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## **The Season of Gratitude and Gifts**

For me, Veterans Day in November marks the start of the holiday season filled with gratitude and gifts. It's a season in which we pause to reflect on our many blessings, and in the case of our veterans, we set aside time to show our gratitude for the huge debt owed to those who wear or have worn the military uniform of the United States of America. We are reminded to never take for granted that we enjoy living in the greatest country in the world because of the price they paid for our freedom.

Our country was born from the struggle of the Colonists who sought a better life in what eventually became the United States of America. Their celebration of the first successful harvest in the new world is honored today by our observance of Thanksgiving; a day in which we take time to count our personal blessings and enjoy the fruits of living in a prosperous country. The spirit of the pilgrims and subsequently our founding fathers, lives on today in our ability to passionately and freely allow our voices to be heard and enjoy the fruits of our labors.

Our founders embraced the value in differing opinions and ideologies, and they insightfully ensured ongoing change, cooperation and compromise which begins by each person's ability to cast a ballot. The ability to have our voices heard and our opinions known is one of the greatest benefits of living in a free country.

Personally, I look forward to closing the year by celebrating what I believe to be the greatest gift of all, and professionally, I want to express my gratitude for the public service afforded me by the citizens of Pasco County. With the start of the new year, I look forward to an election year in which collectively, the voices of the voters possess power, a power afforded us by those who were brave enough to pursue it and those who have bravely defended it with their lives. Let us never take our gift of freedom lightly or for granted, and let it begin with a peaceful, reflective celebration in the upcoming season of gratitude and gifts.

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