



**THE FLORIDA SENATE**  
**SENATOR DENNIS BAXLEY**  
*President Pro Tempore*

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** All Senators and Senate Staff  
**FROM:** Dennis Baxley, President Pro Tempore  
**SUBJECT:** Obituary of First Gentleman, Mr. John Passidomo  
**DATE:** April 12, 2024

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I wanted to share the First Gentleman's Obituary, which is below.

**John M. Passidomo**

*January 11, 1952, to April 3, 2024*

Surrounded by his beloved wife of nearly 45 years and his three daughters, John Michael Passidomo, 72, passed away peacefully on April 3, 2024. Days earlier, Passidomo was hiking in Bryce Canyon National Park with his wife, Kathleen, when he suffered fatal injuries from a ground level fall. Their last trip together was one of many great adventures they shared during five decades together, filled with special moments, beautiful scenery and wonderful reflections on their time spent with family.

John was preceded in death by his parents, John A. Passidomo and Gloria Massaglia Passidomo. He is survived by his wife Kathleen Cinotti Passidomo; daughters Catarina Passidomo Townes (Will), Francesca Passidomo (Claudio Almeida), and Gabriella Passidomo; grandchildren William and Emilio Townes; siblings Janet Presley (Gregory), Paul Passidomo, Laura Rosenthal (Robert), and Peter Passidomo (Rita); numerous nieces and nephews; and cherished yellow lab Tucker.

The legacy he leaves behind will be felt for generations by the family and dear friends who knew him and by the community he helped build. He could lift up others with his genuine smile and offer wise counsel to anyone who sought his insight. His unexpected passing leaves a void no one can fulfill.

John had a love for adventure, second only to his love for Kathleen. The two met in law school and married in 1979. They ventured to Naples to build their home, launch their careers and start a family together. Their love for and devotion to one another was admired by all. This September would have marked their 45th wedding anniversary.

John's list of achievements is innumerable, but key among them are the daughters he and Kathleen raised: Catarina, Francesca and Gabriella. He taught them to be hard-working, humble, curious and resilient, values they exemplify today as adults, professionals, wives and mothers. After raising a family of daughters, John was thrilled to be "Poppa" to his two grandsons, William and Emilio. They will forever remember his goofy faces, funny jokes and warm hugs.

John grew up in Harrison, New York, as part of a large, but close-knit, Italian-American family. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from Boston College in 1974 and a Juris Doctorate from Stetson University School of Law in 1978.

John was a real estate lawyer who specialized in land use and zoning. He spent nearly 10 years at the Naples office of a national law firm then known as Frost and Jacobs before partnering with Ed Cheffy in 1993 to open their own practice, Cheffy Passidomo. As an attorney, John played a role in virtually every major development project in Naples over the last four decades. He was instrumental in the re-development of Naples' Fifth Avenue and its emergence as one of the premier destinations in the United States.

Still at the peak of his career, John's keen understanding of the law and commitment to his work earned many awards and accolades over the years, including the "Lion of the Law" Award for Professionalism, which recognizes a lawyer whose "career is marked by a reputation for professionalism and character, and possessed of great legal skill in advocacy", which he and Kathleen received together and Lawyer of the Year in Real Estate for the Naples/Fort Myers Metropolitan Area. On two separate occasions, he received The Florida Bar President's "Pro Bono Service Award" in recognition of his "personal commitment to providing legal services to the poor."

John was a dedicated public servant, having taken on many leadership roles in Naples and Collier County. He served as Chair of the Naples Planning Advisory Board from 1986 to 1990. Subsequently, he served on Naples City Council and as the Vice Mayor of Naples from 1990 to 1992. John was Chair of the Economic Development Council of Collier County from 1995 to 1997 and Chair of the Community Foundation of Collier County from 1998 to 2001. He also served as President of the Collier County Bar Association and as Chairman of its Real Estate Attorneys' Section. In 2000, John and Kathleen were named Outstanding Collier County Citizens of the Year by the Naples Daily News, and in 2003, he was selected as a Laureate in the Junior Achievement of Southwest Florida Leadership Hall of Fame.

All Senators and Senate Staff  
April 12, 2024  
Page 3

As husband to the President of the Florida Senate (2022-2024), John proudly served as the very first “First Gentleman of the Florida Senate.” He was fiercely devoted to Kathleen. As her first and strongest encourager to run for elected office, he supported her career and commitment to public service just as passionately as he did his own.

Even in his final hours, John put others first. A registered organ donor, John made clear that he wanted to help others live in the event he could not. Several matches for his organs made life possible for others, and the family finds comfort knowing their great loss resulted in a life-saving gift.

The community is invited to a celebration of John’s life at the Sugden-Gomez Center of Baker Park in Naples (50 Riverside Circle) on Friday, April 26, from 4 to 7 p.m. with words of remembrance beginning at 5:30 p.m. A funeral mass in John’s honor will be held at St. Anne’s Church (985 3rd Street South) on Saturday, April 27 at 11 a.m. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to the John Passidomo Donor Advised Fund at the Collier Community Foundation (1110 Pine Ridge Road Suite 200, Naples, Florida 34108 % Collier Community Foundation) or at: [https://cfcollier.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit\\_id=6643](https://cfcollier.fcsuite.com/erp/donate/create/fund?funit_id=6643).