

Who's Running for Florida Commissioner of Agriculture in the August Primaries

By Sandy Parker | Sparker's Soapbox | Published 2026-07-05

Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture, a statewide cabinet office overseeing the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, is on the Aug. 18, 2026 primary ballot. Incumbent Republican Wilton Simpson faces a primary challenge from Matt Taylor, known professionally as "Matt the Welder." On the Democratic side, Joey Mendoza Atkins and Donald A. Prichard are competing for their party's nomination. Both primaries are closed, open only to registered voters of the respective party. The Republican and Democratic nominees will meet in the Nov. 3, 2026, general election, along with write-in candidate Kyle Gibson, who appears on the ballot regardless of the primary outcome.

For background, please visit [The Executive Branch of Florida's Government: A Primer](#) on Sparker's Soapbox.

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Research and campaign finance data for this post were compiled with assistance from Claude (Anthropic AI), drawing on the Florida Division of Elections, candidate websites, and Florida news sources. All information was reviewed and verified by the author.

The Republican Candidates

Wilton Simpson

Bio

Wilton Earl 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: Agriculture, Free Florida, Public Safety, Families, Veterans, Economic Freedom, Environment, and Education ([wiltonsimpson.com](#)).

Endorsements

According to [Simpson's campaign website](#), his endorsers include:

- President Donald Trump
- U.S. Senator Ashley Moody
- U.S. Senator Rick Scott
- Governor Ron DeSantis
- Sam Garrison, Speaker-Designate, Florida House of Representatives
- Jim Boyd, President-Designate, Florida Senate ([Facebook](#))
- 61 of Florida's 67 sheriffs
- 24 past presidents of the Florida Cattlemen's Association
- Associated Industries of Florida
- Florida Farm Bureau PAC
- Florida Forestry Association
- Florida Professional Firefighters
- Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association
- United Dairy Farmers of Florida

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)
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Matt Taylor (“Matt The Welder”)

Bio

Matt Taylor was born on Aug. 28, 1989, in Clearwater, Florida. His career experience includes work as a long-haul trucker, welder, and mechanic, and as an independent contractor/media platform manager ([Ballotpedia 2025 Candidate Connection Survey](#)).

Taylor grew up around agriculture, raising cattle, horses, and pigs, and was active in FFA and rodeos; he has since worked with farmers, ranchers, and small operators across Florida doing hands-on work including fixing tractors and equipment and shoeing horses ([treadback.com/about-matt](#)).

Taylor legally changed his name to “Matt The Welder” on Jan. 12, 2026, but Florida’s SAVE Act requires a candidate to hold a name for a full year before using it to qualify for office. The Florida Division of Elections’ current candidate records list him as Matt Taylor. ([FOX 13 Tampa Bay](#), 6/23/26; [Florida Division of Elections](#), 7/4/26)

Taylor previously ran for the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners District 4 seat in 2024 under the name Matt Taylor, receiving 5.4% of the vote as a no-party-affiliation candidate ([Ballotpedia](#)).

Per his Ballotpedia Candidate Connection survey response, Taylor describes himself: “Matt The Welder (Matt Taylor) was born and raised in rural Florida, where family, faith, and hard work come first... Matt has been happily married for 8 years and is the proud father of wonderful children.” ([Ballotpedia 2025 Candidate Connection Survey](#)).

Platform

Taylor’s campaign website lists five platform priorities: Protecting Rural Land, Standing With Farmers, Healthy Food in Schools, Conservation and Clean Water, and Consumer Protection. According to a “policy document,” his priorities as Florida’s Commissioner of Agriculture are: Protect Florida’s Waterways & Public Health, Right to Repair for Florida Farmers, Save Florida’s Citrus Industry & Grove Land, Responsible Growth & Forestry Management, Restore Accountability in Consumer Protection, Protect Pollinators and Support Beekeepers, and Protect Green Belt for Real Farmers. ([treadback.com](#))

Endorsements

Taylor has been endorsed by Stand for Health Freedom, a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization “dedicated to informing and activating a grassroots movement to protect our health and our families.” ([standforhealthfreedom.com](#))

Further Research

- Campaign website: treadback.com
- Active social media: [Facebook \(campaign\)](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [TikTok](#)

In the News

- Plant City native Matt the Welder challenges Wilton Simpson in Florida agriculture commissioner race. ([FOX 13 Tampa Bay](#), 6/23/26)

Republican Campaign Finances

The chart's last column shows available funds reported by a candidate's affiliated political committee: a separate state-registered account that may accept contributions of unlimited size and spend without limit in support of the candidate, though it may give no more than \$3,000 per election directly to the candidate's own campaign (§ 106.08, Fla. Stat.). Committee funds carry over from prior races. Simpson chairs four active political committees; the chart reflects only Friends of Wilton Simpson, the one that has actually funded political consulting, advertising, and transfers to party committees this cycle. His other three committees are addressed below. For more on how to read these figures and learn what this information does and does not tell us, see Sparker's Civics primer, [Understanding Campaign Finance Data](#).

Wilton Simpson's Contributions

Ninety-seven percent of Simpson's \$904,866 total monetary contributions came from Florida donors, three percent from out of state. That figure includes \$79,800 received from 37 political committee contributions, including \$3,000 from his own affiliated committee, Friends of Wilton Simpson. Separately, Simpson chairs three other active political committees: Florida Green PAC and Future Florida, both formed in 2019, and Home Grown PAC, formed in 2024. Combined, the three have raised \$23.9 million since their respective formations but spent only about \$645,000, almost entirely on state and federal tax payments; none shows spending on political consulting, advertising, or other campaign-support activity. These figures cover all committee activity since formation, not just the current election cycle.

Matt Taylor's Contributions

Ninety-one percent of Taylor's 3,000 contributions came from Florida donors, nine percent from out of state. Taylor received no contributions from political committees.

Democratic Candidates

Joey Mendoza Atkins

Bio

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 has a ‘Why Joey’ section that lists:

- Protect & Preserve
- Fight for Floridians
- Cut Costs & Corruption

Endorsements

No endorsements specific to this race were found on Atkins's available social media accounts or in public sources as of Jul. 5, 2026.

Further Research

- Campaign website: joeyforflorida.com
- Social media: [Facebook](#), [X](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [TikTok](#), [Threads](#) (content not updated for this race)

In the News

- No candidate-specific coverage was identified as of Jul. 5, 2026.

Donald A. “Don” Prichard

Bio

Donald A. “Don” Prichard received a Bachelor’s degree in Intelligence Studies from American Military University in 2015, a Master’s in Business Administration and Management from Western Governors University in 2022, and completed the Southern Police Institute’s 103rd Command Officer’s Development Course in June 2026. He qualified for the Commissioner of Agriculture race May 21, 2026. ([WGCU News/News Service of Florida](#), 6/12/26; [Florida Division of Elections](#); [Facebook](#)).

Prichard describes himself as follows: “a dedicated law enforcement leader with extensive experience in both policing and labor relations, and currently serves as Captain at the Pembroke Park Police Department, president of Strategic Law Enforcement Development Group International LLC, and president of the Naval Air Station Fort Lauderdale. He previously served for 24 years as a sergeant in the Broward County Sheriff’s Office, and during the later years of that service, as president of the International Union of Police Associations (Broward County, FL, Local 6020). ([LinkedIn](#), accessed Jul. 5, 2026)

Platform

No campaign website was found as of Jul. 5, 2026.

Endorsements

No endorsements were found in public sources for Prichard as of Jul. 5, 2026.

Further Research

- Campaign website: None found as of Jul. 5, 2026.
- LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/donprichard/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/donprichard/)
- Social media: No confirmed campaign-run social media accounts were found as of Jul. 5, 2026.

In the News

- BSO Deputy Reflects on How Being Thrust Into the War on Terror After 9/11 Shaped Him. ([NBC Miami](#), 9/9/21)

Democratic Campaign Finances

Joey Mendoza Atkins’s Contributions

Atkins raised \$180 from six outside donors, all from Florida. The remainder of his funding is an \$8,480 personal loan he has not yet repaid. Atkins received no contributions from political committees.

Donald A. Prichard's Contributions

Of Prichard's contributions, \$15,500 came from two direct contributions he made to his own campaign; the remaining \$8,985 came from 44 outside donors, 92 percent from Florida and seven percent from out of state. Prichard received no contributions from political committees.

Summary

The Florida Commissioner of Agriculture race offers voters in both parties a choice on Aug. 18, 2026. Both primaries are closed to registered party members.

The Republican contest features Incumbent Wilton Simpson against Matt Taylor. Joey Mendoza Atkins and Donald A. Prichard compete in the Democratic primary. The winners of both primaries will advance to the general election ballot in November, where they will also face write-in candidate Kyle Gibson.