



THE FLORIDA SENATE
SENATOR WILTON SIMPSON
Republican President-Designate

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Senators and Senate Professional Staff
FROM: Senate President-Designate Wilton Simpson
SUBJECT: Developing a Plan for the Senate to Safely Conduct the 2020-22 Legislative Term
DATE: October 6, 2020

When we were last together in Tallahassee more than six months ago, I am certain none of us could have imagined the impact COVID-19 would have on our state, our nation, and the world. While our primary focus as Senators is serving the constituents of our districts as they deal with the challenges caused by COVID-19, we also need to plan for Organization Session, Committee Weeks, and the 2021 Legislative Session.

Traditionally, the interim calendar is not released until after November in an election year. We will keep with that practice. Florida's Constitution requires the Legislature to hold an Organization Session two weeks after the general election, **which this year falls on Tuesday, November 17**. In addition to the Organization Session, I know you are getting many questions regarding committee weeks and the 2021 Regular Session, and I want to update you on the process that we have undertaken.

During the interim planning period, members of our staff have been researching strategies employed by other states and have also been engaging in discussions with the Florida Department of Health, universities, and hospitals to ensure the Senate has an understanding of options available to safely conduct our business.

In order to begin the formal process of developing a plan for the Senate, I asked President Galvano to authorize the execution of a contract with infectious disease and infection prevention experts at Tampa General Hospital (TGH). The hospital, in partnership with USF Health, has created a strike-team-like program that connects members of their in-house infection prevention team with infectious disease experts at USF Health Morsani College of Medicine and with private practice physicians in the TGH network who specialize in infectious disease. Together these subject matter experts consult with businesses and organizations on the development of

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safe plans for conducting business. To date, TGH teams have worked with the Florida Aquarium, TECO, the Straz Center for the Performing Arts, and the Tampa Bay Lightning, among others.

The TGH team will work with our professional staff on the development of a plan, including an evaluation of all Senate areas, from our Senator and staff offices, to public areas, to committee rooms, and our Senate Chamber. They will help us develop educational information for Senators and staff on practical, actionable infection prevention steps. Additionally, they will support the Senate on an ongoing basis as the need arises, recognizing that specific intervention strategies and guidance may change between now and early next year, when the bulk of legislative work for the 2021 Session would traditionally take place.

The goal of this new collaboration with TGH is to give Senators, staff, and visitors the confidence that safety measures are fully considered and implemented as we move into the legislative activities ahead of us.

While we don't have all the answers right now, I will continue to communicate with you as we gain an understanding of the specific strategies for the Senate. I also want you to know that we are fortunate to have excellent collaboration with the incoming Speaker of the House of Representatives. We are actively seeking expert advice, we will make informed decisions, and we will work together to implement the best approach on how to keep everyone safe.