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Statewide Televised Debate Set for Florida's U.S. Senate Race

*Leadership Florida, Florida Press Association
To Produce "Decision 2016: Before You Vote"*

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – The most experienced and trusted political debate partnership in Florida's modern history today announced plans for a live, statewide-televised debate for the Florida U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Sen. Marco Rubio. **Leadership Florida** and the **Florida Press Association** reported that both major political parties' respective nominees are expected to participate in the debate – "Decision 2016: Before You Vote" – that will be broadcast in October, from the Central Campus of **Broward College** in Davie, Florida.

The producing television station partner will be **WPBF 25**, the Hearst-owned ABC affiliate based in West Palm Beach. A total of 11 broadcast partners will be selected around the state to help ensure that the program is viewed in every media market in Florida. The live debate broadcast will also be simulcast on all Florida Public Radio member stations.

"As always, Florida is a key state in this big election year and the race to pick a new U.S. Senator is being closely watched nationally," said Dean Ridings, the current chairman of Leadership Florida, who also serves president of the Florida Press Association. "This debate will help millions of Floridians learn more about who the key contenders for the job are and where they stand on the issues that matter most to our citizens."

One of the nation's most esteemed, experienced, and decorated network news producers, multi-Emmy Award Winner **Phil Alongi**, who spent much of his storied career as Executive Producer of Specials and Politics at NBC News, has been signed to serve as Executive Producer of the U.S. Senate debate project. He will have responsibility for coordinating all elements of the project for the producing partners – with Broward College, the candidates, the producing station and broadcast partners.

“Civil discourse is paramount to democracy and the advancement of our country, and Broward College is committed to providing the community with a platform for discussion on topics of state and national importance,” said Broward College President J. David Armstrong, Jr. “We were thrilled to host a gubernatorial debate during the general election two years ago, and we are honored to have had Bailey Hall chosen as the venue once again.”

Moderating the debate will be veteran WPBF 25 News anchor and multi-Emmy Award winner **Todd McDermott**, with a media panel still to be named.

“WPBF 25 is a well-known leader within the West Palm Beach market when it comes to important political coverage,” said WPBF 25 President and General Manager, Caroline Taplett. “We are proud to be the producing station for the statewide 2016 Senatorial Debate and are honored to partner with Leadership Florida, the Florida Press Association and Broward College.”

The “Before You Vote” statewide broadcast ultimately will include a network affiliate partner in each of the following markets: Miami/Ft. Lauderdale; West Palm Beach; Orlando; Jacksonville; Tampa/St. Petersburg; Sarasota; Ft. Myers; Gainesville; Pensacola; Panama City; and Tallahassee.

*For more than 34 years, **Leadership Florida** has provided a non-partisan, non-parochial perspective about statewide topics of concern and opportunities while encouraging collaboration among the state's leadership.*

*The **Florida Press Association** is a nonprofit corporation designed to protect the freedoms and advance the professional standards of the press in Florida, with a membership that includes most of Florida's daily and weekly newspapers.*

***Broward College** is ranked as one of the top 10 community colleges in the nation by the Aspen Institute. Serving more than 68,000 students annually, Broward College provides residents with certificate programs, two-year university-transfer degrees, two-year career degrees and baccalaureate degrees in selected programs. The mission of the college is to provide high-quality educational programs and services that are affordable and accessible to a diverse community of learners. For more information, visit www.broward.edu.*

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