**PINELLAS HAS 8 STATE LEGISLATORS UP FOR**

**RE-ELECTION IN 2020**

**HOW DO THEY VOTE ON GUN SAFETY?**

*“Although the overall violent crime rate nationally has been on a downward trend since the 1990s, Florida has been the site of at least seven mass shootings in the past three years.”[[1]](#footnote-2)*

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - 2 Year Terms**

REPUBLICANS

JAMIE GRANT (R) District 64, Elected 2010

CHRIS LATVALA (R) - District 67, Elected 2014

CHRIS SPROWLS (R) District 65, Elected 2014

NICK DiCEGLIE (R) District 66, Elected in 2018

DEMOCRATS

BEN DIAMOND (D) District 68, Elected 2016

WENGAY NEWTON, SR. (D), District 70, Elected 2016

JENNIFER WEBB (D) District 69, Elected 2018

**SENATE - 4 year terms**

DEMOCRAT DARRYL ROUSON (D) District 19, Elected 2016 (Previously in Florida House of Representatives, District 70, 2008-2016)

\*Note that Republicans control the Senate, the House, and the governorship and have done so for the last 20 years.

**ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN AND BACKGROUND CHECKS**

In 2018, six days after the Parkland shooting, House Republicans rejected a motion by Democrats to debate an assault weapons ban.

Like all other Republicans present, the Pinellas Republicans voted NO on the Democrats’ motion:

**VOTED NO** - James Grant (R), Chris Latvala (R), Chris Sprowls (R)

**VOTED YES** - Ben Diamond (D) [Wengay Newton, Sr.](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/details.aspx?MemberId=4659&LegislativeTermId=87) (D)

Nick DiCeglie (R) and Jennifer Webb (D) were not in office at the time of this vote. Darryl Rouson (D) was in Senate.

This legislation would have banned weapons like the one used in Parkland. An assault weapons ban failed again during the 2019 session (no votes recorded).

In August of 2019, after the mass shootings in El Paso, TX and Dayton, OH, Democrats forced a vote on whether or not to convene a special session so the legislature could consider background checks for all firearm sales, bans on large-capacity magazines, and other mechanisms to address gun violence. The effort failed. (An assault weapons ban was not up for consideration.)

**VOTED NO** - James Grant (R), Nick DiCeglie (R), Chris Latvala (R), Chris Sprowls (R)

**VOTED YES** - Ben Diamond (D) [Wengay Newton, Sr.](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/details.aspx?MemberId=4659&LegislativeTermId=87) (D) Darryl Rouson (D) Jennifer Webb (D)

In the past, Democrats have filed other gun safety bills, including for universal background checks, but with the Republicans in control, these bills have been sidelined without the legislators having to vote on the record. In February 2019, however, Republican James Grant, Chair of the [Criminal Justice Subcommittee](https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Committees/committeesdetail.aspx?TermId=88&CommitteeId=3023)**,** said that “a background check is ‘effectively a gun registry,’ and he won’t support it.” [[2]](#footnote-3)

**ASSAULT WEAPONS BAN PETITION**

There is a petition to put an amendment on Florida's 2020 ballot to constitutionally ban the sale of assault weapons. <https://bawnfl.org/amendment.html>

Republican Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody has been working to prevent the proposed amendment from being placed on the ballot. She continued to oppose the amendment even in the wake of the mass shootings in El Paso, TX and Dayton, OH.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis created another possible roadblock when he approved legislation [HB 5] that makes it harder for citizens to petition to put amendments on the ballot.

Pinellas Republicans voted YES to make it harder to get amendments on the ballot, while Pinellas Democrats voted NO.

**VOTED YES** - James Grant (R), Nick DiCeglie (R), Chris Latvala (R), Chris Sprowls (R)

**VOTED NO** - Jennifer Webb (D) Ben Diamond (D) [Wengay Newton, Sr.](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/details.aspx?MemberId=4659&LegislativeTermId=87) (D) Darryl Rouson (D)

**GUNS IN SCHOOLS**

In 2018, the Florida legislature passed a bill allowing school personnel to be armed (SB 7026), but teachers who exclusively performed classroom duties were excluded. Then in 2019, with the passage of SB 7030, they allowed teachers to be armed.[[3]](#footnote-4) All Democrats in the House and Senate voted against arming teachers.

**2019**

**SB 7030**

**Arming Teachers**

**VOTED YES** - James Grant (R), Nick DiCeglie (R), Chris Latvala (R), Chris Sprowls (R)

**VOTED NO** - Jennifer Webb (D) Ben Diamond (D) [Wengay Newton, Sr.](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/details.aspx?MemberId=4659&LegislativeTermId=87) (D) Darryl Rouson (D)

**2018**

[SB 7026](https://votesmart.org/bill/24440/62450/117113/establishes-the-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-school-public-safety-act)

Arming School Personnel

Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School

Public Safety Act

Created a “guardian” program that **allows school personnel to be armed**, but teachers who exclusively perform classroom duties were excluded. (This exclusion was removed in 2019 by the bill referenced above, SB 7030.) SB 7026 also provided for some gun restrictions and funding for safety measures and mental health services.

**VOTED YES** Chris Latvala (R), Chris Sprowls (R)

**VOTED NO** Ben Diamond (D) [Wengay Newton, Sr.](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/details.aspx?MemberId=4659&LegislativeTermId=87) (D) Darryl Rouson (D) James Grant (R)

Nick DiCeglie (R) and Jennifer Webb (D) were not in office at the time of this vote.

**Guns on college campuses and universities**

In 2016, Republicans, **Chris Sprowls (R), James Grant (R),** and **Chris Latvala (R),** voted to allow guns to be carried openly onto college and university campuses, where they are presently not allowed. In that same year, **Chris Sprowls (R),** and **James Grant (R)** voted in favor of open-carry of firearms. These bills failed.[[4]](#footnote-5)

Then in 2019, Republicans, **Chris Sprowls (R), James Grant (R), Chris Latvala (R),** and **Nick DiCeglie (R**) voted to allow concealed weapons in churches operating on the same grounds as schools.[[5]](#footnote-6) This bill failed.

Also in 2019, a bill “to bar school districts from preventing adults over 18 from storing a firearm in their vehicle on school grounds[,]” was referred to the Criminal Justice Subcommittee, where Republican, **James Grant** **(R)** is Chair. He voted in favor of the bill which then died in the Education Committee.[[6]](#footnote-7)

**STAND YOUR GROUND**

**2017**

[**SB 128**](http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2017/00128)

**Shifts burden of proof in “stand your ground” cases from shooter to party trying to overcome immunity defense.**

VOTED YES Chris Sprowls (R), James Grant (R), Chris Latvala (R)

VOTED NO Ben Diamond (D) [Wengay Newton, Sr.](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Representatives/details.aspx?MemberId=4659&LegislativeTermId=87) (D) Darryl Rouson (D)

Nick DiCeglie (R) and Jennifer Webb (D) were not in office at the time of this vote.

**To see how your representative voted on additional legislation, go to https://www.floridareportcard.com.**

**Did you know?**

“[S]tates with stricter gun laws and laws requiring universal background checks for firearm purchase had lower firearm-related pediatric mortality rates.” <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/144/2/e20183283#ref-9>,

“Half as many US Children Die from Firearm Injuries Where Gun Laws are Strictest.” <https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/Half-as-many-U-S-Children-Die-from-Firearm-Injuries-Where-Gun-Laws-are-Strictest.aspx?fbclid=IwAR2FFj3mroprK3n8Eg67R_piuBdqrlYrUankxBnr0RMndfDEwdfKhnrV6fA>

A 2017 study “f[ound that violent crime rates increased](https://news.stanford.edu/2017/06/21/violent-crime-increases-right-carry-states/) with each additional year a right-to-carry law was in place, presumably as more people were carrying guns on their person and in their vehicles. By years seven through 10 following the adoption of a RTC law, violent crime rates were 11 percent to 14 percent higher than predicted had such laws not been in place. Weaker concealed carry laws were associated with a 10 percent higher murder rate 10 years following the adoption of RTC laws. A separate study by Boston University researchers also found that state laws greatly expanding legal gun carrying were linked to increased homicides with handguns.”<https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/365543-gun-owners-and-republicans-dont-really-want-concealed-carry>

Florida “lead[s] the nation with the highest number of concealed weapon permits.” https://www.tampabay.com/florida-politics/2019/04/11/florida-nears-milestone-2-million-concealed-weapon-permit-holders/

“Nationally, the number of people hurt in firearms accidents is flat. In Florida, it’s soaring.” <https://www.tampabay.com/florida/2019/05/17/nationally-number-of-people-hurt-in-firearms-accidents-is-flat-in-florida-its-soaring/>

“Case-control studies, ecological time-series and cross-sectional studies indicate that in homes, cities, states and regions in the U.S., where there are more guns, both men and women are at a higher risk for homicide, particularly firearm homicide.”

<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hicrc/firearms-research/guns-and-death/>

1. <https://wusfnews.wusf.usf.edu/post/gunshine-state-florida-nears-2-million-concealed-weapons-permits>, https://www.floridatoday.com/story/news/local/2019/01/23/sebring-floridas-fifth-mass-shooting-less-than-3-years/2660065002/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. https://www.floridaphoenix.com/2019/02/12/heres-whats-happening-on-gun-laws-a-year-after-south-florida-high-school-mass-shooting-shattered-a-community/ [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/hsph-in-the-news/arming-teachers-bad-idea/ [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2016/163/BillText/e1/PDF; <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2016/4001> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2019/403/BillText/e1/PDF>; https://www.tampabay.com/blogs/gradebook/2019/03/12/florida-house-committee-eases-gun-restrictions-at-schools-churches/ [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. https://www.tampabay.com/blogs/gradebook/2019/03/12/florida-house-committee-eases-gun-restrictions-at-schools-churches/ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)