

# *Voicing Paths for Change*

2025 ANNUAL REPORT



FLORIDA COMMISSION  
*on the STATUS of WOMEN*



# MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR

Dear Fellow Floridians:

As we close 2025, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the progress the Florida Commission on the Status of Women has made in advancing our mission to empower, educate, and celebrate the women and families of our great state. When women and families thrive, Florida grows stronger, and this belief has guided all of our work throughout the year. Our theme, Voicing Paths for Change, came to life through listening, collaboration, and meaningful engagement in communities across Florida.

Listening and educating remained at the center of our mission. Through the 2025 Voices of Florida Women Survey and the Inaugural Veterans Survey, thousands of women shared their perspectives on challenges and opportunities related to health care, childcare, economic

stability, housing, and support for veterans and military families. Their insights shaped our priorities and ensured that women's experiences were represented in the conversations guiding Florida's future.

These insights helped strengthen the partnerships we rely on to advance our work. We expanded our reach through key initiatives, including the inaugural gathering of Statewide Commissions for Women, the Trailblazers luncheon, and regional outreach across the state. We also hosted the Virtual Florida Veterans Summit, "Forging New Paths: Opportunities Beyond the Uniform," which focused on employability and transition resources for veterans and military families. This summit reinforced our commitment to ensuring that those who have served our country have the support, networks, and opportunities they need to thrive in civilian life.

We celebrated remarkable women whose leadership has strengthened our state. The Florida Women's Hall of Fame honored both the 2023 and 2024 inductees, and special celebrations, such as Miami's tribute to Mary Brickell, reminded us of the powerful legacy of women who helped shape Florida's history and identity.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of our commissioners, staff, community partners, and the many civic leaders and policymakers who champion efforts that improve the lives of women and families. Their commitment inspires our work every day.

As we look ahead, I am encouraged by the momentum we have built together. We will continue to elevate women's voices, honor their achievements, and expand opportunities so that every woman and every family has the chance to thrive. As Floridians, we are all better when we are all better.

With gratitude,



Lori Day  
Chair, Florida Commission on the Status of Women  
Director, CGI Technology



# **Table of Contents**

<b>2025: THE YEAR IN REVIEW .....</b>	<b>2</b>
Collaboration .....	2
Education .....	4
Celebration .....	6
Growth in Commission Engagement .....	8
Summary .....	8
<b>ABOUT THE COMMISSION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Mission .....	9
Enabling Legislation .....	10
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2025 COMMISSIONERS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>FLORIDA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN REGIONAL MAP .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2025 YEAR IN PICTURES .....</b>	<b>14</b>

# 2025 THE YEAR IN REVIEW

*The Florida Commission on the Status of Women (FCSW) proudly reflects on a year marked by progress, partnership, and purpose. Throughout 2025, the Commission continued its commitment to amplifying women's voices and promoting opportunities to strengthen Florida's communities. From data collection and statewide outreach to meaningful collaborations and recognition of exceptional women, this year showcased the power of community and dedication to the Commission's mission. Together, we celebrate the strides made toward a brighter, more prosperous future for all Floridians.*



2025 FCSW Installation of Officers

## Collaboration

In March, FCSW proudly participated as an Advocate Sponsor of the **Oasis Center for Women & Girls' annual Trailblazer Luncheon** in Tallahassee. This year's celebration carried special significance as it commemorated Tallahassee's bicentennial, highlighting women whose achievements have been instrumental in shaping the city's rich history and continued progress. This inspiring event honors Tallahassee-Leon County women and girls who have made groundbreaking contributions to their communities. Each year, the ceremony recognizes *Trailblazers* who have shattered glass ceilings and opened doors for others, *Unsung Sheroes* whose quiet dedication keeps our communities thriving, and *Girls Who Can Do Anything* – young leaders already making their mark and proving that age is no limit to making a difference. The luncheon served as a powerful reminder of the lasting influence of women's leadership and the importance of honoring those who inspire change and create pathways for future generations.

Also in March, "**Generation W 2025: Explore**" was held at the University of North Florida's Fine Arts Center in Jacksonville as a nationally recognized thought leadership and community event focused on empowering women and sparking curiosity, connection, and meaningful conversations. FCSW participated as a Community Partnership Sponsor. Attendees engaged in a full day of bold discussions and interactive sessions exploring leadership, personal growth, work, life, and community. The event provided opportunities for meaningful networking, sharing of experiences, and collaborative problem-

solving, inspiring participants to take actionable steps in their personal and professional lives while fostering a sense of empowerment and community among women in attendance.

In April, FCSW served as the Presenting Sponsor for the **Pasco County Commission on the Status of Women's annual Women Uplifting Women Luncheon**, celebrating the accomplishments, leadership, and resilience of women across the community. Business owners, students, community leaders, and residents came together to honor the contributions of women who continue to shape Pasco County.

FCSW commissioner Rosie Paulsen delivered remarks emphasizing leadership, community engagement, and the importance of women uplifting one another. This year's luncheon highlighted the shared commitment of both the state and county Commissions on the Status of Women to recognizing achievements, strengthening connections, and inspiring future generations of women leaders.



**2025 National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) Annual Conference**

**The 2025 National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) Annual Conference** was held July 30 - August 2 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma with the theme *"Her State: Breaking Barriers and Building Futures by Paving the Way."* The event brought together nearly 100 attendees from 11 states representing state, county, and local women's commissions. Among the attendees were FCSW Chair Lori Day and Immediate Past Chair Sophia Eccleston, who joined commissioners and leaders from across the nation to exchange best practices, participate in panels discussing economic security, human trafficking, and advocacy, and engage with leaders across public, nonprofit, and business sectors. FCSW was honored with the NACW Certificate of Achievement Award in recognition of its Voices of Florida Military Women research study.

In September, FCSW proudly co-hosted the **inaugural Statewide Women's Commissions Meeting** in Tallahassee, in partnership with the Tallahassee-Leon County Commission on the Status of Women and Girls and the Miami-Dade County Commission for Women. This historic event brought together more than 50 leaders representing over 17 organizations, including county and city commissions, academic institutions, and advocacy partners from across the state who are united in purpose and grounded in possibility.

The meeting centered around three bold goals: building a statewide network rooted in shared values and collective purpose; identifying gaps and opportunities to influence community change to improve the lives of women and girls; and sharing best practices to strengthen organizational capacity and local partnerships. Each goal reflected a shared commitment to progress and connection.

FCSW was honored to sponsor and support the event. As Dr. Rose Martin, Executive Director of the Miami-Dade County Commission for Women, reflected, "What began as a vision to create space for connection, strategy, and shared learning became something far more transformational." The energy of the day was captured in every conversation, every shared meal, and every exchanged idea, and underscored a collective belief that we are better together. The success of this inaugural gathering laid a durable foundation for ongoing collaboration and the continued growth of women and girls across Florida.

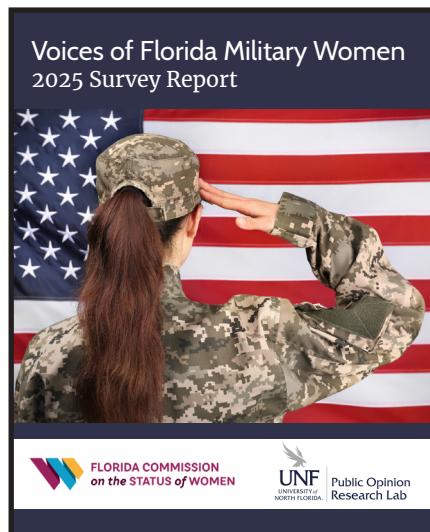
## Education

The partnership between the Florida Commission on the Status of Women and the University of North Florida Public Opinion Research Lab produces valuable research that deepens understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing women in Florida. The collaboration began in 2022 with the first **FCSW Voices of Florida Women Survey**, which examined key issues such as health, safety, education, and economic security. The 2025 survey built on the 2022 study's findings by tracking changes over time and identifying emerging priorities for women and girls across the state. In addition, the partnership produced the **Voices of Florida Military Women Survey** this year, focusing on the unique experiences of women veterans and service members in Florida. Together, these studies provide a powerful foundation for informed policymaking and programs that strengthen the well-being and advancement of women statewide.

The 2025 survey of Florida women reveals that the most pressing challenges across the state are **affordable healthcare, the rising cost of living, mental health, childcare and family support, and personal safety**. Priorities vary by age group, with 18–24 year-old women more focused on **mental health and career opportunities**, while women ages 25+ emphasize **healthcare access and financial stability**. Overall, the findings reflect the diverse and evolving needs of women throughout Florida and highlight key areas where support, policy action, and community resources can have the greatest impact.



Access reports by scanning the QR code above.



The 2025 survey of military-affiliated women in Florida reveals the most significant challenges and priorities faced by this unique population, which includes active-duty members, reservists, veterans, and military family members. The findings indicate key challenges center on **access to quality healthcare, mental health support, financial stability, employment opportunities, and the availability of family and childcare resources**. Respondents also emphasized the importance of **community connection and smoother transitions between military and civilian life**. Overall, the results highlight the need for increased awareness and targeted support for military-affiliated women, ensuring their voices are represented in statewide policy discussions and resource planning.

In October, Commissioners Belinda Keiser and Candace Falsetto participated in the **North Miami Commission for Women's "The State of Women & Girls in Florida" conference**, where Dr. Rosario Concha from the University of Miami School of Law's Human Rights Clinic presented findings from our **2025 Voices of Florida Women survey**. Her presentation highlighted three pressing issues affecting women – **economic security, healthcare, and violence against women**. She emphasized the persistent challenges women face in low-wage, female-dominated professions, the ongoing wage

gap and the struggle to access affordable housing. Dr. Concha also discussed concerning trends in maternal health, noting racial disparities in mortality rates and a growing need for emergency housing and survivor support services. Additionally, she addressed the prevalence of intimate partner violence, particularly among younger women, underscoring its deep connection to economic hardship and housing instability.

Both survey reports can be found in their entirety on the fcsw.net website at:

<https://fcsw.net/voices-of-florida-women/>

The Florida Commission on the Status of Women hosted **The Florida Veterans Summit** held on November 7, titled **“Forging New Paths: Opportunities Beyond the Uniform.”** The virtual event convened veterans, service organizations, employers, and community leaders to explore strategies and resources that support veterans as they transition from military to civilian life. Led by Commissioner Sophia Eccleston, Chair of the Veterans Task Force, the summit featured an esteemed panel of speakers including **Leslie Coffey of American Corporate Partners, Julia Dattolo of CareerSource Palm Beach County, Maureen Elias of Wounded Warrior Project, Joe Marino of Veterans Florida, and Tami Martin of the Wounded Veterans Relief Fund.** The panel discussed topics such as workforce engagement, employment opportunities, advocacy, and access to community resources, emphasizing the importance of collaboration across sectors to help veterans achieve long-term success and stability beyond their service.

For more information or to see the program in its entirety, please visit our website at:

<https://fcsw.net/virtual-florida-veterans-summit/>



2025 Veterans Summit Panelists

This year, the Florida Commission on the Status of Women reinstated its Legislative Summary Report, a valuable resource highlighting newly enacted Florida laws that impact women and families across the state. The return of this report reflects the Commission's commitment to education, awareness, and advocacy by providing accessible, nonpartisan information on legislative developments that influence economic opportunity, health, safety, and overall quality of life. With the publication of this important report, the FCSW continues its mission to empower Floridians by promoting their knowledge and understanding of policies shaping their communities and strengthening the well-being of women and families statewide.

## Celebration

On January 15, the Florida Commission on the Status of Women proudly welcomed three remarkable women into the **2023 Florida Women's Hall of Fame - May Mann Jennings, Graci McGillicuddy, and Penny Thompson**. The Tallahassee induction ceremony, hosted by Senator Kathleen Passidomo, included a reception made possible through the generous support of **Kimmins Contracting Corp.** May Mann Jennings was honored for her pioneering work in civic engagement, women's suffrage, environmental conservation, and historic preservation. A visionary leader, she played a key role in establishing Florida's early forestry service and championed landmark environmental legislation that shaped the state's future. Graci McGillicuddy was recognized for her lifelong advocacy on behalf of children, leading statewide efforts in child-abuse prevention and supporting vulnerable youth through her nonprofit and community initiatives. Penny Thompson was celebrated for her trailblazing contributions to aviation – as a Civil Air Patrol pilot during World War II, a leader among women pilots, and an advocate for expanding opportunities for women in flight.

On September 30, the Florida Commission on the Status of Women celebrated the induction of three extraordinary women into the **2024 Florida Women's Hall of Fame - Belle Yates Bear, Mary Brickell, and Dotti Groover-Skipper**. The celebration in Tallahassee included the induction ceremony hosted by Senate President Ben Albritton, with a surprise appearance by Lieutenant Governor Jay Collins, followed by a reception honoring the honorees' remarkable accomplishments. This was made possible through the generous support of our Reception Sponsor, **Ferman Motor Car Company**. Each honoree embodies the values of leadership, service, and innovation that have shaped Florida's history and continue to guide its future. Belle Yates Bear has dedicated decades to philanthropy and community service in Northwest Florida, supporting programs that enhance education, health, and social services, and transforming the lives of countless residents through her unwavering commitment to giving back. Mary Brickell, often recognized as the co-founder of Miami, played a pivotal role in the city's early development – establishing businesses, promoting civic growth, and laying the groundwork for



2023 Florida Women's Hall of Fame Inductees



2024 Florida Women's Hall of Fame Inductees

Miami's evolution into a vibrant metropolitan hub. Dotti Groover-Skipper has spent her life championing community engagement and advocacy, leading initiatives that empower underserved populations, and combating critical social issues, including human trafficking, through awareness, prevention, and support programs. Together, the 2023 and 2024 inductees embody the courage, leadership, and service that define the Florida Women's Hall of Fame and continue to inspire future generations across the state.

FCSW was honored to partner with **Health First** as the official sponsor of the **2025 Florida Women's History Contest**. The FCSW Women's History Contest is a statewide program that encourages students to learn about women's contributions and achievements to Florida's history with the goal of fostering appreciation and future leadership. Open to all students in grades K–12, the contest supports student engagement through the integration of creative and academic work: elementary students use the visual arts of drawing and painting, middle school students author essays, and high school students produce videos inspired by the annual theme. The 2025 theme, "**Women and Innovation**," invited students to explore Florida women who turned novel ideas and inventions into something useful creating significant value, solving meaningful problems, and implementing original approaches, creating impactful change for the people of Florida. The contest promotes education through research and awareness to inspire young people and support FCSW's mission of education, collaboration, and celebration. The Commission was able to expand outreach and recognition for young Floridians whose essays, videos and art reflected the spirit of progress and inspiration that defines the mission of the FCSW.



## **2025 FCSW HISTORY CONTEST WINNERS**



## Growth in Commission Engagement

This year, FCSW experienced **significant growth and engagement across its social media platforms**. Followers increased across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X/Twitter, while impressions and interactions surged, particularly on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Commissioner spotlights, Florida Women's Hall of Fame promotions, and milestone celebrations were the top-performing content. FCSW increased content volume across all platforms, driving greater visibility and audience interaction. Social media followers were concentrated in Florida's metro areas and primarily represented professional services, education, government, and healthcare sectors. The data shows that recognition-focused campaigns resonate strongly, with hashtags like #honorawoman and #fwhof amplifying reach. Key takeaways are the effectiveness of commissioner and Hall of Fame content, LinkedIn's growing potential for professional engagement, and the opportunity to balance celebratory posts with educational and resource-driven messaging to sustain momentum.

## Summary

As 2025 ends, the Florida Commission on the Status of Women proudly reflects on a year defined by collaboration, research, and celebration. Through statewide partnerships, educational initiatives, and recognition of women's achievements, the Commission continued to advance its mission of amplifying women's voices and promoting opportunity for all Floridians. From uniting local commissions and community leaders to expanding research that informs policy and elevates understanding, FCSW strengthened its role as a catalyst for progress. The year's accomplishments—including the *Voices of Florida Women* surveys, the *Virtual Veterans Summit*, and the Florida Women's Hall of Fame—demonstrate the collective power of leadership and service in shaping a stronger, more equitable future. With gratitude for the dedication of its commissioners, partners, and supporters, the FCSW looks ahead to building on this momentum in 2026 and beyond.



2025 Florida Women's Hall of Fame Ceremony — Current and Former FCSW Commissioners

# ABOUT THE COMMISSION

*For more than 30 years, the Florida Commission on the Status of Women has served as a resource and champion for women throughout Florida. Established in 1991 by the Florida Legislature, the Commission is a non-partisan board of 22 appointed members. The Commission serves as a valuable resource for state and local leaders, so they have a better understanding of the needs, concerns, and challenges facing women in Florida. The Commission also serves as a resource for connecting women to the tools and resources necessary to live healthier, more prosperous lives.*

## ***Mission***

Our mission is to enable Florida women and girls to reach their fullest potential through Collaboration, Education, and Celebration.

## ***Vision***

A State where women and families are empowered, have opportunities to thrive, and contribute to building a more prosperous Florida.



2025 FCSW Officers with Supreme Court Justice Charles Canady

# **Enabling Legislation**

FL Stat 14.24 Florida Commission on the Status of Women. —

(1) There is established in the Office of the Attorney General the Florida Commission on the Status of Women, consisting of 22 members. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, the Attorney General, and the Governor shall each appoint four members, and the Chief Financial Officer and the Commissioner of Agriculture shall each appoint three members, for a term of 4 years. The members appointed shall include persons who represent rural and urban interests and the ethnic and cultural diversity of the state's population. No member shall serve more than 8 consecutive years on the commission. A vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term in the same manner as the original appointment.

(2) The commission shall meet once in the first, second, and fourth quarters of each year and upon the call of the chairperson or two other officers. Annually, at the meeting in the first quarter, officers consisting of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, and treasurer shall be elected. Each officer shall serve until a successor is elected and qualified. No officer shall serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

(3) Members of the commission shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for per diem and travel expenses in accordance with s. 112.061.

(4) It shall be the duty of the commission to study the changing and developing roles of women in American society. The study shall include, but not be limited to, the following areas:

(a) The socioeconomic factors that influence the status of women.

(b) The development of individual potential.

(c) The encouragement of women to utilize their capabilities and assume leadership roles.

(d) The coordination of efforts of numerous women's organizations interested in the welfare of women.

(e) The identification and recognition of contributions made by women to the community, state, and nation.

(f) The implementation of paragraphs (a)–(e) where working conditions, financial security, and legal status of both sexes are improved.

(5) The commission may apply for and accept funds, grants, gifts, and services from the state, the government of the United States or any of its agencies, or any other public or private source for the purpose of defraying clerical and administrative costs as may be necessary in carrying out its duties under this section.

(6) Beginning January 1, 1993, the commission shall report annually on January 1 to the Governor, the Attorney General, the Cabinet, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the President of the Senate, and the minority leaders of the House and Senate on the study carried out under the provisions of this section.

FL Stat 265.001 Florida Women's Hall of Fame.—

(1) It is the intent of the Legislature to recognize and honor those women who, through their works and lives, have made significant contributions to the improvement of life for women and for all citizens of Florida.

(2)(a) There is hereby established the Florida Women's Hall of Fame. The Department of Management Services shall set aside an area on the Plaza Level of the Capitol Building and shall consult with the Florida Commission on the Status of Women regarding the design and theme of such area.

(b) Each person who is selected as a member shall have a designation placed in the Florida Women's Hall of Fame, which designation shall provide information regarding the member's particular discipline or contribution and any vital information relating to the member.

(3)(a) Every year, the commission shall accept nominations for persons to be recommended as members of the Florida Women's Hall of Fame. The commission shall recommend to the Governor 10 persons from which up to three members shall be selected.

(b) In making recommendations pursuant to this subsection, the commission shall recommend women who were born in Florida or adopted Florida as their home state and base of operation and who have made a significant contribution to the enhancement of women in this state.

(4) The Florida Commission on the Status of Women may set specific time periods for acceptance of nominations and the selection of members to coincide with the appropriate activities of the Florida Women's Hall of Fame.

## ***ACKNOWLEDGMENTS***

The Florida Commission on the Status of Women extends its sincere appreciation to all who contributed to the success of this year's initiatives and the completion of the 2025 Annual Report. The Annual Report Committee, chaired by Candace Falsetto, provided thoughtful leadership and oversight throughout the process. The Commission thanks committee members Katherine English, Maria Garcia, Stephanie Goforth, and Commission Chair Lori Day for their collaboration and commitment to excellence in bringing this publication to fruition.

Special recognition is given to the commissioners whose vision and coordination were instrumental in conducting the 2025 Voices of Florida Women Survey and the Women Veterans Survey projects. Their efforts ensured that the voices and experiences of women across the state were meaningfully represented in the Commission's work and programming throughout the year.

The Commission is grateful to its many partners, sponsors, and community supporters who provided resources, venues, and assistance in support of its events statewide. Their generosity and engagement continue to strengthen the Commission's mission to uplift and empower Florida's women and girls.

Finally, the Commission extends its deepest appreciation to Governor Ron DeSantis, Lieutenant Governor Jay Collins, Attorney General James Uthmeier, Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia, and Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson, Senate President Ben Albritton and Speaker of the House Daniel Perez for their steadfast support, leadership and commitment to advancing opportunities for women and families throughout the state.

# 2025 COMMISSIONERS

The Florida Commission on the Status of Women proudly recognizes the outstanding leadership and dedication of its 2025 Commissioners. This year, we welcomed **five (★) new members** bringing fresh perspectives and expertise to our mission. Together, they have strengthened our collective voice for women and girls across Florida.

*Lori Day, Chair*

*Claudia Medina Thomas, Vice Chair*

*Leda Kelly, Secretary*

*Jennifer Collins, Treasurer*

*Belinda Keiser, Member at Large*

*Rosie Paulsen, Member at Large*

*Sophia Eccleston, Immediate Past Chair*

*Sharon Hanlon, Parliamentarian*

*Susan Curtis*

*Jennifer Pereira*

*Katherine English*

*Lina Rojas ★*

*Candace Falsetto*

*Taylor Schrader ★*

*Maria Garcia*

*Staci Sims*

*Stephanie Goforth*

*Stephanie Smith ★*

*Jennifer Guy-Hudson*

*Donna Wright ★*

*Kerry Irvin ★*

*Brittany Yonge*

## **Commissioners Completing Service in 2025**

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the following commissioners, whose terms of service concluded this year, for their dedicated service and lasting impact on the work of the Commission.

*Abby Bean, 2021 – 2025*

*Staci Sims, 2023 – 2025*

*Katherine English, 2023 – 2025*

*Melissa Stone, 2022 – 2025*

*Maria Garcia, 2022 – 2025*

*Claudia Medina Thomas, 2022 – 2025*

*Jennifer Guy-Hudson, 2023 – 2025*

*Maria Wells, 2022 – 2025*

*Rep. Jenna Persons-Mulicka, 2017 – 2025*

# Florida Commission on the Status of Women

## Regional Map



★ Denotes FCSW Home Office

# 2025 YEAR IN PICTURES



FLORIDA COMMISSION  
on the STATUS of WOMEN

2025 ANNUAL REPORT | 14





## FLORIDA COMMISSION *on the STATUS of WOMEN*

@flacsw



Florida Commission on the Status of Women



fcsw.net



flwomenshalloffame.org