

Florida's restless GOP bench

Even out of office, Trump will steer the fate of the state's presidential hopefuls.

BY KIRBY WILSON AND STEVE CONTORNO
Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

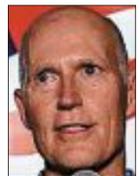
MARIETTA, Ga. — The Cobb County Republican Party headquarters is a sparse event space deep in the bowels of a shopping center 20 miles outside Atlanta. Red, white and blue streamers adorn the rafters. Banners with the Statue of Liberty and patriotic messages complete the furnishings.

Greeting guests at the entrance are cutouts of the party's past and current icons: Presidents Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump.

Appearing there on a recent November morning was the man once considered the GOP's future, Marco Rubio, Florida's senior senator. Rubio arrived in Georgia to campaign for the most consequential U.S. Senate races in a generation. As a dutiful foot soldier in Trump's Republican Party, Rubio declined to look ahead to the next election while the president refuses to concede the last one, insisting to reporters, "We're not even through with 2020 yet."

But Rubio's message for his Georgia audience sounded like he'd thought hard about the current state of America and the kind of campaign that can win across the country. "Normal people that want to own a home and raise their family in a safe community and retire with dignity, and have a country that's safe and stable, and give their children a chance at a better life, they're going to vote against people that are crazy," Rubio said.

In the weeks since Trump, their party's standard-bearer lost reelection, the political ambitions of Florida's top Republicans — Rubio, Sen. Rick Scott and Gov. Ron DeSantis — have shifted precariously. The trio are among at least a dozen Republicans in the conversation to become the party's next presidential nominee. But how can the Republican



Sen. Rick Scott



Gov. Ron DeSantis

See **REPUBLICANS, 6A**

Speaking of Georgia ...

Why Florida's senators care about Georgia — and why you should too: a look at the importance of the Senate runoffs there. **6A**

Presidential transition

The transition of power is a mix of laws and tradition. PolitiFact takes a look at how the Trump-Biden transition has gone off the rails. **7A**

TARGETED | A TIMES INVESTIGATION

PROFILING KIDS

Pasco's sheriff uses grades and abuse histories to guess which schoolchildren could become criminals. The kids and their parents don't know.



The Sheriff's Office accesses private records on Pasco students that are so sensitive they're protected by state and federal law.

DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD | Times

BY NEIL BEDI AND KATHLEEN McGRORY | Times Staff Writers
Second in a series

The Pasco Sheriff's Office keeps a secret list of kids it thinks could "fall into a life of crime" based on factors like whether they've been abused or gotten a D or an F in school, according to the agency's internal intelligence manual.

The Sheriff's Office assembles the list by combining the rosters for most middle and high schools in the county with records so sensitive, they're protected by state and federal law.

School district data shows which children are struggling academically, miss too many classes or are sent to the office for discipline. Records from the state Department of Children and Families flag kids who have witnessed household violence or experienced it themselves.

According to the manual, any one of those factors makes a child more likely to become a criminal.

Four hundred twenty kids are on the list, the Sheriff's Office said.

The process largely plays out in secret. The Sheriff's Office doesn't tell the kids or

their parents about the designation. In an interview, school superintendent Kurt Browning said he was unaware the Sheriff's Office was using school data to identify kids who might become criminals. So were the principals of two high schools.

The Department of Children and Families didn't answer when asked if it knew its data was being fed into such a system.

Sheriff Chris Nocco declined requests to be interviewed, and his agency did not make anyone from its intelligence-led policing or school resource divisions available for comment.



Times (2016)

Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco

In a series of written statements, the Sheriff's Office said the list is used only to help the deputies assigned to middle and high schools offer "mentorship" and "resources" to students.

Asked for specifics, it pointed to one program in which school resource officers take children fishing and another in which they give clothes to kids in need.

Ten experts in law enforcement and student privacy questioned the justification for combing through thousands of students' education and child-welfare records.

They called the program highly unusual. Many said it was a clear misuse of children's confidential information that stretched the limits of the law.

"Can you imagine having your kid in that county and they might be on a list that says they may become a criminal?" said Linnette Attai, a consultant who helps companies and schools comply with student privacy laws.

"And you have no way of finding out if they are on that list?"
See **PASCO, 9A**

Families face a Thanksgiving divided

The resurgence of coronavirus has forced a majority to sharply scale down celebrations.

BY SHARON KENNEDY WYNNE
Times Staff Writer

Long before arguments can begin at the Thanksgiving table over politics, families are debating if or how they should gather as another wave of the coronavirus spreads across the country.

Since the pandemic began here in March, Renae Williams McConnell, 65, and her husband, 70, have kept to themselves in their Treasure Island home and haven't returned to their small farm near Vidalia, Ga.

Normally, they would host 25-30 family

members and friends for Thanksgiving at their farmhouse. This year, they thought seriously about canceling. But the darker side of coronavirus fatigue is setting in among family members young and old who have been kept apart for months.

"We really felt like it is too much of an emotional toll for the grandkids for us not to see them on Thanksgiving," McConnell said. The children, ages 8 to 20, all have talked of being depressed at not seeing their cousins and especially their grandfather, "because he has been the male figure in their lives."

The emotional toll of isolation is often at

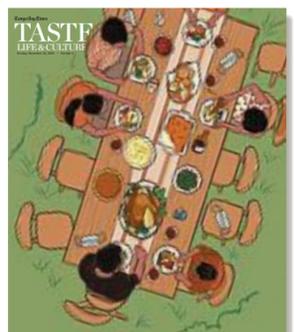
the center of the Thanksgiving decision.

President Donald Trump's COVID-19 adviser, Dr. Scott Atlas, is urging Americans to visit elderly family members for Thanksgiving.

"This kind of isolation is one of the unspoken tragedies of the elderly who are now being told don't see your family at Thanksgiving," Atlas, a radiologist, told Fox News on Monday evening.

But public health officials worry that traditional Thanksgiving gatherings could add fuel to the current outbreak.

See **THANKSGIVING, 4A**



A SPECIAL TASTE

Plan your Thanksgiving meal, from coronavirus safety tips to tasty new dishes. **Section K**

DID OFFICIALS KNOW WHAT WAS THERE?

A report suggests another Black cemetery was either lost or forgotten, this one at MacDill Air Force Base. That makes it the fifth such bay area graveyard to be rediscovered recently. **Local & State, 1B**

TRASHING TEAMS MISSES THE POINT

If you're looking to place blame for Saturday's game between Clemson and Florida State being called off, there's a surefire culprit: the coronavirus, colleges reporter Matt Baker says. **Sports, 1C**

BIG BUSINESS OF OFF-CAMPUS DORMS

Developers stepped in as growing universities weren't building new dormitories fast enough. The result? Since 2011, Florida has added 40,000 privately owned, off-campus beds. **Business, 1D**

BRINGING ATTENTION TO AWFUL INJUSTICE

A Tampa photographer wants the nation to know the story of one of his ancestors, who was lynched in North Carolina in 1921 for demanding better apples than the ones he was sold. **Floridian, 1E**

Few showers

8 a.m. Noon 4 p.m. 8 p.m.
69° 79° 80° 73°

30% chance of rain
More, back page of Sports
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INDEX

Astrology	F	Crossword	F
Business	1D	Editorials	2P
Classified	F	Lottery	2A
Comics	F	Puzzles	F

