



**“Before You Vote” Statewide-Televised Gubernatorial Debate Final Details Announced;
Planned U.S. Senate Debate Cancelled as Candidates Fail to Commit to Participate**

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Leadership Florida and the Florida Press Association today announced final plans for the October 24 “Decision 2018: Before You Vote” statewide televised gubernatorial debate between Democratic nominee, Mayor Andrew Gillum, and the Republican nominee, Congressman Ron DeSantis—and any other candidate who may qualify under the project’s criteria. The organizations today also cancelled a parallel planned statewide televised debate set for October 23 in Florida’s U.S. Senate race because neither Governor Rick Scott, the Republican nominee, nor incumbent Senator Bill Nelson, the Democratic nominee, committed to participate.

“We’re excited that this gubernatorial debate will help inform millions of voters about the views and vision of the candidates for governor -- just days before the general election,” said Wendy Spencer, president of Leadership Florida. “This is the only live, 60-minute debate in this election cycle with a statewide consortium of broadcast partners blanketing every market in the Sunshine State.”

The gubernatorial debate will be produced from the campus of Broward College, from 7-8 p.m. on October 24, with WPBF 25 News, the Hearst Television-owned ABC affiliate in West Palm Beach, leading the production under the guidance of longtime former NBC News executive producer Phil Alongi, one of the nation’s most respected and accomplished broadcast professionals. The debate will be moderated by WPBF 25 News anchor and multi-Emmy Award winner Todd McDermott, with a media panel that will be named soon. The debate will be simulcast statewide on Florida Public Radio and will later be rebroadcast nationally on C-Span. Underwriting sponsors of the debate include the Florida League of Cities, Broward College, AARP, the Claude Pepper Center, and the Claude Pepper Foundation.

“It’s critically important for voters to hear firsthand the perspectives from the gubernatorial candidates about the critical issues that matter most to millions of Floridians,” said Dean Ridings, president of the Florida Press Association. “We expect to have direct questions asked and answered about issues ranging from providing for the education of our children to protecting Florida’s environment, and many others.”

In addition to WPBF, the broadcast partners in the “Before You Vote” consortium include:

Miami-Ft. Lauderdale — WFOR (CBS)
West Palm Beach — WPBF (ABC)
Orlando — WESH (NBC)
Jacksonville — WJXX (ABC)
Gainesville — WCJB (ABC)
Tampa/St. Pete — WFLA (NBC)
Tallahassee — WCTV (CBS)

Pensacola————— WEAR (ABC)* (one-hour delay in broadcast time)
Panama City————— WMBB (ABC)* (one-hour delay in broadcast time)
Fort Myers————— WBBH (NBC)

The Leadership Florida and Florida Press Association debate partnership is responsible for the longest-running, most highly respected statewide televised debate series in Florida's modern political history, in gubernatorial and U.S. Senate contests. In 2016, the partnership produced the U.S. Senate debate in which incumbent Senator Marco Rubio faced off against Democratic challenger, Congressman Patrick Murphy.

About Leadership Florida

For thirty-seven years, Leadership Florida has dedicated itself to bringing together emerging and existing leaders from across the state to challenge, prepare, and inspire them to build a better Florida. As a respected non-partisan organization, Leadership Florida provides meaningful forums and creates unique opportunities introducing members to fresh transformative ideas and information. Leadership Florida is a federally registered trademark.

About The Florida Press Association

The Florida Press Association is a nonprofit organization with a purpose to protect the freedoms and advance the professional standards of the press in Florida, with a membership of Florida's daily and weekly newspapers and online local media. Visit www.flpress.com to learn more.

About Broward College

Serving more than 63,000 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.

About WPBF 25

WPBF 25 is the ABC affiliate serving the West Palm Beach-Ft. Pierce Designated Market Area as defined by the Nielsen Company. WPBF 25 is owned and operated by Hearst Television. WPBF 25 can be viewed locally on Comcast channel 10 or 431(HD), Dish Network/Direct TV/AT&T U-verse on channel 25 and over the air on digital channel 25-1. WPBF 25 also operates WPBF.COM, The Justice Network, and Estrella TV West Palm Beach, South Florida's premier Spanish-language entertainment channel. About Hearst Television Hearst Television owns and operates television and radio stations serving 26 media markets across 39 states reaching over 21 million U.S. television households. Through its partnership with nearly all of the major networks, Hearst Television distributes national content over nearly 70 video channels including programming from ABC, NBC, CBS, CW, MY Net, MeTV, This TV, Estrella and more. The radio stations are leaders in Baltimore news/talk and rock music listenership. Hearst Television is recognized as one of the industry's premier companies and has been honored with numerous awards for distinguished journalism, industry innovation, and community service. Hearst Television is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hearst. The Company's Web address is www.hearsttelevision.com