



First Amendment Foundation Announces New Board of Trustees Leadership

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TALLAHASSEE -- The First Amendment Foundation (FAF) Board of Trustees has unanimously elected a new chair and vice-chair to help guide the Foundation in its mission to protect the public's constitutional right to open government. Trimmel Gomes, president of Gomes Media Strategies, was elected chairperson, and Edward L. Birk, a First Amendment attorney and shareholder at Marks Gray, P.A., was elected vice-chairperson.

With the latest round of attempts to overturn constitutional safeguards to all forms of expression, from political dissent to controversial speech, these new leaders are taking charge at the most critical time, with unprecedented threats to the public's right to free speech, a free press and an open government moving through the Florida Legislature.



"We are excited to have Trimmel and Ed step into these leadership roles at the First Amendment Foundation," said Bobby Block, Executive Director of FAF. "Their expertise and passion for our mission will help us continue to promote government transparency and accountability in Florida."

"The challenges we face today with advances in media and information technologies demand the public's attention as they come with new threats on top of deliberate attempts to stifle, suppress, and silence speech," said Gomes.

In addition to constant chipping away of Florida's nationally revered public records and open meetings laws with new exemptions, there are proposals in the Florida Legislature

that would impose restrictions on how the media can report on the people seeking these changes.



"This will not only chill speech, it will freeze it. Free speech is the lifeblood of our democracy," said Birk, also the general counsel for the Foundation. The First Amendment contains 45 words that created and now maintain our democracy. Free speech is life itself.

Gomes and Birk will lead the Foundation's efforts to promote government transparency, educate the public and policymakers about the importance of open government, and protect Floridians' First Amendment rights. This protection is not limited to any specific group or ideology but rather applies to all individuals equally, regardless of their political leanings.

About The Florida First Amendment Foundation

The Florida First Amendment Foundation is a non-partisan non-profit organization that believes government openness and transparency are critical to citizen trust and involvement in our democratic society. The Foundation serves as a highly visible and accessible source of authoritative information, expertise and assistance to the public and government alike. The Foundation advocates for the rights of freedom of speech and press as enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, as well as for open meetings and access to public records protected by the Florida constitution and state statutes.

FAF does this work primarily through education programs, litigation and legislative advocacy. Through ongoing monitoring of the state's laws and decision-making and the education of government officials and citizens, the Foundation promotes the public's constitutional right to oversee and participate freely in the governance process.

How to get involved with the Florida FAF and support the mission

The foundation counts on the support of our members and donors to preserve sunshine in Florida. Your financial support and commitment ensure that we can continue our work in open government. We are the only organization helping citizens, businesses and government officials alike fight for greater transparency at all levels. That has been our commitment since 1985.

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