



New Administrations Bring New Changes

On January 8, 2019, Florida will inaugurate Ron DeSantis as the state's 46th Governor, as well as swearing in three additional cabinet officers: Attorney General Ashley Moody, Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis, and Commissioner of Agriculture Nikki Fried. As we speak, each of these officers-elect is busy shaping their administration and appointing key staff who will help implement their policies over the next four years. In the coming weeks, the transition teams for each of the statewide elected officials will announce these key hires.

One of the primary agencies that will impact vacation rental issues is the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR), which is overseen by the Governor's office. This agency is in charge of licensure and regulation for public lodging establishments, which includes vacation rental properties. The DeSantis transition team has already announced their pick for Secretary of the DBPR. Representative Halsey Beshears (R-Monticello) has been tapped to lead the agency. Beshears has served in the Florida House since 2012, most recently serving as the chairman of the Business and Professional Regulation subcommittee.

Though the new cabinet will not take office until January, the post-election transition in the Florida House and Senate has already occurred. The new Speaker of the House, Jose Oliva (R-Hialeah), and Senate President, Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton), have renamed and reorganized some committees and have announced both committee chairs and membership. While the path is always uncertain, some of the committees that could hear vacation rental bills are outlined below.

In the Senate, some key committees that could affect our issues are Commerce and Tourism and Community Affairs. Commerce and Tourism will be led by Senator Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota), who has previously served one term in the Florida House and now holds the seat formerly occupied by Greg Steube, who has moved on to Congress. At the helm of Community Affairs is Senator Anitere Flores (R-Miami), a long-serving Senator whose district includes the Florida Keys. Another committee, new this year, that could consider vacation rental issues is Innovation, Industry, and Technology. This committee will be chaired by Senator Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby), who is slated to be Senate President in 2021.

In the House, the Commerce Committee will likely be a stop for any vacation rental bills. The Commerce Committee chair is Representative Mike La Rosa (R-St. Cloud), who chaired this committee during the 2016 and 2017 legislative sessions. Other committees in the House that could consider vacation rental issues include the Business and Professions Subcommittee, chaired by Representative Heather Fitzhagen (R-Fort Myers), and the Workforce Development and Tourism Subcommittee, chaired by Representative Rene Plasencia (R-Orlando).

These changes at the cabinet and legislative levels will bring new ideas and new approaches. The LLW lobbying team is looking forward to helping the FL VRMA navigate these changes in the 2019 legislative session and beyond.