

**Penta** Policy Insiders

# Florida Insights Review Series

Environment and Climate

# Executive summary

We are excited to share our findings from this year's Florida Insights Review. From April to September 2022, we surveyed and spoke with over 250 state and local policymakers in Florida to understand their policy priorities and how the private and public sectors can collaborate to move forward on important issues.

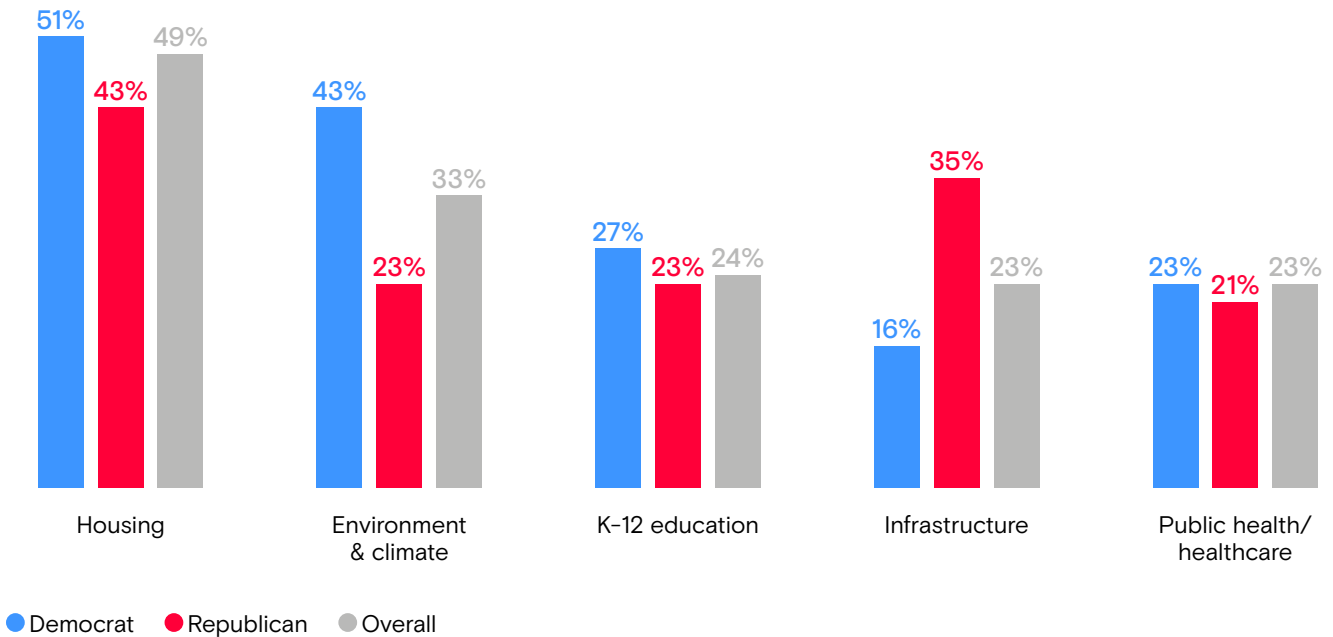
Last year was particularly noteworthy for the state of Florida, which was at the center of national discourse when its business community and political leadership found themselves misaligned over issues relating to corporate engagement on social issues, highlighted by the Parental Rights in Education legislation. Our research in Florida indicates that policymaker perceptions of corporate engagement on social issues vary significantly by party, with Republicans more critical of corporate engagement on these issues.

In fact, 40% of Republican policymakers believe that companies should avoid engaging on social issues, altogether. Those Republican policymakers that welcome private sector engagement tend to suggest that such engagement should be directly related to business functions and avoid overstepping into political issues.

In terms of policy priorities, both Democrats and Republicans report that the state's housing issues are top of mind, while education and healthcare remain in the top five priorities of Florida policymakers.

This report is the third in a series that examines Florida policymakers' top policy priorities of 2022. This review examines Environment and Climate in the state.

## Top policy priorities in Florida



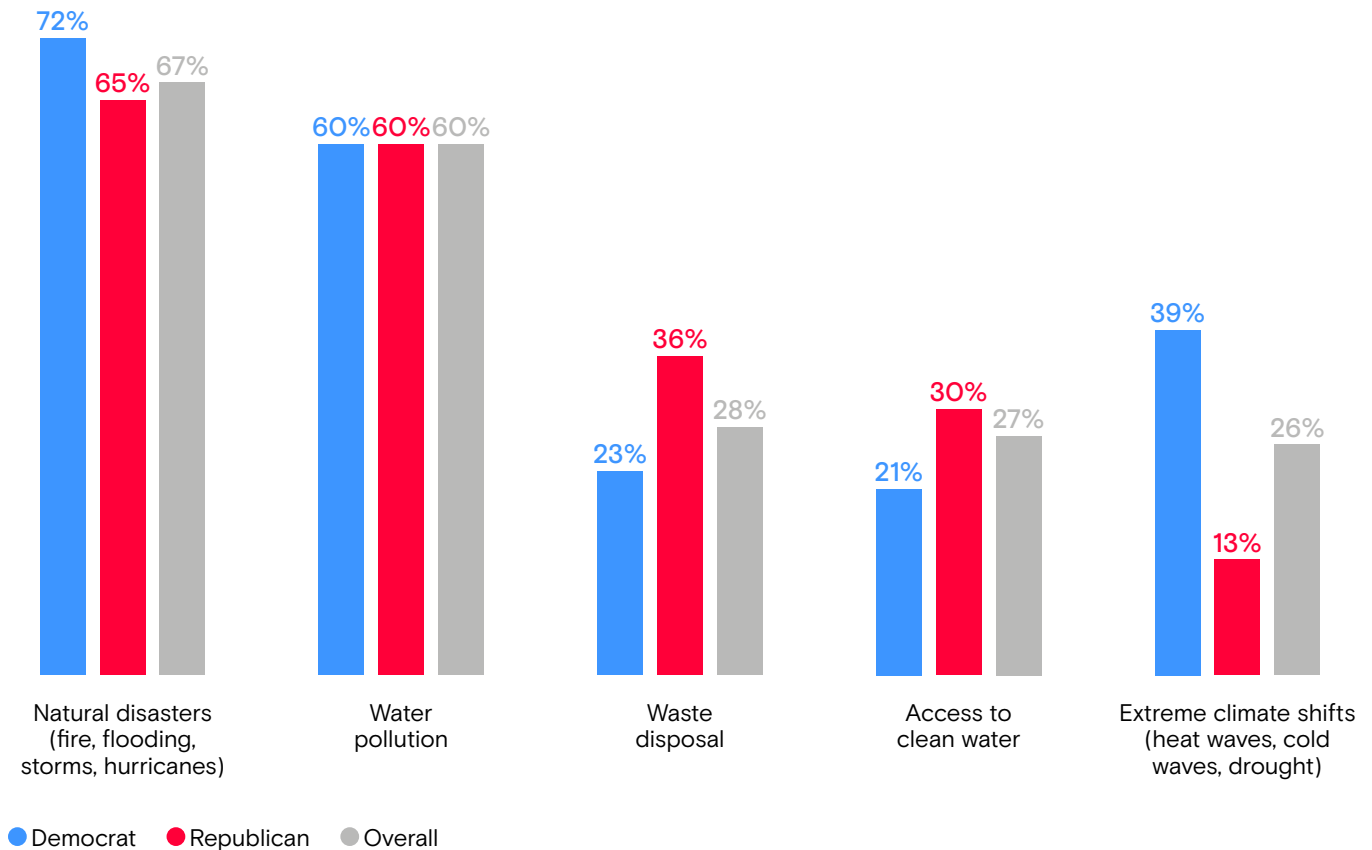


# Environment

Thirty-three percent of policymakers, including 23 percent of Republicans and 43 percent of Democrats, identify environment and climate as a top policy issue in the state of Florida. While Republicans and Democrats disagree on the overall importance of the environment as policy priority, there is strong bipartisan agreement that natural disasters and clean water are the top environmental challenges confronting Florida.

## Top priority environmental issues

Multiple selections permitted





## Navigating natural disasters

Policymakers want to improve electrical grid health so that power will be protected and available in the event of a natural disaster.



And then the last thing I would say for utilities in Florida, in particular, is probably hardening the grid and making sure lines are underground so that when we have a hurricane event, we're not having hundreds of thousands of people without power for months. So that's another utility issue.

Representative, Florida House of Representatives, D



## Protecting Florida's water

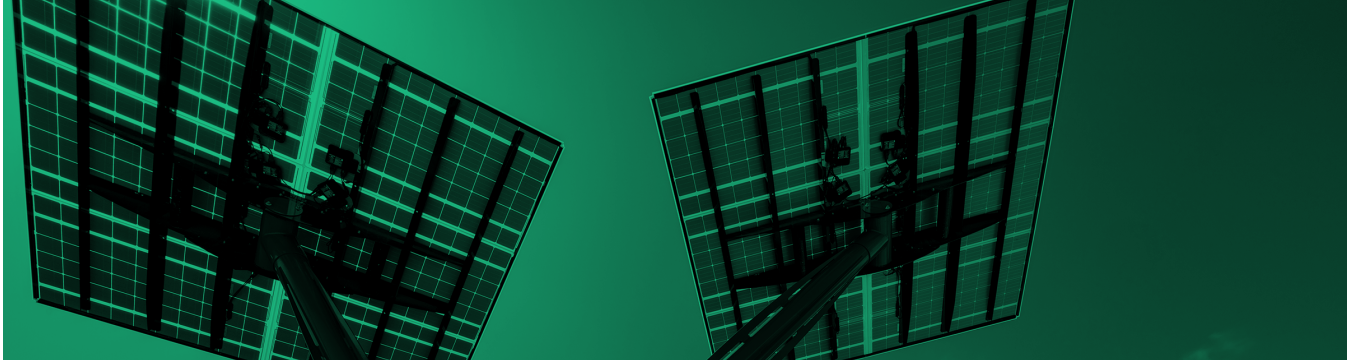
Clean water is a bipartisan focus, with 60 percent of Republicans and 60 percent of Democrats selecting it as a top issue in the environment and climate sector.



Florida is a very diverse state with salt water and fresh water...These are really important resources for the state and really for the country if you will. I think a priority is to make sure that we have a very healthy and robust environment....It spans both sides of the aisle. It's hard to argue against clean water.

Vice Chairman, Executive, R





## Solar energy in the Sunshine State

A top priority is developing renewable sources of energy to avoid further damage to the environment in Florida. Policymakers are excited about the potential of solar energy and want to continue developing strategies for successful storage and utilization.



I think that **Florida being the Sunshine State, it's an ideal place for solar to exist. I think that solar has a big future.** And if we are to believe what the utility companies are now doing—they're increasing their solar portfolios. And **that is going to push things forward in a good way in the state.**

**Legislative Analyst, Florida House of Representatives, D**



In Florida I think it's **(the future of energy) solar... I think solar is truly the next source if we have the battery power to be able to store it.**

**Vice Chairman, Executive, R**

## Concerns about renewable energy

Policymakers emphasize that individual participation in renewable energy initiatives is highly dependent on the ability to afford innovations such as electric cars and solar panels. Creating a plan to make these energy sources more affordable is vital for the state of Florida as they continue to transition towards renewable energy.



There's a lot of interest in it from time to time. But **unless it's heavily subsidized, it's really not super practical on a general basis.** So you have to have a pretty substantial amount of money on the front end to do anything on the kind of renewable, solar panels, electric, that's all on the high front end cost, unless it's heavily subsidized, it doesn't seem to work that well.

**Government Relations Director, Executive, R**



I know some about solar opportunities. But what I have found at least is that it's a high cost upfront. **If there were some assistance or some sort of incentive for people, they might be quicker to jump on the bandwagon.** I would be one of them.

**Consultant, Executive, D**

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Additionally, policymakers are hesitant to fully support renewable energy efforts because they have concerns that certain initiatives could produce waste and pollutants that further harm the environment.

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I'm extremely interested in both...it's shown that **renewable resources can be a huge resource. They don't necessarily have to be the only resource.** California got into solar early and now they're having issues with the disposal of the solar panels. It turns out that the solar panels are made out of hazardous materials. **How do we make sure when we get rid of the panels, they don't become a hazardous material that pollutes our environment?**

**Director, Executive, D**

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## Private and public sector involvement on environmental issues

Policymakers are impressed when companies take responsibility during environmental crises, but want to see more active involvement from the public and private sectors on sustainability initiatives.

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**The government, I believe, still needs to be involved in [renewable and green energy initiatives] because resources are finite...**at some point, we're going to run out...changing from plastic straws to paper straws. It's a start, but it was kind of one of those feel-good things that was easy to do, but it doesn't really move the needle.

**Vice Chairman, Executive, R**



I would hope that [corporations] service is excellent, their product is excellent, and that their sense of responsibility to people, in general, is excellent... **I think the electric industry has certainly shown corporate responsibility during hurricane times....** I think it's important to have a sense of responsibility to your customer and people who aren't customers.

**Mayor, Municipal, R**

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## Conclusion

As policymakers evaluate the state of the environment in Florida, they cite many challenges including natural disasters and water pollution. Despite these obstacles, policymakers are excited about the progress Florida is making to utilize sources of renewable energy. However, the high costs associated with renewable energy innovations remain a challenge. Looking forward, policymakers want companies to continue to show leadership in responding to environmental crises and exploring sustainability initiatives.

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## About Penta Policy Insiders

Penta Policy Insiders provides direct feedback from policymakers to government relations professionals, improving advocates' ability to understand, validate, and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their engagement.

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