

TOPIC	Reporter roundtable- election plus highlights from the year
PROPOSED AIR DATE	December 24, 2024
Guests	Steve Newborn  Stephanie Colombini  Nancy Guan  Sky Lebron
Meeting links (Zetta and Zoom)	
Background info	Links to articles, other important info on the topic

## CONTINUITY & QUESTIONS

You're listening to Florida Matters, I'm Matthew Peddie.

From back to back hurricanes to the twists and turns of the US presidential election, there's been a lot to keep up with in 2024.

Coming up this next half hour you're going to hear from reporters in the WUSF newsroom. They've been covering the issues that have had the biggest impact on you and your neighbors across the greater Tampa Bay region.

The hurricane season is over, but the impacts from Debby, Helene and Milton linger. Next week on Florida Matters you'll hear an in-depth conversation about those storms and how they affected people in Tampa Bay.

But for now- a look back at the 2024 presidential election and issues that you told us were important in that election.

Steve Newborn covers politics and the environment, Nancy Guan focuses on immigration, Stephanie Colombini covers health care and Sky Lebron covers transportation among other things.

Sky and Stephanie- you reported on two closely watched constitutional amendments on the ballot- amendment 3 which would have legalized recreational marijuana and amendment 4, which would have enshrined the right to an abortion in the state constitution. A majority of Florida voters voted for them, but neither got the 60 percent votes required to pass.

- **Sky**- how much would amendment 3 have changed Florida if it had passed?
- Medical marijuana companies poured a lot of money into this. Do you have a sense of why it failed?
  - Could mention the DeSantis backed opposition, and the high bar of 60% of the vote to pass
- What happens **now**?
  - (The state announced in November that it had approved 22 new applications to grow medical marijuana)
- **Stephanie** Amendment 4- which would have essentially returned Florida's abortion law to what it was before Roe was overturned- dominated the headlines for a long time leading up to the election. Why did this one fail?
  - Some of the same reasons as Amendment 3 presumably
- Health care providers you have talked to the last couple years have been focused on helping patients as Florida has tightened abortion restrictions. Sometimes patients have had to go out of state for care- like St. Pete Mom Thea Thompson, who had to go out of state for care because of a fatal fetal abnormality. Here's what she told you:

#### **ROUNDTABLE BITE 1- ABORTION**

**"Looking back on it now, I'm mad. I'm really angry that I was put in that position because of the laws, because of the politicians who are making decisions about my own health" (14)**

What are you going to be looking out for over the next couple years with Florida's six week abortion restriction still in place?

- What story sticks with you from your reporting on this issue over the last year or so?
  - Could mention the St. Pete Mom and others who had to travel out of state for care, flood of donations to abortion funds etc
- **Steve** the Democratic party had some hopes for Florida- and nationally- in 2024. Those hopes were dashed. You spoke to political analyst Susan MacManus about the election. What was the takeaway?
- You talked to senior citizens and young voters about the election- and the economy was a throughline. Let's hear from a couple of those voices:

#### **ROUNDTABLE BITE 2- ECONOMY**

**"Well, rent is insanely expensive. It's like my entire paycheck to cover my month of rent. So I can't afford food. So I get most of my food from the school pantry... Sometimes I'm not even able to pay certain bills, because, you know, I have to pay the rent and my car, my insurance, my phone, and everything just keeps going up, but the income doesn't, doesn't budge." (29)**

Jacque Kurchinski and Dolly Andino there.

- Steve- was the economy what defined this election? For people of all ages?
- Another story you watched from the get go was Andrew Warren's on again off again bid to get his state attorney seat back after he was removed by Governor Ron DeSantis. Remind us what happened...
- **Nancy-** you focused on immigration, and reported on the family of a DACA recipient and how they were navigating the uncertainty of the election and how it might change their lives. Here's Diego Dulanto Falcon, who also shared his story with Florida Matters:

### **ROUNDTABLE BITE 3 - DIEGO**

**"I see a lot of people tend to speak on behalf of immigrants, when in reality, there's just not enough spaces for us to feel safe enough to speak about our own experiences and stories and advocate for ourselves. If you care about the immigrant community, specifically the undocumented community and you want to be an ally, I would just say help create safer spaces for immigrants to come forward about their experiences and what it's really like living in this country, whether you're undocumented or not." (31)**

- What was the takeaway for you about Diego's story?
- Immigration was an issue that a lot of voters said was important. Does the reality of the immigration system match what you saw and heard from candidates during this election?
- What immigration issues will you be watching going forward?

You're listening to Florida Matters, and a look back at some of the big stories from 2024 with the WUSF news team. More coming up in a moment, including reporters sharing their favorite stories from the year.

### **BREAK**

You're listening to Florida Matters, and a conversation with WUSF reporters about some of the biggest stories in Tampa Bay in 2024. I'm Matthew Peddie. You're also hearing from WUSF's Steve Newborn, Nancy Guan, Stephanie Colombini and Sky Lebron.

- Protests against the war in Gaza erupted across college campuses in the US in April- including at the University of South Florida's campus in Tampa. Here's one of the protesters- Ali Abdel Qadr:

#### **ROUNDTABLE BITE 4 – PROTEST**

**The entire community was attacked when the students were attacked yesterday. These are people's children, these are peoples' daughters, these are people's sons.” (7)**

- **Nancy-** You were one of the reporters covering these protests at USF. Remind us how the protests played out- and how the university responded...
- You covered a lot of other education stories this year such as reporting on book bans in K-12 schools. How has that issue evolved during the course of the 2024?
- What else was on your radar in education this past year?
- Speaking of protests- the normally placid state parks got some noisy attention in summer after plans to develop golf courses, pickleball and other amenities were revealed.

#### **ROUNDTABLE BITE 5– PARKS**

**“Development doesn’t belong in our state parks. Our parks were created to protect these special, rare resources. We love outdoor recreation, but there’s a place for that. These areas were set aside for future generations and for natural resources.” (14)**

That's Kira Barrera with the Suncoast Sierra Club who talked with Steve Newborn during a protest at Honeymoon Island State Park.

- Steve- what happened with this plan to develop some of the parks?
- That story overlapped with both of your beats- politics and the environment. What else were you following in environmental news this year?
  - Bull sharks? Red Tide? Coral breeding?
- **Stephanie** the abortion amendment may have been the biggest story you covered this year but it's not the only health care story of 2024. One topic you've watched closely for years is gun violence among young people.. What did the city of Tampa do this year to try and curb youth gun violence... and could treating it like a public health problem be the key to success?
- Medicaid unwinding was another issue that you reported on in 2024. What impact did it have on things like opioid addiction treatment and health care for kids?

**Sky** you discovered and told the stories of some Tampa Bay mysteries over the last year- including an old mining town that disappeared, and a quest to find the source of weird sounds in South Tampa. Let's take a listen:

#### **ROUNDTABLE BITE 6– FISH NOISE**

**“Engine off. We are on the hunt for this mystery noise.” (9)**

- You rode along with a bunch of people who were investigating the sound. What did you find?
- You've also been covering transportation, including the ongoing challenges facing Tampa Bay's mass transit systems. And giving listeners insights into what goes on behind the scenes- including the people who make road signs in Hillsborough County.

#### **ROUNDTABLE BITE 7–SIGNS**

**"First thing you're going to do is go through every intersection, every city, every street, and make sure we got our stop signs up," Marzano said. "Once you get the stop signs, then you go to the other signs, street markers, speed limits, school signs." (13)**

Gino Marzano explaining the work of repairing downed signs after a hurricane. What are the highlights for you from your transportation reporting this year?

Finally– what was your favorite story, or the story that's going to stay with you from the year?

- Sky
- Nancy
- Steve
- Stephanie

You've been hearing from WUSF's Stephanie Colombini, Steve Newborn, Sky Lebron and Nancy Guan. Thanks.

That's Florida Matters for this week. Florida Matters' executive producer is Gracyn Doctor. Engineering support from Blake Bass. Subscribe to Florida Matters wherever you get your podcasts- and find the show on WUSF's YouTube channel. Next week- a look back at the 2024 hurricane season.

I'm Matthew Peddie. Thank you for listening.

## RECORDED PROMO-REPORTER ROUNDTABLE

WUSF journalists kept you informed throughout 2024...back-to-back hurricanes...the presidential election... and outrageous mysteries that caught your attention.

**“I was eating dinner at like, 8:30 in the evening, and then I got the call that, like, hey, the fish sounds are happening. You need to come down right now. And so I kind of felt like a superhero in that moment.” (11)**

On the next Florida Matters, WUSF reporters reflect on the top stories of 2024. Tuesday evening at 6:30 on WUSF- 89-7.

## NOTES

- The election
  - Abortion amendment
  - Marijuana amendment
  - Andrew Warren
  - immigration
- The environment
- Healthcare
- Campus protests
- Education-
  - book bans continue,
  - Florida’s continued experiment with remaking New College as an anti-woke institution
- Transportation??
- Favorite / most memorable story from the year
- Hurricanes & the Trop / Rays we’ll tackle in separate shows

## NANCY

- THE ELECTION-

Immigration

<https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-11-19/report-florida-immigration-bill-cau>

[sed-anxiety-stress-people-leave-state](#)

<https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-10-30/two-tampa-brothers-share-experience-growing-up-undocumented>

<https://www.wusf.org/courts-law/2024-08-29/florida-undocumented-community-new-laws-intensify-harsh-reality>

- **EDUCATION**

- **Educator Unions**

- <https://www.wusf.org/education/2024-03-04/tampa-bay-teachers-unions-fighting-stay-afloat-stricter-state-law>

- **Campus protests**

- <https://www.wusf.org/university-beat/2024-06-28/usf-doubles-down-on-suspension-and-expulsion-of-pro-palestinian-student-protestors>

- **Book bans**

- <https://www.wusf.org/education/2024-11-04/florida-tops-the-nation-in-school-book-bans-again>

- **School closures**

- <https://www.wusf.org/education/2024-05-28/five-hillsborough-schools-have-closed-a-parent-mourns-the-loss-of-her-daughters-elementary>

- **Higher Ed, erosion of tenure, DEI**

- <https://www.wusf.org/university-beat/2024-08-13/usf-faculty-say-morale-has-dropped-significantly-after-new-state-law>

- **Hurricanes**

- <https://www.wusf.org/environment/2024-11-27/tons-hurricane-debris-collected-tampa-bay-area-where-does-it-go>

- <https://www.wusf.org/arts-culture/2024-11-13/hillsborough-residents-recover-hurricanes-spanish-speaking-group-boricuas-de-corazon-help>

- <https://www.wusf.org/weather/2024-09-30/helene-wrecked-tens-of-thousands-of-homes-in-the-tampa-bay-region-here-are-the-numbers-so-far>

- <https://www.wusf.org/weather/2024-10-03/hurricane-helene-sewage-see-where-it-spilled-tampa-bay-area>

STEVE

## POLITICS / ELECTION

- <https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-11-06/susan-macmanus-florida-democrats-failed-connect-most-voters-well-before-elections-2024>
- <https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-11-05/andrew-warren-loses-quest-hillsborough-state-attorney-once-again-suzy-lopez-desantis>
- <https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-10-25/students-eat-pay-rent-say-politicians-arent-listening-2024-elections>
- <https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-10-24/many-seniors-getting-food-on-table-not-something-hearing-about-2024-election>
  - **School board politics**  
<https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-08-15/school-board-races-primaries-reflect-culture-wars-nationwide>
  - **Financial disclosure law**  
<https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-02-18/new-financial-disclosure-law-for-cities-and-county-election-officials-is-challenged>

## ENVIRONMENT

- <https://www.wusf.org/environment/2024-09-11/rare-threatened-florida-smooth-flow-er-coral-bred-mote-marine-laboratory>
- <https://www.wusf.org/environment/2024-11-21/red-tide-still-being-found-beaches-sarasota-manatee-counties>
- <https://www.wusf.org/environment/2024-09-09/in-search-of-bull-sharks-where-manatees-roam>
- - **PARK DEVELOPMENT PLAN**  
<https://www.wusf.org/environment/2024-08-28/protesters-assail-honeymoon-island-plans-recreational-development-florida-state-parks>

STEPHANIE

- **Health / politics**  
<https://www.wusf.org/health-news-florida/2024-11-08/florida-abortion-funds-spike->



[donations-election-say-need-will-grow](#)

<https://www.wusf.org/health-news-florida/2024-11-01/why-st-petersburg-mom-traveled-out-of-state-abortion-care-despite-exceptions>

<https://www.wusf.org/politics-issues/2024-08-20/medical-freedom-candidates-lose-out-in-sarasota-hospital-board-primary>

<https://www.wusf.org/health-news-florida/2024-08-15/florida-abortion-law-more-residents-seek-care-other-states>

### **Gender affirming care**

- <https://www.wusf.org/health-news-florida/2024-08-28/florida-ruling-gender-affirming-care-cruel-transgender-community-advocates>

### **Gun violence / youngsters**

- <https://www.wusf.org/courts-law/2024-06-13/tampa-federal-funds-tackle-gun-violence-young-people>
- <https://www.wusf.org/2024-05-29/a-program-in-tampa-offers-a-new-start-to-teens-arrested-for-carrying-guns>

### **Healthcare & hurricanes**

- <https://www.wusf.org/health-news-florida/2024-10-22/how-va-health-centers-recovering-tampa-bay-region-after-milton-helene>

### **Addiction**

<https://www.wusf.org/health-news-florida/2024-02-15/teen-addiction-tampa-bay-recovery-high-schools>

<https://www.wusf.org/2024-06-21/medicaid-unwinding-can-be-dangerous-for-those-who-need-opioid-addiction-medications>

### **Medicaid**

<https://www.wusf.org/health-news-florida/2024-05-09/nearly-600-000-florida-kids-lost-medicaid-chip-during-unwinding-report-shows>

## SKY

## POLITICS

- **Amendment 3**  
<https://www.wusf.org/podcast/our-changing-state/2024-08-07/our-changing-state-vote-24-florida-amendment-3-recreational-marijuana>

## Transportation

- **Road signs**  
<https://www.wusf.org/transportation/2024-04-05/hillsborough-county-road-signs-men-in-charge-making-nearly-all>
- **Mass transit**  
<https://www.wusf.org/transportation/2024-08-12/hart-breaking-reality-tampa-public-transit-heavy-maintenance-facility>  
<https://www.wusf.org/transportation/2024-07-16/hart-will-not-face-a-fiscal-cliff-this-year-new-projections-show>
- **Biking / walking**  
<https://www.wusf.org/education/2024-08-14/hillsborough-school-safety-robots-elementary-kids-walking-biking-routes>

## Sports

- <https://www.wusf.org/arts-culture/2024-09-20/how-usf-new-esports-lab-takes-gaming-next-level>
- <https://www.wusf.org/sports/2024-08-16/here-comes-the-sun-tampa-bay-fc-first-pro-womens-team-generating-hype>

## Culture

- **Strawberry queen**  
<https://www.wusf.org/arts-culture/2024-02-28/no-black-florida-strawberry-festival-queen-women-worked-to-break-barriers>
- **Noisy fish**  
<https://www.wusf.org/environment/2024-02-26/south-tampa-fish-sex-loud-music-weird-sound>

SKY QUESTION RETRACK [12.2 seconds]

**Sky** you discovered and told the stories of some Tampa Bay mysteries over the last year- including a quest to find the source of weird sounds in South Tampa. Some speculate it's the sound of fish mating . Let's take a listen:

## WEB BLURB

From back to back hurricanes to the twists and turns of the US presidential election, there's been a lot to keep up with in 2024.

Reporters in the WUSF newsroom who covered the issues that had the biggest impact on the greater Tampa Bay region join Florida Matters to share their insights.

[Steve Newborn](#) covers politics and the environment, [Nancy Guan](#) focuses on immigration and education, [Stephanie Colombini](#) covers health care and [Sky Lebron](#) covers transportation among other things.

Colombini and Lebron reported on two closely watched constitutional amendments on the ballot- [amendment 3](#) which would have legalized recreational marijuana and [amendment 4](#), which would have enshrined the right to an abortion in the state constitution. A majority of Florida voters voted for them, but neither got the 60 percent votes required to pass.

The implications of amendment 3 passing would have been huge, said Lebron. "It would have meant a lot more money that could have gone to different programs throughout the state because of the tax that was attached to any marijuana sale, it would have changed the amount of marijuana that can be carried by a single person before they were to face repercussions." He said Gov. DeSantis waged an effective campaign against the amendment.

As for amendment 4, "the governor exerted a lot of influence to oppose amendment four, used

state resources to launch a website through the health agency encouraging people to vote against the amendment and defending the current six week abortion ban- with some exceptions-that's in place right now," said Colombini.

With the six week ban in place for now, Colombini said she'll continue to follow stories like that of Thea Thompson, from St. Petersburg, [who had to travel out of state](#) for medical care for a fatal fetal abnormality.

Newborn said the [aftermath of the presidential election](#) was a "post mortem in every sense of the word for the Democratic Party," while the Republicans strengthened their hammerlock on politics statewide. Democratic candidates failed to win votes in some closely watched races- like [the Hillsborough County State Attorney's](#) race.

"Most polls consistently said the biggest issue was the economy, inflation that had been stoked by COVID and pocketbook Issues like that, and Democrats focused on abortion, they focused on niche issues that didn't resonate with a lot of people," said Newborn, who spent time talking with young voters and [senior citizens](#) in the run up to the election.

Immigration was another important issue for voters and Guan reported on the story of two brothers, Diego and Leo, and [their experience as undocumented immigrants](#).

"Leo, the older brother, told me that it felt like being a part time citizen, and now with a second Trump presidency on the horizon, there's a sense that the DACA program could be even more in jeopardy," said Guan.

"I think one thing that most people can agree on is that the immigration system needs to be fixed," she added.

"But obviously there's been a lot of rumors and misconceptions spread about the immigrant community."

Other highlights from this reporter roundtable on 2024 include [campus protests](#) and [book bans](#). Environmental issues got some attention too, including a widely criticised plan to [develop some state parks](#), the return of [red tide](#), and [imperilled coral](#). The city of St. Petersburg continued working to [curb youth gun violence](#), and WUSF listeners got to see - and hear- [how road signs get made](#), and how mysterious noises got Tampa area sleuths [speculating on the cause](#)- from fish mating to loud car stereos.

And the panel reflects on their favorite stories from the year. For Lebron that included a story about women who worked to diversify the [strawberry queen pageant](#), new sports teams [coming to Tampa Bay](#) and a program to get people [off the street and housed](#).

Guan said hearing from [asylum seekers](#) was powerful, especially because of how polarizing immigration is in the US. And Newborn says the stories of [students who are struggling to pay for](#)

[food and housing](#) sticks with him.

And for Colombini, in a year covering a lot of powerful and challenging stories, a favorite was “one of the rare moments I got to do a good news story,” about the [Tampa period pantry](#)- like a little free library but stocked with free products to help people get through their periods.

“It’s really special when you can tell a story that has impact,” said Colombini.

“And so to help have a hand in spreading this important community effort is something I’ll keep with me.”

## **POD BLURB**

From back to back hurricanes to the twists and turns of the US presidential election, there’s been a lot to keep up with in 2024.

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Highlights include stories about polarizing constitutional amendments on recreational marijuana and abortion access, immigration issues, the high cost of groceries and housing, campus protests, and a widely criticized plan to put amenities like pickleball and golf courses in state parks. Reporters also covered some lighter stories including a quest to find the source of mysterious sounds in Tampa Bay, which some speculate was caused by fish mating.