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On Interesting Times, and a Less Dramatic Future...

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There's an ancient proverb that states, "May you live in interesting times." Regardless of one's philosophical ideology, I think we can all agree that the times are, in fact, quite interesting. I am reminded of something a friend told me recently: "think about going back in time 20 years to 1998 and attempting to convince people that Arnold Schwarzenegger would

be elected Governor of California TWICE, and Donald Trump would be elected President."

In the wake of these interesting times – Trump, North Korea, Russia, Twitter, Iran, G7 – we would be forgiven for missing the onset of what might be the single most pivotal election in Florida's history. An election cycle that may chart the course of

our state for generations. I am not prone to hyperbole, I tend to regard headlines that exaggerate an election cycle as a bit clownish. With that said, the 2018 election in Florida is that important.

Consider Florida's cabinet – Governor, Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer, Commissioner of Agriculture. Voters will be choosing new occupants for each of these offices (CFO Jimmy Patronis was appointed to serve out the remainder of Jeff Atwater's term and will be on a statewide ballot for the first time). At the top of its list of duties, a new cabinet will set an economic agenda, appoint agency heads, oversee a \$1 trillion-dollar economy (the 17th largest on the planet), direct law enforcement policy, and navigate the three biggest drivers of our state's economic engine – construction, agriculture, and tourism. And if that wasn't enough to make this election pivotal, bear in mind that our next Governor will immediately be able to appoint three new justices to Florida's Supreme Court (because of mandatory retirements).

In addition to Florida's cabinet officers, every member of the Florida House of Representatives and half of the Florida Senate will face election. Over the past 20 years, Florida's legislature has set a largely conservative path – embracing limited government involvement in the economy and free markets. In 2018, the legislature passed an \$87 billion budget. By way of contrast, the state of New York, with slightly less population, passed a \$175 billion budget. Because of these policies we have seen greater degrees of economic prosperity than we otherwise would. Florida bounced back from the “great recession” faster than anywhere, and over the past eight years our

economy has created approximately 1.5 million new jobs. These past 20 years have seen \$125 billion in annual income migrate from states like Illinois, New Jersey, and Connecticut to the Sunshine State.

Florida is also pivotal at the federal level. One of the most closely watched U.S. Senate races pits Rick Scott against incumbent Bill Nelson. And with Republicans holding a razor thin majority, control of the Senate could hinge on this race.

And if all of this wasn't enough to make the election a must-follow, there are 13 constitutional initiatives on the ballot. Initiatives put forth by the legislature, citizens, and the Constitution Revision Commission have the possibility to either reinforce or radically alter the trajectory of our state. Merriam-Webster provides my favorite definition of humility: freedom from pride or arrogance. It's an attribute most of us have an appreciation of when seeing it in others.

This is why I'd like to take the opportunity to discuss something that I feel we (myself 100 percent included) could use a healthy dose of, both now and in what will come post-election – and that's humility. Over my years in the policy world, we have often used terms that equate our efforts and those of our political or philosophical opponents to those of the worst elements of humanity. We talk of the battle of ideas, the arena of politics, and the war of words. The vitriol appears to continue ratcheting up, and to be perfectly clear, both “sides” fall into the trap. I think those leaders whom I have admired and respected the most over time – Ronald Reagan, Mother Theresa, John Kennedy, Pope John Paul II, Nelson Mandela – personified both the traits of



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humility and of servant leadership. I find it sad and telling that none of the individuals I listed are from the current day. Seeking out one requires me to go into the sports realm – Tony Dungy is, for me, the best example of humility in leadership in today’s world. It’s a shame that politics doesn’t do more to attract men and women like Tony Dungy into its realm.

For more than 30 years, JMI has articulated our belief in policy solutions for a more prosperous and free Florida. We have, as much as possible, been happy warriors in everything we do. We can always

improve and it’s my sincere hope that we can be part of the solution to our discourse, as opposed to a contributor to the problem. I have had the highest privilege of serving as JMI’s Policy VP for the past four years, and I want to work on making the next four the start of a better Florida for my daughters to inherit. I want them to see the efforts and initiatives we undertake to be honorable. They, and millions of the next generation of Floridians, will look back on this election and our response to it as a hallmark for Florida’s future.