

Dade County Farm Bureau  
Candidate for State Legislature Questionnaire

Please type responses. Your questionnaire will be posted to our website, [www.dade-agriculture.org](http://www.dade-agriculture.org) and shared with members who wish to be informed voters.

Name: Frank Morra

Address: 5717 Sunset Drive, South Miami, Florida 33143-5335

Campaign Website: None At This Time

Party Affiliation: Democrat Office Sought: State Representative, District 111

Occupation: Courier Employer: Comet Delivery Services

Please list your educational background. Undergraduate degree in Political Science from F.I.U. in 1983 and I hold a Florida Teacher's Certificate.

Why are you running for office? It has always been a dream of mine to offer myself for public service. I have worked as both a legislative secretary and a legislative assistant for more than 18 years. As a result of this professional experience, I would be able to represent the district well if I were to be elected. I view my candidacy as another phase of my life which has been devoted to public service.

Have you held public office before? If so, please name the offices held.

I have served as a member of the Miami-Dade County Democratic Executive Committee for several years. I was just re-elected to a full four year term unopposed which begins in December, 2008.

How would you describe your knowledge of Miami-Dade County's agricultural industry?

It is not an intimate one. However, when I worked for former state Representative John Cosgrove, I had the pleasure of having worked with Will Brown, Patricia and her son to help fund Farm Share that funded the nutritional needs of hungry people in our state. Also, I am aware of the research programs conducted under the auspices of IFAS. The one that is particularly needed is in the area of tropical fruits. Also, there was a research program that existed, I am not sure if it still does, that involved the State of North Dakota with respect to the growing of potatoes. Also, since Hurricane Andrew, there has been a reduction in the total acreage of agriculture and the subsequent increase in housing developments on land previously used for agriculture.

Agriculture often faces the burden of duplicative enforcement of laws at the local and state level. Do you believe that the Legislature should pass laws that preempt county and municipal authority to regulate agricultural lands? Why or why not?

No. Those farmers that are engaged in best management practices should not have to be further burdened with more regulation.

Do you support changes to Florida's Greenbelt Law (F.S. 193.461)? Why or why not?

No. It works well as is.

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What are your views on growth management as it relates to the preservation of agricultural land?

I would like to see any growth necessary to provide housing for low to middle income families be done in or near urban centers. I do not want to see a further loss of farm land because of this. Also, because of the price of gas, it is not practical anymore for people to take advantage of the inexpensive housing that was built on previously zoned agricultural land.

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Do you support the revocation of all state sales tax exemptions? No

Please list past examples of support of the agricultural industry.

In my capacity as a legislative secretary for former State Representative John Cosgrove, I was responsible for inputting the legislative budget requests for the district. These included any programs relating to the agricultural needs of the district. In order for a request for state funds to be considered, it has to be electronically filed in a timely manner. Also, as a legislative assistant for Rep. Bullard, I had occasion to meet with Patricia and her son when they asked for Rep. Bullard's help to make sure that Farm Share was funded.

The agricultural industry depends on research, education and extension to compete. What will you do to insure the State continues to provide this?

I would work to make sure that the State does not cut funding for research, education and extension to compete since what IFAS does is such an important part of our state's economy.

Urbanization, environmental regulation, market pressures and natural disasters have made it increasingly difficult for agriculture to remain in business. What do you think should be done to help the agriculture industry remain a vital part of Florida's economy?

I mentioned previously that we need to focus on providing housing in or near urban centers. The need for inexpensive housing cannot be met anymore by developing what was previously land zoned for agricultural purposes. This is due in large part to high gas prices which is making it very difficult for people to commute to their jobs which are usually many miles away.

I believe in best management practices as they have been defined. Farmers are among the best environmentalists because they have to be aware of what crops can be grown that do not unduly deplete the nutrients in the soil. They have to know what pesticides can be used and in what quantity. How much water is needed to grow a particular crop and what time of day to apply it.

Market pressures are being felt with respect to crops imported into the United States that compete with domestically grown crops. Oftentimes they are cheap because of labor costs being much smaller than in the United States. Environmental practices are not as stringent. The outbreak of salmonella hurt the domestic tomato crop for which Florida is responsible for producing a major share. The ultimate culprit turns out to have been an unsafe environmental practice on a farm in Mexico. It turned out that the source was not even from tomatoes. There was entirely too much uncertainty as to the source of the outbreak. This was in large part because of cutbacks in agricultural inspection programs. This caused an unneeded and costly delay in determining the cause of this program. We need to renegotiate the free trade agreements that have been entered into by the federal government. We cannot allow products into our country that are not meeting our health standards.

Market pressures can be alleviated to a large extent if the federal government has as its goal the prevention of unfair competition. We have largely eliminated tariffs. Other countries that do business with us have not done so. We cannot continue to put ourselves unilaterally at an economic disadvantage.

The impact of natural disasters can be blunted to some extent by increasing the availability and affordability of crop insurance. Part of the costs associated with this should be guaranteed through the state CAT fund.