

**VOTE
Aug 28th**



Marion County Is A Place Where Families Still Matter

Catching up with Commissioner Carl Zalak before the August 28 primary election.

Carl Zalak was a new father when he realized how much Marion County mattered to his family. “I have always lived in what my wife calls a ‘tribal’ family, meaning that wherever Mom and Dad are, we all are,” he recalls. “As I held my new baby and imagined how great the future would be—my child surrounded by loving family and friends—my wife interrupted with, ‘That’s all fine and well, but I was hoping our child would have a career.’”

The unfortunate truth was that at that time, kids grew up and often left Ocala because there were fewer career choices here. That’s when Carl gained the perspective that it was not enough to love just his family. So as a business leader, he made a family plan that

would stop at nothing less than Marion County becoming a great place for finding promising careers for our talented kids and at the same time being the best place in the world for his parents’ retirement. This is why Commissioner Zalak has been so solutions-focused. Now he is asking you to join his team and vote August 28th.

In the hope of providing some answers, here’s a short Q&A of the most important issues facing voters right now:

Beginning with public safety, will our kids be safer August 13th?

That lies primarily in the hands of the Sheriff and School Board, but know that the County Commission has already dedicated \$2.1 million to the equipment needed for our School

Resource Officers. I will do my part to secure our schools.

How do we rank statewide in public safety?

In the past, Marion County has struggled to hire and maintain top-rated firefighters and paramedics. This is mainly due to holding the line on taxes during The Great Recession, but this is the first year we’ve had the ability to make salaries competitive with surrounding counties. The Board of County Commissioners is accomplishing this now—without raising taxes, I might add.

How did we do this? We identified the areas of our greatest need for the labor unions and they actually worked with us this time. The result is that Marion County is now rated third in

Carl’s Big Three

- 1. FAMILY**—The bedrock of any community is the family. I will continue working to ensure that Marion County is a place where our children and grandchildren find careers worthy of their talents
- 2. FAITH**—My faith is what guides me every day in what I do as a husband, a father, and as your county commissioner.
- 3. OPPORTUNITY**—People shape community, not government. When government, with its bureaucracy and red tape, spends too much and neglects the essentials, the results paralyze business and congest our roads.

the state for a career as a dual-certified firefighter/paramedic. Now we should be able to keep and recruit the best, most-qualified people to show up when there is an emergency, whether it’s for my family or yours.

Have you noticed a change in the signs of store windows?

The national recession led me to public office. I wanted to see those “going out of business” signs in the store windows disappear. In those days, unemployment was over 14 percent and home values had fallen 40 percent. It’s hard to express the joy in seeing so many “help wanted” signs our store windows today.

But we still have more work to do. We have the tools to grow. The important part is believing in the opportuni-

ties around us and believing in each other. Local business leaders, as well as some industry giants like FedEx, AutoZone, and Chewy.com have created more than 5,600 local jobs, many of which offer cutting-edge careers. So do you feel the momentum rising? I do.

What’s one of the accomplishments of which you’re most proud?

Probably the top of my list is the creation of the Veterans Resource Center, a one-stop shop for all the county’s veterans services both governmental and non-profit. It eliminates the hassle of having the various agencies scattered throughout the county, cuts a lot of red tape in getting our veterans the services they need, and is centrally located next to the main branch library on Silver Springs Boulevard. In my mind, valuing our veterans is the same as valuing our freedom. Any way that we can serve and honor them is worth it.

Do you miss your old worries?

You mean back when we didn’t know where our garbage was going to go or what impact it would have on our environment? Not really. I just made sure that within my first 100 days that I kept my campaign promise to resolve our county’s trash issues with zero impact on our springs, something that will save our taxpayers millions over the next 30 years.

But the truth is that without the right leaders over the next few years, we

could have plenty to worry about. Marion County’s population is projected to climb from 350,000 to north of 525,000. This means we must plan now for our future. I understand that things like urban sprawl clogging up SR 200 will not lead us to happiness, nor does the Coastal Connector belong in our beautiful horse country.

What does the future look like?

It is likely that the next 20 years will be structured in the next few years, shaping our community forever. Don’t be fooled—there are definitely some “good ol’ boys” who do not appreciate the fresh perspective of building partnerships throughout our community. But this is no time to hand Marion County back to the cronyism and bureaucracy of the past, unless you like willy-nilly development, the unions refusing to let leadership tackle public safety challenges, and the neglect of our natural treasures.

We have a bright future ahead and together we can claim it. In fact, you may even want to think about inviting your loved ones to come share it with us, if they are not already here. Marion County has the room and the careers for your family, too.

Any final thoughts?

This race will be decided in the Republican primary on August 28th. We make a difference when we vote. Thank you.

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