

Who's Running in Florida's 2026 U.S. Senate Race?

By Sandy Parker | Sparker's Soapbox | Published 2026-06-27

Florida voters will choose a U.S. senator in a special election this year to fill the remainder of the term originally won by Marco Rubio. Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Ashley Moody to the seat in January 2025 after Rubio resigned to become U.S. Secretary of State, and Moody is now seeking voter approval to complete the term. Qualified candidates from both major parties will compete in [closed primaries](#) in August, with the winners advancing to the November general election.

In this post, I summarize the backgrounds and stated priorities of the candidates seeking Florida's Senate seat, highlighting information that voters may find useful as they prepare to cast their ballots. I also include links where you can research each candidate further.

- [Republican Candidates](#)
- [Democratic Candidates](#)

Republican Candidates

- Moody, Ashley (incumbent)
- Gleason, Chris
- Rivera, Ernest "Ernie"
- Perry, Neelam Taneja

Ashley Moody (incumbent)

Ashley Moody is a fifth-generation Floridian raised in Plant City, Florida. She earned bachelor's, master's, and law degrees at the University of Florida and a Master of Laws from Stetson University.

Moody began her career at the law firm Holland & Knight, where she specialized in commercial litigation. She later served as a federal prosecutor in Jacksonville and Tampa, where she handled cases involving drug trafficking, firearms, and fraud offenses (2004–2006). In 2006, she was elected to serve on the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit Court in Hillsborough County (2007–2017). Moody was elected to serve as Florida's Attorney General in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. As Attorney General, she championed policies to enhance public safety, strengthen law enforcement, and crack down on violent crime. She also

supported lawsuits to invalidate the Affordable Care Act and opposed the legalization of recreational cannabis. In January 2025, Moody was sworn into the U.S. Senate after being appointed by Governor Ron DeSantis.

Her campaign website describes Moody as “Florida’s America First Fighter,” and says she is “dedicated to America First policies that promote law and order, economic prosperity, and American sovereignty.”

Endorsements

- President Donald Trump
- Sen. Rick Scott (FL)
- Sen. Ted Cruz (TX)
- Sen. Tommy Tuberville (AL)
- Additional endorsements are listed on the [campaign website](#)

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
- [Official U.S. Senate page](#)
- [Official Senate biography](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [X: @AshleyMoodyFL](#)
- [Official Senate X: @SenAshleyMoody](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Florida Bar profile](#)

Chris Gleason

Chris Gleason was born in Lowell, MA, earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Massachusetts Lowell in 1996, and served in the U.S. Army National Guard from 1989 to 1999.

The campaign website describes him as an Army veteran, tech pioneer, and data forensics expert. It provides no other biographical information.

Public business records and online profiles indicate Gleason has been associated with multiple business ventures, including firearms-related and political-activism projects. Florida corporate filings show his name connected with numerous business entities, while online profiles describe leadership roles in companies including Molon Labe Industries and Vomvos. Readers interested in researching those activities further can review these sources:

- [Florida corporate filings associated with Christopher Gleason](#)

- [Molon Labe Arms](#)

His campaign website states that Gleason used forensic analysis of federal campaign contribution records and, based on that analysis, alleges that ActBlue was involved in a large-scale money-laundering operation.

Gleason ran unsuccessfully for Pinellas County Supervisor of Elections in 2024.

Platform

Gleason says he is running for the U.S. Senate “because the only way to fix a broken system is to put someone inside it who has the evidence, the expertise, and the backbone to tear it open.” His website provides his plan for “the issues Florida voters say matter most.” They include: Economy & Cost of Living, Housing Affordability, Border Security, Health Care & Medical Freedom, Election Integrity, and more.

Endorsements

No major endorsements were identified during the research period.

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Ballotpedia](#)
- [X: @immutablechrist](#)
- [Pinellas supervisor race latest in Florida to feature elections denier](#) (Tampa Bay Times, 7/16/24)

Neelam Taneja Perry

Neelam Taneja Perry (also known as Neelam Taneja Uppal) is, according to her campaign website, “a physician, author, and advocate for truth and accountability in government.” It says she is running for the United States Senate “to restore integrity, protect freedom, and defend the people of Florida from government corruption and bureaucratic overreach.”

Perry has a documented history of medical disciplinary actions in both Florida and New York. The New York State Board of Medicine revoked her medical license in 2017. Her license to practice medicine in Florida, originally issued in 1991, was suspended in 2016 and revoked in 2023. Perry was charged in 2022 in Pinellas County in connection with alleged illegal prescription-drug activity. She has publicly denied the allegations. ([Tampa Bay Times](#), 7/28/22)

Platform

Perry says her campaign is centered on uniting Americans across all backgrounds to build a stronger, fairer, and more resilient future. Her website contains statements on economic freedom, security and sovereignty, accountability and anti-corruption, faith, family, and freedom, and Florida First.

Endorsements

No major endorsements were identified during the research period.

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
 - [Florida Department of Health license records](#)
 - [FindLaw: Uppal v. New York State Department of Health](#)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [iVoterGuide profile](#) (should be treated as a candidate/disclosure source rather than an independently verified biography)
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Ernest “Ernie” Rivera

According to a biography published by the Protect Our Children Project, Ernest “Ernie” Rivera was born in Florida, raised in Georgia, Puerto Rico and North Carolina and completed undergraduate studies in psychology and education at the University of Puerto Rico and graduate studies in administration and supervision at New York University. The biography also states that he continued doctoral studies in theology at Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando, holds certifications as a Certified Manager of Housing (CMH) and Certified Financial Manager (CFM). (Protect Our Children Project)

His website says he is “a bold, unapologetic conservative leader re-entering the 2026 U.S. Senate race as a seasoned minister, educator, entrepreneur, and national voice for Christian values.” Rivera ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 2016, when he was defeated by then-incumbent Marco Rubio. ([website](#))

Platform

Rivera says he is fighting for safer communities, stronger families, secure borders, economic opportunity, and Florida First values. His website contains “Five Pillars to Protect Florida”: crack down on illegal pill presses, hold drug traffickers accountable, protect Florida families, support law enforcement, and secure our borders. ([website](#))

Endorsements

No major endorsements were identified during the research period.

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [Ballotpedia](#) (links Rivera's 2026 candidacy to his prior 2016 U.S. Senate run)
 - [Protect Our Children Project biography](#)
 - [2016 iVoterGuide profile](#) (should be treated as a candidate/disclosure source rather than an independently verified biography)
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Democratic Candidates

- Nixon, Angie
- Vindman, Alex

Angie Nixon

Angela “Angie” Nixon was born and lives in Jacksonville, FL. After earning a B.A. in political science from the University of Florida in 2007, Nixon worked on a series of political campaigns and held several community organizer positions.

Nixon was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2020 and has been re-elected twice since. She was recently sanctioned by the House Rules and Ethics Committee for using a megaphone to protest while her colleagues voted to approve a congressional redistricting map.

Nixon also serves as Executive Director of Florida for All, a statewide voter registration and fundraising coalition, and runs a bookstore and community hub focused on bringing healthy food and educational opportunities to local families.

Her campaign website says Nixon is running “to take on corporate greed, lower costs for hardworking families, and ensure the government actually works for the people.” The campaign lists as priorities: making Florida more affordable and raising wages, standing up for immigrant neighbors, rooting out government corruption, and ensuring seniors can retire with dignity.

Endorsements

- Four Florida Service Employees International Union (SEIU) locals. ([Campaign announcement](#), 5/19/26)

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
- [Florida House biography](#)

- [LinkedIn](#)
 - [Facebook](#)
 - [X: @AngieNixon](#)
 - [Instagram](#)
 - [Megaphone mistake: Angie Nixon reprimanded for interfering with redistricting vote](#) (Florida Politics, 5/14/26)
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Alex Vindman

Alex Vindman is a retired lieutenant colonel, a 21-year U.S. Army combat veteran, and a national security expert who worked for presidents of both parties.

Alex Vindman was born in Kyiv, then part of the Soviet Union (now Ukraine), and immigrated to the United States with his family as a child. His family settled in Brooklyn, New York, where he was raised. He earned a Bachelor's Degree from Binghamton University in 1998, a Master of Arts in International Business from Harvard University in 2011, and a Doctor of International Affairs from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in 2022. Vindman later served for more than two decades in the U.S. Army and became a national security official working for presidents of both parties. In 2009, he founded The Institute for Informed American Leadership, a nonpartisan national-security think tank operating under the Vet Voice Foundation, a veteran-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit. He currently serves as the institute's director.

The campaign states that Vindman is “running for the United States Senate to be a common-sense voice for everyday Floridians who want a Senator who will stand up for them... who will use the power of the office to crush corruption and cut costs instead of using it to make millions for themselves and their billionaire backers... to fix a system that has been rigged for the elites and fight for Florida's hard-working families.”

Endorsements

- [VoteVets PAC](#) / [VoteVets.org](#)
- [End Citizens United](#)
- [Veterans for Responsible Leadership](#)

Further Research

- [Campaign website](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [X: @AVindman](#)
- [Instagram](#)

Campaign Finances

Campaign finance reports can help voters understand a campaign's financial strength and identify which candidates have attracted the most donor support. These filings provide a public snapshot of each campaign's financial resources, including contributions received, expenditures made, and cash on hand. U.S. Senate candidates are required to file these reports with the Federal Election Commission (FEC).

The chart below reflects the most recent reports available at the time of publication, covering activity through March 31, 2026. Updated reports are due July 15, 2026. Only Moody and Vindman reported meaningful fundraising activity.

Moody's Contributions

Republican incumbent Ashley Moody raised a total of \$8.4 million in the 2025–2026 election cycle, including \$4.1 million in transfers from her former attorney general campaign committee and \$1.6 million in party and PAC contributions. Ninety-one percent of her itemized individual contributions came from out of state; nine percent came from Florida donors.

Vindman's Contributions

Democrat Alex Vindman raised \$8.2 million in the 2025–2026 election cycle, with 61 percent of receipts coming from small-dollar contributions of less than \$200, the FEC threshold for itemized donor disclosure. Thirty-four percent of itemized individual contributions came from Florida donors; 66 percent came from out of state. Vindman received \$166,050 in PAC contributions.

Super PACs

Outside groups (Super PACs) reported \$441,539 in independent expenditures supporting Moody as of March 31, 2026, including: the Senate Leadership Fund (\$200,000), Senate Conservatives Fund (\$143,501), Law Enforcement for a Safer America PAC (\$55,000), and Senate Conservatives Action (\$42,889). One committee, Out of the Swamp PAC, reported \$36,025 in expenditures opposing Moody.

Outside spending supporting Vindman totaled \$2,167 from two minor Democratic-aligned committees. Independent expenditures are not coordinated with candidates and are not included in the campaign finance totals above.

Sources

Campaign finance data was compiled from Federal Election Commission filings using Claude Cowork and cross-checked against FEC source records by the author. Data through March 31, 2026.

For complete campaign finance data, including top industries, top contributing organizations, and historical comparisons, see the [Florida Senate race page on OpenSecrets](#).

Summary

Florida Republicans will choose their U.S. Senate candidate from among incumbent Ashley Moody and challengers Chris Gleason, Neelam Taneja Perry, and Ernest “Ernie” Rivera in a closed primary on Aug. 18. Campaign finance reports show Moody has substantially outraised her Republican opponents and has received endorsements from President Donald Trump and numerous other elected officials and organizations.

Florida Democrats will also hold a closed primary on Aug. 18. They will choose their candidate from between Angie Nixon and Alex Vindman. Campaign finance reports show Vindman has raised substantially more money than Nixon.

At the time of publication, polling averages for a potential Moody-Vindman general-election matchup show Moody leading 45.5% to 38.0%. Readers interested in following the race can monitor polling averages and race ratings at [RealClearPolling](#), [CookPolitical](#), and [270towin](#).