Who’s Running for Florida Senate District 28 in the 2026 General Election

By Sandy Parker | Sparker's Soapbox | Published 2026-09-06; Updated 2026-10-24

Florida Senate District 28 is on the Nov. 3, 2026, ballot for registered voters in the district. Republican Lauren Melo and Democrat David Silverberg are running for the open seat, vacated by term-limited Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, R-Naples. The winner will serve a four-year term in the Florida Senate.

District 28 covers Collier and Hendry counties and the eastern portion of Lee County. Find your district using the Florida Legislature’s district finder. For background on the Florida Legislature and what state senators do, see The Legislative Branch: A Soapbox Primer.

In this post, I summarize the backgrounds and stated priorities of the two candidates seeking the District 28 seat, along with their endorsements, recent news coverage, and campaign finance data, to help you prepare to cast your ballot. I also include links where you can research each candidate further.

- Lauren Melo (Republican)
- David Silverberg (Democrat)
- Campaign Finances

Lauren Melo

Republican candidate Lauren Melo is running for the open Senate seat. She was born Aug. 30, 1966, in Naples, FL, and lives there with her husband, Robert, and their three children. In 1991 she started a trucking company that grew from a single truck into a fleet of more than 100, and she still holds a commercial driver’s license. She has worked in real estate since 2009 and has been a broker at Florida’s Realty Specialists since 2011.

Melo was first elected to the Florida House in 2020, representing District 80, and was elected to District 82 in 2022 following redistricting; she was reelected in 2024. This is her third House term; Florida’s eight-year, four-term House limit would have allowed her to seek a fourth term in 2026, but she is running for the Senate seat instead. She chairs the House Human Services Subcommittee and was the lead legislative sponsor of the Right to Hunt and Fish constitutional amendment placed on the 2024 statewide ballot. Melo has served as president of the Naples Area Board of Realtors and the Naples Seahorse Riding Club, as a Guardian ad Litem volunteer, and on the boards of the Florida

Association of Realtors, the National Association of Realtors, HELP (Housing, Education, Lending, Programs), the Southwest Florida Truckers Association, and CareerSource Florida. (VoteSmart; Florida House of Representatives; Ballotpedia; Florida Politics)

Platform

Melo's campaign website is a single homepage without a dedicated Issues or Platform page. Its only stated platform language reads: "Lauren Melo is a conservative Republican who fights to protect our second amendment rights, honor our veterans, cut bureaucratic red tape, and grow the economy." (laurenmelo.com)

The Florida Politics coverage of her endorsements adds detail on her legislative record: she focused on workforce development and workforce education since entering the House in 2020, and "concentrated heavily on addressing affordable housing challenges in the state." Accepting the Florida Chamber of Commerce's endorsement, she said: "Florida businesses are the backbone of our economy… I will continue to fight for policies that enable businesses, workers and families to prosper." Accepting the Associated Industries of Florida endorsement, she said: "Americans continue to flee high-tax, heavily regulated states for the freedom and prosperity that Florida has to offer… As a State Senator, I will continue my strong record of fighting for freedoms and for the future of Florida." (Florida Politics; Florida Politics)

Endorsements

- **State leaders:** former Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, and Senate President Ben Albritton, Senate Majority Leader Jim Boyd and Senate Health Appropriations Chair Jay Trumbull, who endorsed jointly through the Florida Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee (Florida Politics; Florida Politics)
- **Organizations:** Florida Realtors PAC, the Associated Industries of Florida, the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Florida Professional Firefighters (Florida Politics; Florida Politics; Florida Politics; Florida's Voice)

In the News

- Lauren Melo files to succeed Kathleen Passidomo in Senate District 28. (Florida Politics, 2/19/25)
- Kathleen Passidomo endorses Lauren Melo as preferred successor in SD 28. (Florida Politics, 2/19/25)
- Senate Republican leaders back Lauren Melo's bid in SD 28. (Florida Politics, 3/11/25)
- 'The right choice': Florida Realtors PAC rallies behind Lauren Melo's SD 28 bid. (Florida Politics, 8/26/25)
- Voice of Florida business sounds support for Lauren Melo in SD 28. (Florida Politics, 9/8/25)

- Florida Chamber backs Lauren Melo for SD 28. (Florida Politics, 9/9/25)
- Florida Professional Firefighters endorse Rep. Lauren Melo for Senate District 28. (Florida's Voice, 7/23/26)
- Florida Senate District 28 candidate Lauren Melo Q&A. (Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News, 10/13/26)

Further Research

- Campaign website
- Facebook
- X/Twitter
- Instagram
- YouTube

David Silverberg

Democratic challenger David Silverberg has been a permanent Florida resident since 2013 and lives in Naples. Educated at Syracuse, Rutgers and Johns Hopkins, he spent more than three decades as a journalist in Washington, D.C., most recently as Managing Editor at The Hill (1998-2002) and Founding Editor of Homeland Security Today (2004-2013). After moving to Southwest Florida in 2013, he founded the political blog The Paradise Progressive in 2018, which covers Southwest Florida politics. His prior political activity includes serving as communications director for David Holden's 2017-2018 campaign for Florida's 19th Congressional District, and authoring a 2021 resolution reaffirming Collier County's allegiance to the U.S. Constitution. He filed to run for Senate District 28 on March 31, 2026. (silverberg4florida.com; Florida Politics)

Platform

Silverberg's campaign website has a Platform section organized under nine named headings:

- Make Florida Affordable Again
- Face Climate Change
- Protect Our Waters
- Protect Health & Healthcare
- Protect Public Education
- Keep Our Towns Strong
- Restore the Constitution
- End the War on Learning
- End Terror in Our Communities

He says his “signature issue” is “No More Alligator Alcatrazes.” (silverberg4florida.com)

Endorsements

No endorsements were listed on his campaign website as of Sept. 6, 2026.

In the News

- David Silverberg steps away from notepad to run for Kathleen Passidomo’s Senate seat. (Florida Politics, 3/31/26)
- David Silverberg: My triple debate challenge to Southwest Florida. (The Paradise Progressive, 9/20/26)
- Florida Senate District 28 candidate David Silverberg Q&A. (Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News, 10/13/26)

Further Research

- Campaign website
- Facebook
- X/Twitter
- The Paradise Progressive (blog)

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.

Lauren Melo’s Contributions

Lauren Melo’s campaign took in $313,245 in monetary contributions: $158,395 (51 percent) from 235 individual and business donors and $154,850 (49 percent) from political committees giving directly to her campaign account. Ninety-two percent of that money came from Florida. Nearly all of her in-kind support, 94 percent of the $18,650 total, came from Florida Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, Inc., an affiliated party committee.

Separately, Friends of Lauren Melo PAC, a political committee she chairs, has raised $1.8 million since its formation, of which $889,649 remains available.

David Silverberg's Contributions

David Silverberg's campaign took in $10,423 in monetary contributions, all from 67 individual donors. Sixty-five percent of that money came from Florida and 35 percent from out of state. He received no contributions from political committees and has no affiliated committee.

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 for Friends of Lauren Melo PAC 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.