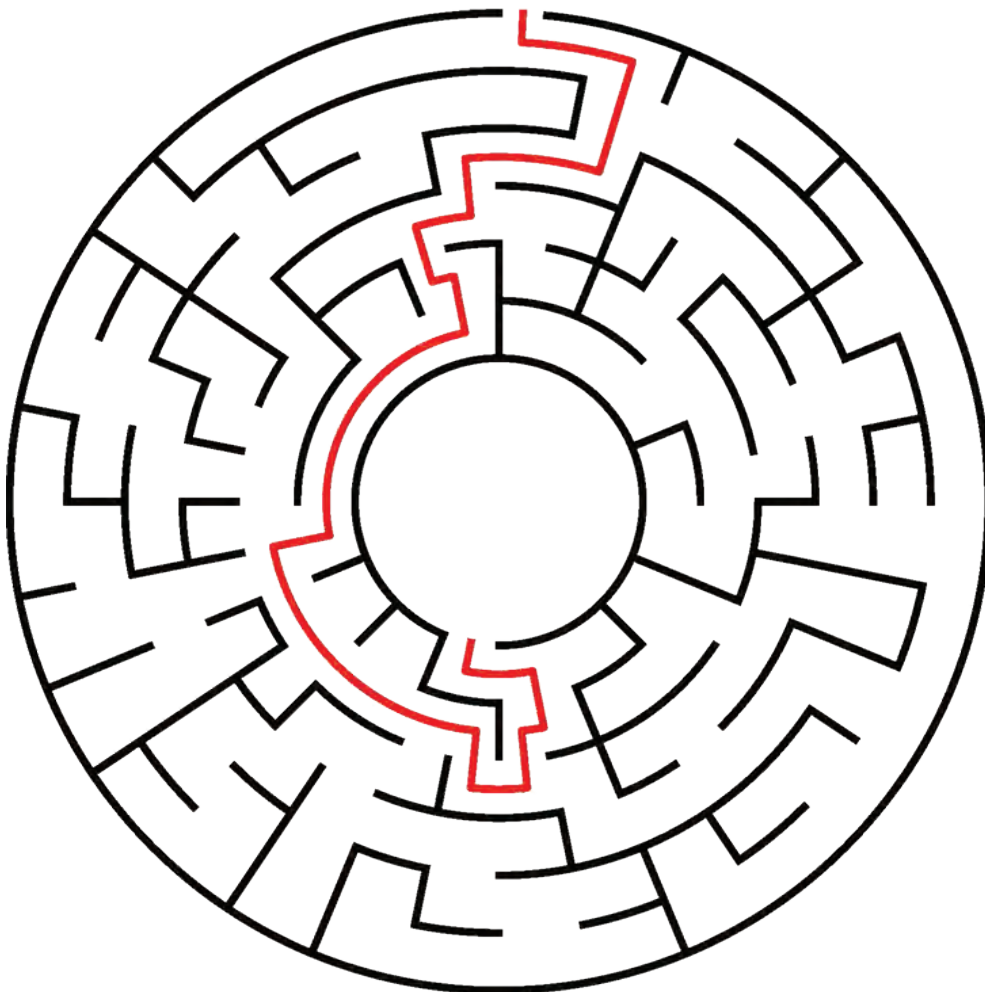
WORD SCRAMBLE

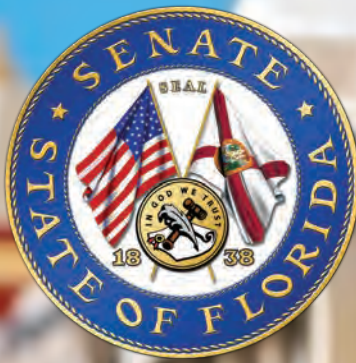
1. JACKSONVILLE
2. CAPE CANAVERAL
3. KEY WEST
4. EVERGLADES
5. TALLAHASSEE
6. ORLANDO
7. DAYTONA BEACH
8. HIALEAH
9. PENSACOLA
10. FT. LAUDERDALE
11. ST. PETERSBURG

ABOUT OUR GOVERNMENT

Florida is the only state in the nation whose **CONSTITUTION** is reviewed every 20 years. This set of rules determines the State's government and our laws. Our government has three branches. They are the **LEGISLATIVE**, the **EXECUTIVE**, and the **JUDICIAL** branches. The legislature passes **LAWS**, which are carried out by the executive branch. The head of this branch is the **GOVERNOR**. The judicial branch is a system of **COURTS**. Judges and justices in this branch determine facts, interpret the law, and make rulings on legal cases. The legislature meets **ANNUALLY** to discuss laws, change the law, or make new laws. The two bodies of the legislature are the **HOUSE** and the **SENATE**. Together, these houses work to better the lives of the people of Florida.

MAZE





We hope you enjoyed learning about the
Florida Senate and the Florida Legislature!
For more information visit us at
WWW.FLSENATE.GOV

PREPARED BY THE:

OFFICE OF THE SENATE PRESIDENT
SUITE 409, THE CAPITOL
TALLAHASSEE, FL 32399-1100
(850) 487-5229