

Rene Plasencia “Coach P” House District 50

1. Primary areas of interest

a. Education

As a public school teacher, education was the catalyst for my original candidacy. As the only classroom teacher in the Florida House, I am often looked to for direction on numerous Ed policy issues. As a state, we need to continue reducing the amount of testing in our classrooms and making sure that we get immediate feedback from the testing we do so that teachers can use those results to modify instruction. We need to address the current teacher shortages we are seeing statewide. Over the years, we have asked our teachers to do more with less time. We need to work on eliminating some of the regulatory restrictions we have placed on the profession so that teachers have the autonomy to be innovative once again.

b. Healthcare

Legislatively, my biggest impact thus far has probably been in healthcare. In my first two years I (sponsored/co-sponsored) legislation which would increase access to healthcare and the quality of care while also reducing costs. They included: HB 335 which added ARNP to the list of qualified people who could rescind the Baker Act in order to deal with the gridlock we are seeing in our ED's; HB1241 allowed Pharmacist to have standing to order lifesaving opioid antagonist called naloxone; HB595 allows health clinics to be reimbursed for dental hygiene services for children covered by Medicaid; HB 541 increases the scope of practice for athletic trainers providing greater options for consumers.

Although these measures and others we have passed are a step in the right direction, they do not begin to address the biggest issue which are the millions of Floridians who are uninsured or underinsured. The federal government began the elimination of our LIP funding, which amounts to just over \$2 billion annually because Medicaid expansion was supposed to replace the need for that service. During the 2015 special session A, the Senate proposed a conservative expansion proposal which was voted unfavorably by the house. Medicaid expansion is a proven success in the states which have chosen to expand. A study examining the Medicaid expansion in 11 states, including Arkansas, Colorado, Kentucky and West Virginia, finds the expansions reduced state spending on the uninsured and increased state revenues, thanks to taxes on providers and existing insurers. The Medicaid expansions even led to job growth, according to the report from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. "On average, the states that expanded Medicaid in January 2014 saw jobs grow by 2.4 percent during 2014, while jobs in states that did not expand grew by only 1.8 percent in the same year."

c. Public Safety

I also sponsored three bills that became law which deal with public safety. HB 357 "Chloe's Law" will study traffic deaths along state highways where drownings have occurred to see if we have the correct barriers present. HB 133 "the 43 days initiative act" increased the statute of limitations for rape. HB 917 "the Deputy Pine Bill" will make sure that if our first responders make the ultimate sacrifice for us, their families will be cared for.

1b. Committees requested

Education

K-12

Health quality

Regulatory Affairs

2. How will I weigh the needs of the district as opposed to that of the state?

This question would be better addressed on a case by case basis. However, I was elected to look out for the interests of the people who elected me. If we are allocating dollars for infrastructure improvements, transportation, special education funding, or pilot programs, I would work to make sure that our district is included in that funding.

3. Top 3 most critical needs for Florida/Brevard

1. Jobs

We have done a great job over the last several years to attract companies to our region and create a business friendly climate which allow our entrepreneurial spirit to succeed. We lead the nation in job growth. We need to continue with this momentum in not just attracting more jobs here but also preparing our existing workforce by partnering our schools and industries to make sure our workforce meets the demands of the 21st century jobs.

2. The uninsured/underinsured

See healthcare answer

3. Indian River Lagoon/infrastructure

It is estimated that the lagoon is a \$3 billion driver in our local economy. The most recent fish kill is a sign of what we have known for years. Statewide our infrastructure is becoming more and more outdated and consequently failing to meet the needs of our growing state. Our lagoon suffers with the amount of people living in and around it with the use of septic and stir water runoff. The investment must be made now if we are to save this precious resource.