

February 2021

FLORIDA BLACK CAUCUS of Local Elected Officials, Inc.

President's Message



Happy Black History Month FBC-LEO Members and Friends!

Last month, we witnessed former Senator Kamala Harris being sworn in as the first black woman to become Vice President of the United States of America, the second highest position in the land. As I reflected on the gravity of this momentous occasion, I realized I was witnessing the fulfilment of my ancestor's wildest dreams. I thought about how the "American Dream" has, for so long, been just out of reach for women and many people of color. I gave thought to those who were excluded from America's vision of democracy, when the Founding Fathers stated in the Declaration of Independence, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," and I was overwhelmed with the magnitude of reaching this milestone in our nation's history. I am grateful to have seen my ancestor's dreams come to fruition in such a notable way during my lifetime.

While I continued to ponder what this moment meant for FBC-LEO members, I realized that we are ALL living, breathing embodiments of those beautiful words, penned by James Weldon Johnson in the second verse of "Lift Every Voice and Sing,"

"We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered.
Out from the gloomy past, till now we stand at last,
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast!"

We are all bright stars, standing in the footprints of all those that have come before us! We've inherited a responsibility to speak boldly, preserve justice and build upon the foundation of those that have come before, and for all those who will serve after us. This month, as we celebrate the 45th nationally recognized Black History Month, please take some time to reflect on the paths that have been watered with tears to bring you where you are today.

We hope that you will join us at the upcoming FBC-LEO Spring 2021 Conference so we can learn together, work together and grow leaders from within in our organization to

meet the unique challenges of this time. I want to personally thank everyone who joined us for the first webinar of the year, "Get Moving on the Road to Healthy Living in 2021." If you did not have the opportunity to attend the live broadcast, a link to the recording is in this newsletter and be on the lookout for future educational opportunities.

As Vice President Kamala Harris works alongside President Joe Biden to bring a sense of unity to our fractured country, relief to the suffering in our cities and hope to the hearts of our residents, let us remember all who have paved the way with their sacrifices to make this moment possible. I hope you find ways to celebrate our rich history and advancement as a people throughout Black History Month 2021, and we look forward to seeing you in Kissimmee, March 18-19, for our Spring 2021 Conference!

Teresa Watkins Brown

President Teresa Watkins Brown
Mayor Pro Tem, City of Fort Myers

Welcome to the FBC-LEO Board of Directors

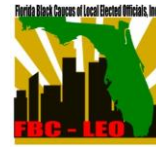


At the January Board of Directors meeting, Apopka Commissioner Alexander H. Smith was voted into the assistant secretary position. Commissioner Smith graduated from Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University with a degree in Agricultural Education and a minor in Horticultural Science and is a founding board member of the Apopka Improvement Association.

Congratulations, Commissioner Smith! Welcome to the FBC-LEO Board of Directors.

2020-2021 Dues Invoices Reminder

FBC-LEO 2021 dues were emailed on Friday, January 8th.



If you did not receive your invoice, be sure to check your spam/junk folder. If you need the invoice emailed to you again, contact Nykierama Cooper at ncooper@flcities.com.

Thank you for your membership. We appreciate your continued support of FBC-LEO.

FBC-LEO 2021 Essay Contest

"What does Emancipation Day, May 20th Mean to Me?" Essay Contest



The **Florida Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials** is sponsoring a statewide essay contest titled "What does Emancipation Day, May 20th Mean to Me?"

This contest assists 11th- and 12th-grade students in FBC-LEO member municipalities who are pursuing post-high school education. We are encouraging students to learn and write about

Florida's true Emancipation Day.

Entries must be emailed by February 19, 2021. Essays will be judged by a committee comprised of members from the Florida Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials Board of Directors.

The winner will receive a \$1,000.00 scholarship for the college or technical career institution of their choice. The selected essay will be published in the caucus' newsletter, and the winner will be recognized virtually at the FBC-LEO Spring Conference March 18-19, 2021.

FBC-LEO members are asked to encourage 11th- and 12th-graders in their city to participate in the essay contest. The contest will also be promoted on our social media platforms.

Please promote this contest by doing the following:

- Share the application with your school superintendent and high school principals. Encourage them to share the contest information with their schools.
- Share the application with local 11th- and 12th-grader teachers and encourage them to share it with their students.

If you have any questions, please contact Nykierama Cooper at ncooper@flcities.com or 850.222.9684.

[Download Application](#)

[Visit FBC-LEO Website](#)

This year's essay contest is being funded by donations. If you would like to donate to this scholarship fund, please click the "Donate" button below.

Thank you for your consideration of this donation and thank you in advance to those who donate.

[Donate](#)

Congratulations, Mary Lawson Brown



The City of Palatka recognized Mary Lawson Brown for 36 years of dedicated service at their commission meeting in January. **Click the video above to watch the recognition of the Honorable Commissioner Mary Lawson Brown.**

Commissioner Brown first ran for a seat on the city commission in 1984. When she emerged from that first race a victor, she also emerged a pioneer. She became the first woman and black person to serve on the Palatka City Commission.

Known as the city mother, she earned numerous accolades, including a Florida League of Cities Lifetime Achievement Award and the city's marina was renamed the Mary Lawson Brown Marina.

Brown has a saying, "We're Better Together," and while that's true, we also know that the City of Palatka is better because of her unwavering dedication to the advancement of her

community, vision to make Palatka known outside of the North Florida Region and commitment to service.

Congratulations, Commissioner Mary Lawson Brown.

Legislative Action Resources



Want to stay up-to-date on legislative action that affects Florida's cities and residents? **Sign up to receive text alerts!** Simply **text the keyword Home Rule to 50457** and when you receive a text confirmation, click the link and add your information so we can communicate with you during session.

Be sure to download the [2021 Legislative Action Agenda](#) and familiarize yourself with the five priority issues that will affect Florida's cities so you can help the Florida League of Cities advocate for local voices making local choices!

Ready to learn more? Check out the League's [Advocacy Tools](#) page for additional resources designed to help city officials advocate for their cities' unique needs.

FBC-LEO Webinar



Last month, FBC-LEO hosted its "Get Moving on the Road to Healthy Living in 2021" webinar. It was an interesting and informative session. Click the view recording button below to view the recorded webinar.

[View Recording](#)

Events & Training Opportunities

#FLCitiesStrong Webinar Series

February 8, 2021
10:00 a.m. ET



On the second Monday of each month, FLC University hosts the popular #FLCitiesStrong webinar series. On **February 8 at 10:00 a.m. ET, Dr. Scott Paine**

and **Shwanda Barnette** will welcome special guests and foster engaging and insightful conversations that take you beyond today's headlines.

In this regularly scheduled session, FLC will welcome local officials from around the state for a discussion on **the role cities play in fostering vibrant economies**. Their guests include **Clearwater Mayor Frank Hibbard**, **Lakeland Linder International Airport Director Gene Conrad** and **Tavares City Administrator John Drury**.

[**Register Now**](#)

FBCLEO 2021 Spring Conference
March 18-19, 2021

Embassy Suites by Hilton Orlando Lake Buena Vista South
4955 Kyngs Heath Road
Kissimmee, FL 34746



Registration: \$150.00
Room Rate: \$125.00 per night + tax

[#FBCLEO2021](#)

At this time, the conference will be an in-person event. FBC-LEO is monitoring the situation and may switch to a virtual event if needed.



2021 FBC-LEO Spring Conference
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

CLARENCE ANTHONY
CEO and Executive Director
National League of Cities



#FBCLEO2021

[Register Online Today](#)

[Download Registration Form](#)

[View Conference Agenda](#)

Reserve your hotel room two ways:

1) Call 1.800.446.6677. Use the group code (FBL).

-or-

2) [Click here](#) to book online.

Parking:

Self-parking daily and overnight for guests: Free

Daily parking for non-guests: \$7.00

For additional information or assistance with registering, please contact fbcleo@flcities.com or **850.222.9684**.

Content Submission



CALL FOR CONTENT

Do you have newsworthy content that your fellow FBC-LEO members would benefit from having in the monthly newsletter? We are now accepting content for our Member News section.

Newsworthy content includes articles, photos, videos, educational opportunities, and life events such as awards, retirement, community activism and the death of members.

Content Submission Guidelines:

1. Original content is preferred.
2. Non-original content should include proper attribution, including links to references and permission from the content's creator.
3. The tone of the content should be neutral and professional.

4. Content should look at major problems, rising trends and innovative ideas affecting elected officials and membership.
5. Promotional content should be for educational opportunities only.
6. Content should be informational, educational, entertaining insightful or procedural.
7. Content should be 3,000 words or less.

Submissions that do not follow the established guidelines may not be accepted for publication. Submissions will be published based on relevancy to the current newsletter theme and will be published at the discretion of the administration team.

To submit content, email FBC-LEO.

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[Florida Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials](#)