



## The Election Cycle is Upon Us!

Election season is officially underway with early primaries throughout the country, and more specifically, the March 17, 2020 Presidential Preference Primary (PPP) in Florida. The PPP, like all primaries in Florida, is a closed primary, and as we approach the February 18, 2020, bookclosing deadline, be sure you are registered in the same party as your candidate of choice. For the first time since 1992 an incumbent president will face opposition in the primary, and both democrats and republicans will be voting in the PPP.

As we open the 2020 election cycle, I can assure the voters of Pasco County that we have been beyond vigilant in working with our state and federal partners in securing our elections. Securing both our physical and cyber systems has been one of our top priorities, but there are two other major areas of concern that every voter has the ability and responsibility to help. For the sake of our democracy, we must prioritize a return to civility, and we must begin using social media more responsibly. As a nation, most people want it and we all deserve it.

A restoration to political civility should begin at the top. I recently submitted to the Board of County Commissioners an amended county ordinance that asks candidates to sign and attest that they plan to run a positive campaign devoid of personal attacks on their opponents. On an individual level, we can begin to restore civility through our interactions on social media, and more importantly, to use social media responsibly. Social media has and continues to be a concern when after the 2016 election cycle it became clear that nefarious nation state actors were actively seeking to negatively impact our elections. The best case in defense of this statement is the instance of 72,000 Americans who in 2016 RSVP'd to a non-existent political event which was the total fabrication of nefarious operatives.

The collective conclusion of literally every United States intelligence agency confirms that foreign state actors undeniably launched misinformation campaigns for the sole purpose of intentionally interfering in our elections in 2016. By seeking to drive the narrative, they successfully spread their message across the political spectrum via unknowing Americans who shared/liked Facebook posts which originated in Moscow. This is a very real threat that shows no sign of letting up in the 2020 election cycle, and in fact, it is now believed that other countries including China, North Korea and Iran are potentially collaborating to use similar tactics against us.

As we begin the 2020 election cycle, I respectfully ask for your help in restoring civility and mending the polarization in our country by re-thinking your personal use of social media. The integrity of our elections is in everyone's best interest, and that my friends should never be a partisan issue.

**#YourVoteYourVoice**  
 **★ 2020**

