

ITE RESEARCH REPORT

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ILLINOIS

SUBJECT: Florida Senate Race 2022
REPORT CURRENT AS OF: February 7, 2022
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- INCUMBENT
- CHALLENGER
- OPEN SEAT

PRIMARY DATE: August 23, 2022

STATE OR DISTRICT: Florida

CANDIDATE(S) BACKGROUND:

Val Demings Biography (from her official House website)

Congresswoman Val Demings represents Florida's 10th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. Born in a two-room, wooden framed home in Jacksonville, Val Demings was the youngest of seven children. Her parents, Elouise, a maid, and James, a janitor, did all they could to support their seven children and instill in them the meaning of hard work.

Val took these lessons seriously, getting her first job at age 14, and became the first in her family to graduate from college. With her parents proudly at her side, she received a B.S. in Criminology from Florida State University.

Val began her career in Jacksonville as a social worker, working with foster children. Despite seeing few women in the ranks of law enforcement in the early 1980's, Val was inspired to move to Orlando to join the police force. She graduated from the police academy as class president, receiving the Board of Trustees' Award for Overall Excellence, and quickly earned the reputation of a tenacious, no-nonsense cop.

It was that reputation that helped her work her way up the ranks while raising a family. During her 27-year career she served in virtually every department, including serving as Commander of the Special Operations, where she was responsible for some of Orlando's highest profile tasks, including special events and dignity protection.

In 2007, Val Demings made history when she was appointed to serve as Orlando's first female Chief of Police. Chief Demings was widely praised for her dynamic leadership and a significant drop in crime. She shepherded the department through the financial crisis and despite budgetary constraints kept the same number of officers on the streets. Remarkably, the Orlando Police Department reduced violent crime by more than 40 percent while she was Chief.

Chief Demings founded innovative programs like Operation Positive Direction, a mentoring program that empowers at-risk students through tutoring, community service, and positive incentives. She also launched Operation Free Palms, a project focusing on rejuvenating Orlando's most crime-ridden housing complex, the Palms Apartments. Collaborating with city officials and faith leaders, this initiative included increasing access to childcare, building playgrounds, a GED program, and job skills training to improve the quality of life in Orlando's most distressed community.

Rep. Demings is eager to continue her record of public service as the Congresswoman representing the people of the 10th District of Florida.

Rep. Demings is married to Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings, is a proud mother to three sons, and proud grandmother to five.

Rep. Demings holds an honorary doctorate of laws from Bethune-Cookman University.

Rep. Demings is an active member of St. Mark A.M.E., Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Orlando Chapter of the Links, Inc., NAACP Silver Life Member, Florida Bar Citizens Advisory Committee, Florida Police Chiefs, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, National Association of Women Law Enforcement Executives, National Congress of Black Women, and numerous other affiliations.

Rep. Demings enjoys spending her very limited free time riding her Harley-Davidson Road King Classic motorcycle. She has completed the O.U.C. half marathon as well as the Walt Disney marathon.

Rep. Demings sits on the Judiciary Committee and the Committee on Homeland Security.

CANDIDATE CAMPAIGN FINANCES:

As of 12/31/21

| Name | Receipts | Disbursements | Cash on hand |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Val Demings | \$20,701,606 | \$13,314,550 | \$8,158,478 |

OPPONENT(S) BACKGROUND:

Incumbent Republican Senator Marco Rubio has no serious challengers in the Republican primary.

Twelve Democrats have declared their candidacy, with U.S. Representative Val Demings seen as the clear front-runner along with former Congressman Alan Grayson. Demings would be the state's first black Senator. Others declared candidates are:

- Edward Abud, businessman
- Allen Ellison, policy consultant and nominee for Florida's 17th congressional district in 2018 and 2020
- Al Fox, president of the Alliance for Responsible Cuba Policy Foundation
- Dana Harshman, pharmacist
- Josue Larose, perennial candidate
- Allek Pastrana, engineer
- Ken Russell, Miami City Commissioner
- William Sanchez, immigration lawyer and former special counsel for the U.S. Department of Justice
- Coleman Watson, federal attorney and stroke survivor
- Joshua Weil, teacher

OPPONENT CAMPAIGN FINANCES:

As of 12/31/2021

| Democrats | Receipts | Disbursements | Cash on hand |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| Val Demings | \$20,701,606 | \$13,314,550 | \$8,158,478 |
| Ken Russell | \$997,743 | \$660,336 | \$ 337,407 |
| Alan Grayson | \$446,030. | \$201,058 | \$ 248,939 |
| William Sanchez | \$154,160. | \$119,604 | \$ -2,101 |
| Allen Ellison | \$ 74,545 | \$ 78,421 | \$ 2,279 |
| Coleman Watson | \$ 12,780 | \$ 13,367 | \$ -612 |
| Albert Fox | \$12,029 | \$ 1,848 | \$ 10,181 |

Republican

Marco Rubio \$24,375,054 \$13,969,514 \$10,587,998

STATE POLITICAL CLIMATE:

Recent Polls:

- Real Clear Politics as of 2/1/22: Rubio 50% to Demings 41% with 8% undecided.
- Suffolk University through January 29, 2022: Rubio 49% to Demings 41% with 10% undecided and 4.4% margin of error.

Past Florida Election Results

The two previous Senate elections were both decided by 2.4%.

- 2018 Election: Rick Scott(R) defeated incumbent Senator Bill Nelson (D) by 0.2%, in a 50.1% to 49.9% race.
- 2016 Election: Sen. Marco Rubio won reelection by defeating U.S. Rep Patrick Murphy (D) by 7.7% in a 52% to 44.3%, with several third party or independent candidates.

The two most recent Presidential elections were both decided by less than 4%:

- 2020: Trump beat Joe Biden by a margin of 3.3%
- 2016: Trump beat Hillary Clinton by a margin of 1.2%

Florida has been a reliable swing state since 1992's fiercely contested Presidential election. In the last 20 years, the Republican Party has grown more powerful in Florida. Currently, it holds nearly all state-wide offices, as well as both US Senate seats and 16 of 27 US House Representative seats.

Per figures released by the Florida Secretary of State:

- Registered Republicans are 35.77% of total voters
- Registered Democrats are 35.93% of total voters
- Registered Independents are 26.54% of total voters

Per the 2020 Census figures

| Demographic | Proportion |
|-------------------|------------|
| White American | 51.5% |
| Hispanic American | 26.5% |
| African American | 14.5% |
| Asian Americans | 2.9% |
| Multiracial | 3.7% |
| Others | 0.9% |

Most of Florida's Hispanics are Cubans.

BIDEN +/- 2020

Trump beat Biden 51.22% to 47.86 %

POLITICAL REPORTS AND POLLS (e.g., Cook Political Report, FiveThirtyEight, Sabato's Crystal Ball)

As of February 1, 2022, the race trackers report as follows:

The Cook Political Report: Lean Republican

FiveThirtyEight: Likely Republican

Sabato's Crystal Ball: Likely Republican

SUPPORT:

- YES
- NO
- TBD

NEWSLINKS:

<https://floridapolitics.com/archives/491610-val-demings-trumpets-historically-strong-fundraising-sends-warning-to-marco-rubio/>

<https://www.tampabay.com/news/florida-politics/2022/02/07/florida-democrats-launch-25-million-effort-to-close-voter-registration-gap/>