

Mel Ponder

FOR OKALOOSA COUNTY COMMISSION, DISTRICT 5

DELIVERING FOR OKALOOSA

And Now Bringing It Back Home!

Mel delivered what he said he would do in Tallahassee and he will do the same here at home in Okaloosa!

LEADERSHIP In just his first term in the Florida House, 2nd year, Mel was appointed Vice Chair of the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee which oversees a budget of over \$8 Billion. In his 2nd Term, he was appointed by House Leadership to be a Deputy Whip. In his 2nd Term, Mel was appointed Chairman of the Children, Families, and Seniors Subcommittee; Chair – Legislative Prayer Caucus all 4 years

TRIUMPH GULF COAST Worked with Northwest Florida House and Senate Delegation to secure Northwest Florida's 75% share of the \$2 Billion state award from the BP Oil Spill. Total portion coming to Northwest Florida - \$1.5 Billion

EDUCATION Prime Co-Sponsor to have "In God We Trust" on every school in Okaloosa County and throughout the State; Okaloosa County School District Funding Jump Start Program; Supported Starting Teacher Salary Increase and Increase to Veteran Teachers; Drafted and Carried Bill to put in place a statewide standard for Vocational Rehabilitation students ages 14-21; Okaloosa Technical College Welding Program Funding for Expansion; Cyber Security Funding for UWF

MILITARY Carried Resolution to protect the Gulf of Mexico Range Complex; Military Postsecondary Fee Waiver for all in-state colleges including our own Northwest Florida State College; Military Postsecondary Education Credit for Military Experience; Helping active duty military with school aged children use orders as residency at new location; Expanded licensure reciprocity for military spouses; encouraged Medal of Honor Day to be taught in schools; Expanded Veteran Court Ordered Treatment Programs; Expanded Alternative Treatment Options for Veterans Research

INFRASTRUCTURE Helped with State Support of Crestview bypass; helped County with Overbrook Subdivision Flooding; Secured funding for Utilities Plant upgrade at Northwest Florida State College; had funding in place prior to COVID veto cuts for Fort Walton Beach Recreation Center Hardening, Overbrook Flooding, & Cinco Bayou Glenwood Park

FAITH Added a member of the Faith Based Community to Community Alliances within Child Welfare / Dept of Children & Family(DCF); was asked by Governor DeSantis to deliver one of the prayers at his Governor's Inaugural Prayer Breakfast; Opening prayer for 2 of President Trump Rally's in NWF; Joint Session Opening Prayer twice, Previously - Helped start the Destin's Week of Blessings and Blessing of the Marketplace and now parts are included in both Fort Walton Beach and Niceville; Helped lead Destin's Crop Drop annual event – serving over 40 agencies with food banks in the greater Okaloosa area

MENTAL HEALTH Carried Pilot and Funding Authorization to stand up Okaloosa's First Mental Health Diversion Treatment Program in Fort Walton Beach – Partnered with County and Local Leaders

TOURISM Carried the re-authorization bill to keep VISIT FLORIDA as our states Tourism Organization twice. This not only continues our statewide umbrella brand, but also offers our Okaloosa TDC and other local tourism providers to partner with VISIT FLORIDA and have a strong advocate for the tourism industry

ENVIRONMENT Supported Record Environment Funding in the Florida House

SPECIFIC ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BILLS SIGNED BY THE GOVERNOR **13**

INCLUDING: 6 benefitting veterans/military; 1 to stand up the mental health diversion pilot; 1 for VISIT FLORIDA; 1 to set a statewide standard for those 14-21 students with unique needs within Vocational Rehabilitation; 1 to enhance key areas with our Child Welfare/DCF; 1 in partnership with Tax Collector Ben Anderson to align heavy truck owners tag renewals with their birthday

RESOLUTIONS PASSED OFF THE HOUSE FLOOR **7**

INCLUDING: 2 to protect the Gulf Range; 1 to honor the Okaloosa County School Resource Officer Program (SRO); 1 to bring awareness to abdominal injuries in youth football (partnered with Taylor Haugen Foundation); 1 to honor Hidden Heroes (military spouses)

ROAD NAMING ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN OKALOOSA **4**

INCLUDING: General Bud Day; Mayor Randall Wise

APPROPRIATIONS RECEIVED **16** FOR \$11,500,000

KEY OKALOOSA APPROPRIATIONS:

- Okaloosa Mental Health Diversion Program – to launch and 2nd year renewal of funds - \$600,000 total
- Northwest Florida State College – for building remodeling and Utilities Plant Upgrade - \$5,700,000
- Okaloosa Technical College – Welding Program Expansion - \$150,000
- Okaloosa County Overbrook Flooding - \$250,000
- Okaloosa County School District – Jump Start Program - \$100,000
- Alternative Treatment Options for Veterans (Northwest Florida State College now a Partner in this initiative) - \$400,000 total
- Bridgeway Center – Mobile Access Teams & Telehealth - \$350,000
- University of West Florida – Cybersecurity - \$2,100,000 total

RECOGNITIONS/HONORS

- Florida League of Cities Defender of Home Rule
- Northwest Florida League of Cities Northwest Florida Legislator of the Year – 3 times – fighting for and defending local decision making/Home Rule
- Conservative Excellence recognition – CPAC National group
- Small Counties Support recognition
- Florida College Presidents Legislator of the Year
- Florida Tax Collectors Legislator of the Year
- Florida Chamber and Associated Industries of Florida A Rating
- NRA A+ Rating

ENDORSEMENTS FOR MEL

In the Okaloosa County Commission, District 5 Race

- NRA – National Rifle Association – for his support of 2nd Amendment Rights
- Personhood FL – Pro Life
- Northwest Florida Chapter of the Restaurant & Lodging Association
- Emerald Coast Association of Realtors



AGAIN...MEL DELIVERED WHAT HE SAID HE WOULD DO IN TALLAHASSEE
And He Will Do The Same Here At Home In Okaloosa!

