Who’s Running for Florida Commissioner of Agriculture in the General Election

By Sandy Parker | Sparker's Soapbox | Published 2026-09-13; Updated 2026-10-27

Republican incumbent Wilton Simpson and Democratic challenger Joey Mendoza Atkins, along with one write-in candidate, are competing for Florida Commissioner of Agriculture in the Nov. 3, 2026, general election. Simpson was elected to the office in 2022 and is seeking a second term. The winner will serve a four-year term as one of the three elected members of the Florida Cabinet, overseeing the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Learn about the Executive Branch of Florida’s government in my Sparker’s Civics primer post.

In this post, I summarize the backgrounds and stated priorities of the two major party candidates seeking the position, along with their endorsements, recent news coverage, and campaign finance data, to help voters prepare to cast their ballots. I also include links where you can research each candidate further.

- Wilton Simpson (Republican)
- Joey Mendoza Atkins (Democrat)
- Minor Candidates
- Campaign Finances

Wilton Simpson

Republican incumbent Wilton Simpson was born Jun. 28, 1966, in Lakeland, Florida. He has worked in his family’s businesses, Simpson Environmental Services and Simpson Farms, a private, family-owned farming and large-scale egg-laying operation, for more than four decades. (Wikipedia)

Simpson served in the Florida Senate representing District 18 (2012-2016) and District 10 (2016-2022), and was elected President of the Florida Senate for the 2020-2022 term. As Senate President, he championed the Right to Farm Act, Florida’s Greenbelt tax-classification laws, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor Act (Ballotpedia; Wikipedia).

Simpson was elected Florida Commissioner of Agriculture in 2022 with 59.3% of the vote and took office Jan. 3, 2023, succeeding Nikki Fried. In Jan. 2025, he was involved in a public dispute with Gov. Ron DeSantis over illegal immigration enforcement legislation; DeSantis nonetheless endorsed Simpson’s 2026 re-election bid (Tampa Bay Times, 1/29/25; The Floridian, 6/9/26).

Simpson is married to Kathy Shotts Simpson and has two adult children and two grandchildren. He is an advocate for the PACE Center for Girls, and he and his wife worked to establish the Simpson Breast Health Center at AdventHealth Zephyrhills (wiltonsimpson.com).

Platform

Simpson's campaign website organizes his record and platform into eight categories, confirmed unchanged from the primary post as of Sept. 13, 2026:

- Agriculture
- Free Florida
- Public Safety
- Families
- Veterans
- Economic Freedom
- Environment
- Education

Endorsements

According to Simpson's campaign website, his endorsers include:

- **National and state leaders:** President Donald Trump, Gov. Ron DeSantis, U.S. Sens. Ashley Moody and Rick Scott, five Florida U.S. House members, Florida House Speaker-Designate Sam Garrison, State Attorney Ginger Bowden Madden, and school-choice advocate John Kirtley.
- **Law enforcement:** 61 of Florida's 67 sheriffs, including Collier County Sheriff Kevin Rambosk, and the Florida Professional Firefighters.
- **Agriculture, business, and civic organizations:** Associated Industries of Florida, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida Citrus Mutual, the Florida Farm Bureau PAC, the Florida Forestry Association, the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association, the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association, United Dairy Farmers of Florida, the Florida Young Republicans, and 24 past presidents of the Florida Cattlemen's Association.
- **Media:** The Palm Beach Post editorial board. (Palm Beach Post)

Further Research

- Campaign website: wiltonsimpson.com
- Active social media: Facebook (campaign), X, Instagram, LinkedIn

In the News

- Agriculture commissioner could become Florida's immigration czar. Who is Wilton Simpson? (USA Today Network-Florida via Tallahassee Democrat, 1/28/25)

- Wilton Simpson, expected contender for governor, files for reelection instead. (Tampa Bay Times, 4/27/26)
- Who is pouring millions into the sleepy race for Florida's ag commissioner? (WGCU News, 7/27/26)
- Wilton Simpson, Joey Atkins win nominations for Florida agriculture commissioner. (The Florida Trib, 8/18/26)

Joey Mendoza Atkins

Joey Mendoza Atkins earned a bachelor's degree in political science from Florida Atlantic University and a JD from the University of Toledo College of Law in 2013. He has worked as a lawyer "protecting families through family law cases, as well as providing Legal Aid with a focus on migrant farm workers" (campaign website). He has also worked as a sports agent (Ballotpedia).

Atkins ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. House in Florida's 26th Congressional District in 2024. He briefly entered the 2026 U.S. Senate special election in Florida before withdrawing from that primary, then qualified for the Commissioner of Agriculture race on June 12, 2026. (Ballotpedia; BallotReady).

Platform

Atkins' campaign website organizes his priorities into six sections:

- Protect Farms
- Protect Consumers
- Preserve Florida
- Responsible Growth
- Water & Conservation
- Disaster Preparedness

Endorsements

According to his campaign website, Atkins is endorsed by the Florida Democratic Agricultural Caucus, the Florida Alliance for Retired Americans, Florida Veterans for Common Sense, and the Sun Sentinel editorial board.

Further Research

- Campaign website: joeyforflorida.com
- Social media: Facebook, X, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Threads

In the News

- Wilton Simpson, Joey Atkins win nominations for Florida agriculture commissioner. (The Florida Trib, 8/18/26)

Minor Candidates

One write-in candidate also qualified for the Nov. 3, 2026, general election ballot. In Florida, the name of a qualified write-in candidate does not appear on the printed ballot.

Campaign Finances

Political committees may raise and spend money without limit to support or oppose candidates, but Florida law caps direct transfers from a committee to a candidate's own campaign account at $3,000 per election, with the primary and general treated as separate elections. For more on how to read these figures and what this information does and does not tell us, see the Sparker's Civics primer, Understanding Campaign Finance Data.

Wilton Simpson's Contributions

Wilton Simpson's campaign took in $1.4 million in monetary contributions: $1.2 million (88 percent) from 815 individual and business donors and $166 thousand (12 percent) from political committees giving directly to his campaign account. Ninety-six percent of that money came from Florida. He also received $87 thousand in in-kind support.

Separately, Friends of Wilton Simpson, Florida Green PAC, Future Florida, and Home Grown PAC, political committees he chairs, have raised $47.0 million combined since their formation, of which $22.0 million remains available.

Joey Mendoza Atkins's Contributions

Joey Mendoza Atkins's campaign has taken in $91 thousand in monetary contributions: 99 percent from 2,093 individual and business donors, mostly small-dollar, and $900 from three political committees. Sixty-eight percent of that money came from Florida, with the remainder from out of state. He has no affiliated committee and lent his campaign $8 thousand.

Sources

Campaign finance data is from Florida Division of Elections filings, cross-checked against source records. See the Division of Elections' Candidate Listing search for complete filings. Affiliated political committee data is from the Division of Elections' Committee Database Search.

This post was researched and drafted with the assistance of Claude (Anthropic AI). The content was reviewed, edited, and fact-checked by the author. Both humans and AI can make mistakes. Please let us know if you spot one.