

Members -- The election is finally over, and we can begin the serious process of governing anew. Both sides fought incredibly hard, but at the end of the day, the voters have spoken, and they have spoken loudly, not just here in Florida, but around the country.

Across this nation, voters rejected failed big government policies that overpromise and underdeliver. They rejected slick politicians who believe in nothing and who will say anything just to get elected.

Yes, the voters have spoken, and they told us they want leaders who understand what it takes to get our economy going again. They expect competency from their government. They expect us to get the job done.

Here in Florida, we are doing just that.

I am pleased that we expanded our Republican majority in this House and returned Governor Scott and our entire Cabinet. Governor Scott and Members of the Cabinet, congratulations! We look forward to continuing to work with you to keep Florida moving in the right direction.

To Leader Pafford – congratulations! You are a good and decent man. You will serve your caucus well, and I look forward to working with you. I am not the Republican Speaker, I am the Speaker of the Florida House. All members will be treated with the same dignity and respect, regardless of their party.

Though Republicans now hold 80 seats, I believe we must be humble with our majority. We must be fair and respect the legitimate concerns of the Minority Party. I absolutely welcome robust debate of the issues between the Majority and the Minority Parties. But, I expect honesty and respectful discourse. We can all agree on so many of the issues that come before us in this chamber. So, let's not play games to score political points; let's just get the job done for our constituents.

After all, it's not just Democrats or Republicans who face the challenges and adversity. It's not just Democrats or Republicans who have to grapple with an unemployment rate that is still too high, with a school system that still fails too many kids, or with the reality that too many Florida families are still struggling to make ends meet.

As Members of the House, we will tackle these challenges together. And it is by working together that we can achieve the real solutions Floridians expect from us.

I would also like to say congratulations to President Gardiner. He is a good friend, and he will be an excellent Senate President. I think we would all agree there was a lot less acrimony between the House and Senate over the last two years because we had joint priorities that we worked to pass together. So much more good can be accomplished when we worry about just getting things done instead of who gets the credit along the way. President Gardiner and I want that trend to continue, and we are working to develop a joint agenda for the House and Senate. And, at the

end of the day, I would like to remind President Gardiner that I am one of his constituents, so he is obligated to do what I say.

Today I am not going to talk to you about specific policy positions—that day will come. Today, I want to talk about who we are as individuals and who we are as an institution. I also want to talk about the gift that I gave each of you earlier today, and that is a brand for the Florida House of Representatives.

As many of you know, I come from an agricultural family that is deeply rooted in Florida. I am a seventh-generation Floridian. There are families all over this state, including some of my own family members that have long used brands. A few years ago, there was a proposal in the House to deregulate the registration of livestock brands with the Department of Agriculture. An effort I opposed for a simple reason – it violated one of the legitimate roles of the government – to protect private property rights.

The debate over the role of government has been fiercely contested from time immemorial. In my judgment, it is often the case that the complex problems facing our society are often compounded by government interference. There is a legitimate role for the government to play in our lives. But, make no mistake - that role must be limited.

It must balance people's rights with personal responsibility. It must ensure the public's safety. It must protect private property rights and allow for the flow of goods and services. And, the government must be fair.

On a more personal level, my dad taught me at an early age that at the end of the day, all you have is your reputation. That is your brand. That's what defines you, and that's how you are remembered. Growing up, my family taught me what it meant to be a Crisafulli and how a Crisafulli was supposed to act.

My grandfather Ben Crisafulli had a work ethic like no other. He never took a day off, and whenever I was around him, we were always working, whether it was sitting with him on the front seat of his tractor as we mowed the groves or snapping beans in the living room after dinner. Ben taught me that you only get out of something what you put into it. He taught me that there is no higher priority than God and family, but that for a farmer, there was never any rest for the weary.

My grandfather Vassar Carlton taught me about the outdoors. We spent our time together hunting and fishing, sitting quietly in his boat or in a tree stand, silently taking in the incredible splendor of God's creation. I learned from Vassar how critical it was to take care of our environment and to respect the life of all of God's creation, not abuse the privilege. Vassar served for a time as the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court, and he taught me that public service comes with a great deal of responsibility. He taught me that public service is something you are called to, not something you do to get ahead in life.

Then there is my dad, Bud. My dad and I spent a lot of time together. He was my coach in football and baseball. We spent a lot of time hunting and fishing. But most importantly, he also

showed me how to run the family business. My dad is principled, calm, fair, and honest. He truly epitomizes what the Crisafulli brand is to me. That life is about family, faith, integrity, humility, respect, the honest work of a long, hard day, and serving the community and helping others.

Just as the six generations of my family before me created our Family brand, as Members of the House, we create the brand of our state. The brand of Florida.

We know that when people think of Florida, they think the Sunshine State. They think about our beaches and our weather. They think about our world-famous theme parks. They think family, fun, and they dream of retiring here one day. There's so much more to Florida than a tourist destination. In Florida, we grow food that feeds America and, we create technology that can change the world. We are the launching pad to the stars and the state where not even the sky is the limit.

Florida is home to over 19.5 million people. It is home to their struggles, their hopes, and their dreams. What does Florida represent to our citizens? What does our state aspire to be? What is Florida's brand?

It is up to us – to everyone in this chamber – to determine what kind of state we want Florida to be. It is my hope that we can work together as Republicans and Democrats, as people of diverse backgrounds, to solve the big challenges we face and create a brand worthy of our great state.

Members, I believe the brand that marks this House is that in every word, every action, every thought, and every deed, we make it all about Florida.

If we are to make our service here about others – we must put aside our own personal ambition and work together.

We must work together to keep Florida one of the best states in the country for job creators so businesses can succeed here and continue adding jobs to our economy.

We must work together to protect our natural resources and plan for Florida's water needs.

We must work together to keep improving our schools so our kids are prepared for the realities of today's world.

We must work together to limit the intrusion of government in our daily lives.

We must work together to make Florida more affordable for our families.

We must work together to create a climate of opportunity so that Florida is the state where people come not just to visit, but to live the American Dream.

We must work together without the bitter, partisan gridlock of Washington, DC.

And, we must work together with servants' hearts to make our state a better place so that Floridians know that government is on the side of the people, not standing in their way.

Members, this is the land I love. This is the land my family has tended for generations. I want to be able to pass Florida off to my kids and yours in better shape than it is today. Yes, Florida faces tremendous challenges. But I know this House is capable of rising to the occasion to work together to make our service all about Florida. And in doing so, we will honor the people and history of the great State of Florida.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your Speaker, and may God bless Florida!