

## Political Dominos Could Fall if FSU Selects John Thrasher

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**John Thrasher**[Hide](#)

The clock is ticking for First Coast politicians as John Thrasher continues his efforts to become the next president of Florida State University.

While FSU has opened the search to other candidates, Thrasher remains a top contender for the position. But Thrasher can be excused if he keeps an eye on the calendar. The last day to qualify for state office is June 20. With Thrasher running for re-election this year, it would make things a lot easier if FSU

makes its decision before then.

Regardless, even if FSU doesn't make its decision by June 20, Thrasher should be in fine shape. Thrasher represents a very Republican district and his only opponent so far is Greg Feldman, a former police officer and DCF executive, who is running with no party affiliation. Thrasher held off two impressive Democratic candidates in 2010 and 2012 and it's hard to imagine a last-minute candidate from that party doing much better this time out.

But if Thrasher is in good shape, even if FSU makes its decision, some other First Coast Republicans should have concerns. Names are already being floated as Thrasher's replacement in the Senate, including Doc Renuart and Travis Hutson who both represent parts of the district in the Florida House.

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If Thrasher gets the appointment before qualifying closes, Renuart, Hutson and other candidates would have to duke it out in the primary. But even if Thrasher gets the appointment later in the summer, Republican leaders from the four counties in the district -- St. Johns, Flagler, Putnam and Volusia -- would meet and find a candidate under an obscure state law. The last time it was used was back in 2010. Jennifer Carroll, who was running for a fourth term in the House, was named as Rick Scott's running mate after the qualifying period ended. Republicans from Clay and Duval counties met and named Daniel Davis to replace her.

This could put Renuart at a distinct disadvantage. He was shoved south after redistricting in 2012, losing the Southside of Jacksonville and other parts of Duval County. While Renuart has a foothold in the posh beach suburbs going down A1A, such as his home base of Ponte Vedra, he is not well-known in other parts of St. Johns County. That was evident in 2012 when he faced two Republican primary challengers -- though, to his credit, he kept his seat. Renuart has had two years to raise his profile, work his district and build ties to leading Republicans.

Hutson represents all of Flagler County and parts of St. Johns and Volusia counties. He certainly has more ties to the southern part of the district than Renuart and should get a boost from Republican leaders in Flagler and Volusia counties. But St. Johns is twice the size of Flagler County and Renuart should be able to compete with Hutson there.

So Renuart's and Hutson's House seats could also be impacted by FSU's decision, as well as Thrasher's Senate. The First Coast might root more for the Gators than the Seminoles but FSU is well-positioned to set a few political dominos in motion there.

*Tallahassee political writer Jeff Henderson wrote this analysis exclusively for Sunshine State News.*

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