



Candidate Profile - City Commission

Name	Jennifer Canady
Office Seeking	Florida House District 50
Do you currently reside in the district?	<input type="radio"/> Yes
Years lived in Lakeland?	46
Campaign Address	P.O. Box 2231 Lakeland, FL, 33806-2231
Campaign Phone Number	(863) 712-3235
Campaign Email	jennifer@jennifercanady.com
Campaign Website	jennifercanady.com
Party Affiliation	Republican
Education	
Kathleen High School Auburn University Florida State University (B.S. Elementary Education) University of South Florida (M.A. Special Education)	
Occupation	Teacher and Director of the RISE Institute
Employer	Lakeland Christian School
Have you attended a Public Leadership Institute/Political Leadership Institute (hosted by a Chamber of Commerce or Economic Development Council)?	<input type="radio"/> Yes
If yes, who hosted the institute?	Lakeland Chamber- Business Voice
Have you ever run for office before?	<input type="radio"/> No

Describe your civic involvement:

In my career as an educator in both public and private school, my primary service to our community has been to prepare students to make significant contributions to the thriving of the state of Florida. For the past seventeen years, I've been a teacher at Lakeland Christian School and the Director of the RISE Institute, which I founded, for the past decade.

RISE stands for Research, Innovation, STEM learning, and Entrepreneurship and includes programs for middle and high school students in robotics and programming, experimental science, law and public policy, and more. I run an urban farm that teaches students about how food grows and donates a significant amount of fresh produce weekly to food insecure individuals in the community. We have Mock Trial and competition robotics programs that are among the most successful in the state of Florida.

I have been involved with homeless ministries since 2000, including serving as the volunteer Director of Community Development at Lighthouse Ministries and continuing to be engaged through regular volunteering with Gospel, Inc., which primarily serves the chronically homeless. I have a long-term interest in and experience with issues related to homelessness.

I have been a supporter and volunteer in crisis pregnancy ministries both locally and nationally.

List any Boards on which you serve, including positions of leadership

I served on the Florida Commission on the Status of Women from 2017-2022, appointed by Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam. I served on the Women's Suffrage Centennial Commission, chaired by Lt. Governor Nuñez and appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis.

Describe your political involvement:

I have been involved in campaigns since junior high, when I first volunteered on a race for extra credit in my social studies class! I've worked in everything from national campaigns to the city commission. Before my race began in February of 2021, I was a volunteer in Chad McLeod's campaign.

Why are you running for office?

We are at a critical time. Lakeland is growing at an extraordinary rate, and we need someone in Tallahassee who can be extremely effective advocating for our District and fighting for our fair share of resources. I have taught thousands of students over the past twenty years, and it's my goal that Lakeland continue to be a place where they will want to live, work, and raise a family.

That was my path. I was born in Lakeland, grew up here, have raised our family here, and am deeply invested in the success of our community. I'm a teacher who grew up in a family-owned small business and understands what it is to mop the floors at the end of a very long day. When you own the business, you do what needs to be done.

I'm running because I believe we need and deserve a strong, effective advocate...warrior...in Tallahassee. I am a supporter of Governor Desantis and believe that my collaborative approach will help us obtain and retain the resources we need as we continue to grow.

What do you consider to be the top three (3) issues facing the City (listing in order of importance)? If elected, when would you plan to address these issues and hope to see them accomplished?

I.

Workforce

As I travel around the district and meet with business owners in industries from manufacturing to distribution to construction, they tell me that they struggle to find the employees they need to run their businesses.

I'm very interested in those businesses that have "hacked" the system by initiating and developing their own successful training programs. Examples include GMF Steel, which has developed its own apprenticeship program for steel workers, FleetForce Truck Driving School, which has partnered with

the Florida Trucking Association to train and place drivers, and my local garage, Webb's, which has taken on an apprentice in a private arrangement that gives them a great young man ready to go to work for them.

I'm very interested in the ways that government can come alongside business and support their own initiative, problem-solving, and tailored approaches to the workforce issue.

Government is not very agile and not very good at solving nuanced problems, like finding and training workers with the right can-do attitude. Entrepreneurs are very, very good at these things, and government ought to learn from them, support them, and get out of their way.

II.

Managing our Success

Eighty-one percent of the growth in Florida is happening in five counties, and Polk competes with Lee for the number one slot. That kind of growth brings extraordinary challenges in everything from roads to schools to first responders. Many of these issues are local and should rightfully be decided at the city and county level, but to the extent that state resources can play a role, we need to fight for every single one of those dollars.

This issue is particularly significant when it comes to law enforcement and first responders. I believe that the rule of law is the bedrock of society, without which we cannot thrive. The rate of growth is outstripping our ability to hire and train, not to mention resource law enforcement and first responders. I'm concerned about these issues and committed to doing everything in my power at the state level to support law enforcement and first responders.

III.

I'm concerned about the ways that taxes, fees, and bureaucracy can impact Florida's ability to compete. It would be my goal to look for ways to push back against the policies that keep businesses from growing and thriving. One example that comes to mind is the business rent tax, which is headed in the right direction with reductions passed in 2021 and scheduled to come online sometime after 2022.

Rank the following as you see their current order of importance for the City of Lakeland:

1: Job Creation & Economic Development

2: Improving roads and infrastructure

3: Improving public safety

4: Reducing taxes and government spending

a. Other:

It's almost impossible to rank order these four priorities, because they're all important. What determines their relative ranking is the opportunity that exists to make an impact.

During an economic downturn, how should the Lakeland City Commission handle increasing and decreasing City tax revenues caused by the normal economic cycle? You may check more than one choice. Depending on your choice/choices, please state what you would cut and what you would increase.

Cut Spending

Other

Depending on your choice/choices above, please state what you would cut and what you would increase.

It's extremely important to look for ways to encourage the thriving of businesses, which increases tax revenues as businesses are successful. I support Florida proactively marketing the state, for example, actively engaging on behalf of our #1 industry, tourism.

During economic downturns, we have to tighten our belts and cut special, pet projects that don't have a direct economic impact.

What do you believe are the main issues facing Lakeland's downtown urban core?

The issues impacting the state are the same as those impacting our community--making sure we have a robust workforce, managing our success, supporting law enforcement and first responders, and keeping taxes low to encourage economic thriving.

I'm also concerned about protecting Florida for future generations and water quality. Water may be the single most important issue we will have to deal with in the years to come.

How are some ways government can encourage and support entrepreneurship?

I have taught entrepreneurship for many years, and I grew up in a family of entrepreneurs. In my opinion, the proper role of government is to have the smallest possible footprint, staying out of the way of entrepreneurs to the greatest extent possible.

When there needs to be engagement, the best way for government to support entrepreneurs is to make the rules absolutely clear and the encounters as brief as possible. Government agencies should be very good, very fast, and have a customer-service mindset.

Entrepreneurs need to be able to get in, get out, and get back to work.

What is your opinion on government providing incentives to businesses?

Tax credits and incentives can be an important strategy for wooing the kinds of businesses we need in the state of Florida and in our community. From Rural and Urban Job Tax Credits to Opportunity Zones, the ability of local and state government to incentivize businesses helps mitigate risk and attract high-caliber employers.

How can the City of Lakeland help attract and retain a vibrant and talented workforce?

I have spent twenty years of my life with young people, and I know them well. What attracts and retains them is opportunity, pride of place, and strong relationships.

Internships to begin to explore possibilities are an important starting point. As Gen Z individuals become aware of the opportunities in Lakeland, it becomes more attractive and more likely to be a real contender when presented with other options.

As Gen Z makes choices, they like to be in a "stinking cool" place, and that's exactly what Lakeland has become over the last couple of decades. What Ideo and the LEDC set out to do a decade ago has

been accomplished, and it's a huge incentive to attracting a Gen Z workforce.

The third aspect is retaining long-term, and that can only happen through relationships, both personal and professional. The LEDC's summer leadership program for interns is a great example of the kind of program that helps encourage relationships.

There's one more factor that I'll mention because it's been interesting over the past sixteen months on the campaign trail. I have encountered a large number of families who are newly arrived to Lakeland. They tell me they're here because they are either fans of Grady Judd or Governor DeSantis, and often both. They are refugees from places like Washington, D.C. and other spots in the northeast.

They tell me that they came here for law and order and for freedom, and because they wanted to raise their children here. It's really extraordinary how often I hear this theme. I would not have predicted it, but I've observed the reality time and time again.

*This document will be published on the BusinessVoice Inc. website for public disclosure.