

**Southern Strategy Group & School District of Clay County
Activity Summary 2015-2017**

Areas of responsibility: Northeast Florida and Tallahassee

Lobbyists assigned: Matt Brockelman and Allyce Heflin

2015-16

It's been a pleasure to work with the Clay County School District since September of 2015. Former Superintendent Charlie Van Zant, Jr. originally brought us on as part of an effort to increase the district's visibility in Tallahassee and secure supplemental funding for the Academies of Clay initiative. For the 2016 Legislative Session, our primary goal was to seek additional state dollars to put directly into building more robust learning opportunities for students in the classroom.

Before and during Session, we worked closely with members of the Clay County Legislative Delegation and other legislators in the education and budget spheres to strongly position the district's funding request for consideration in the K-12 budget. We successfully secured \$1,000,000 in the FY16-17 budget for the Academies and protected the appropriation from the gubernatorial veto pen. SSG's role was to manage the effort's legislative strategy and ensure parties inside and outside the Capitol were coordinated and able to react to the changing environment throughout the process.

In addition to our day-to-day interfacing with elected officials and staff, we also helped coordinate Capitol visits for Superintendent Van Zant, Jr., his staff and school board members.

2016-17

With the transition between superintendent administrations that occurred after the 2016 Clay County election cycle, our focus for the 2017 Legislative Session turned to monitoring policy issues and engaging on them as needed. This included a heavy focus on the evolution of what became House Bill 7069.

As lawmakers floated concepts for consideration among their colleagues, Superintendent Davis reacted to various proposals and gave us a framework from which to represent the district. Broadly, the goals were to seek sensible student assessments reform, advocate for increased per-student FEPF dollars, and minimize the impact of policies that create an unequal playing field between traditional public schools and charters.

Similar to 2015-16, we also assisted with the planning and execution of district leaders' Capitol visits during the 2017 Session.

2017-18

After this past Session's contentious conclusion with respect to House Bill 7069, we anticipate several of the legislation's key features to come back for modification in the near future. Several prominent lawmakers on the Legislature's education-based committees have already

called for various aspects of the far-reaching legislation to be “fixed” in the coming months, particularly regarding provisions in the bill dealing with low-performing public schools and the process by which charter schools can move into those areas. We would look forward to monitoring and sharing this issue’s developments with you so you have the most up-to-date information possible as you look to the 2018 Session.

General Comments

SSG communicates formally and informally with clients through various channels including direct meetings, phone calls and emails, all of which are at our clients’ discretion. We appreciate the open lines of communication that were established under Superintendent Van Zant, Jr. and have remained with Superintendent Davis. We’re always looking to refine our practices to meet your needs, so please let us know how we can continue to ensure we’re providing the customer service you expect from your government relations consultants.

In addition to our direct advocacy of your positions and our regular updates/briefings during and after each Legislative Session, SSG enjoys spending time with clients during the summer and fall months to help build and provide feedback on your emerging legislative agenda. Please consider us willing to assist as the district leadership begins the process of identifying and prioritizing your goals for next year’s Session. We often provide historical context to clients for returning and emerging issues, and our lobbyists have many channels through which to vet your ideas to gauge lawmakers’ interest prior to the finalization of a legislative agenda.