



The tone was set in 1978 when Carrie P. Meek was elected to the Florida House of representatives. Meek, who was subsequently elected to the Florida State Senate in 1982 and ultimately the United States House of Representatives in 1992, was the first African-American voted into Congress since the Reconstruction era. Since her ascension into politics, many other blacks have entered into high ranking political positions in South Florida, but rarely do we realize there are more and more African-Americans entering into politics and holding down powerful appointments.

It goes without saying that we must continue to exercise our right to vote. However, equally important is that we are informed and involved. Recently there has been a changing of the guard,

which is certain to have an affect on policy and legislation across the state. Here are some examples of that change.

In West Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade County's African-Americans have made significant strides. In 1999, Isaac Robinson, Jr. was elected to the West Palm Beach City Commission. Commissioner Robinson is currently serving as the President of the West Palm Beach Commission. Commissioner Barbara Jordan, a Miami-Dade County legislator was recently elected by her peers to serve as the Vice-Chairperson of the 13-member Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners. Commissioner Joe Eggelletion, a long time Broward County Commissioner and former State Representative, is the first African American to become Mayor of Broward County since its incorporation in 1915.

At the state level, African Americans are making their presence known and leaving their mark in

record numbers. There are currently 26 blacks in the Florida State Legislature. Of those legislators, Senator Anthony Hill (D-District 1), Senator Mandy Dawson (D-District 29), Senator Al Lawson (D- District 6) , Senator Larcinia Bullard (D-District 39), Senator Arthenia Joyner (D-District 18) and Senator Fredrica Wilson (D-District 33) have all been tapped to be Senate Committee Chairs. Senator Wilson will have considerable power as the Democratic Leader Pro Tem and the Chairperson of the Miami-Dade County Legislative Delegation. As pro tem, she is second in charge of the Democratic caucus. And as the Chairperson of the Miami-Dade County Legislative Delegation, she will be a key decision maker in setting the Miami-Dade County legislative agenda. In the Florida House of Representatives, Representative Joyce Cusack (D- District 27) is the current Democratic Leader Pro Tem.

Nationally, United States Congressman Kendrick Meek, Congresswoman Carrie Meek's predecessor and son, was recently tapped by House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi to become a member of the very powerful House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee. The Ways and Means Committee makes recommendations to the House on all bills for raising revenue. His appointment to this committee could possibly mean that additional revenue will find its way to South Florida.

Staying informed is of critical importance to the political success of African-Americans here in South Florida. Knowledge is power, and power means increased opportunity for members of our community and for those who will seek political office in the future.