

# Know Before You Go: FL-13 District Primer

*September 2018 • Researched, summarized, and edited by Swing Left's all-volunteer research team!*

**In the last election, Democrat Charlie Crist won this district by only 13,544 votes (3.8%).**

That's too close! With your help, we're going to keep this seat for the Democrats in 2018.

## About the Incumbent

**Introduction:** Democrat Charlie Crist is a freshman congressman serving FL-13. Earlier in his career, Crist served as general counsel for Minor League Baseball and worked as a lawyer in private practice. He served in the Florida Senate from 1993-1999, as Florida Education Commissioner from 2001-2003, as Florida Attorney General from 2003-2007, and as Governor from 2007-2011. Crist was a Republican until he left the party in 2010. A supporter of President Obama's economic stimulus plan, he joined the Democratic Party in 2012.

**Issues:** Crist focuses on environmental issues and climate change, supporting veterans, making flood insurance more affordable, reforming Wall Street, and improving access to capital for small business owners.

**Committees:** Crist serves on the Financial Services and Science, Space & Technology committees.

**Recent Elections:** Crist won the 2016 election with 52% to his opponent's 48%, a margin of around 13,500 votes. In 2014, he lost the Florida gubernatorial race by 1%.

**Strengths:** Crist's high name recognition gives him a significant advantage over his challenger. He is well known, well liked, and, because of his long tenure in politics, well vetted. His accomplishments include using stimulus funds to save teachers' jobs, creating a veterans' job portal, and obtaining drug discounts for seniors.

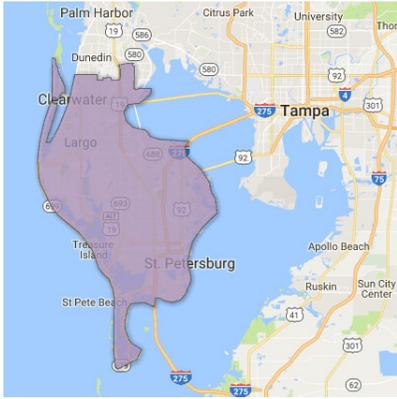
## About the Challenger

**Introduction:** Republican George Buck is a firefighter who has served in the Army, Air Force Reserves, and the Florida National Guard. An emergency management educator and consultant, he started a training center for terrorism preparedness at St. Petersburg College. He is a father of two. In August, Buck defeated his primary challenger Brad Sostack 56% - 44%.

**Issues:** Veterans' issues are central to Buck's campaign platform. If elected, he has pledged to establish his congressional office on the campus of the Bay Pines VA center. In addition to his traditionally conservative, pro-life, and pro-Second Amendment positions, he advocates for a market-driven approach to clean energy and wants to reverse former President Obama's Cuba policy.

**Strengths:** Buck's focus on veterans' issues is supported by his service and personal experience with the VA, which motivated his run for office.

**Potential Weaknesses:** Buck's honesty and character have been questioned after it was revealed that the source of his claimed Master's degree was actually a discredited diploma mill that has since been shut down for defrauding students. While Crist has raised nearly \$3 million, Buck has raised less than \$20,000. His campaign has a limited digital presence and he doesn't appear to have any endorsements.



## FL-13: Better Know the District

### Geography

FL-13 is the peninsula covering the bottom half of Pinellas County, which is the most densely populated county in Florida. It has many state parks and nature preserves, and many of the local parks are beaches.

### Citizenry

According to 2017 census figures, 74.2% of Pinellas County identifies as white, non-Hispanic; the remainder is split primarily between African American (11.1%), Hispanic (9.7%), and Asian (3.6%).

### Elections

Before his death in 2013, FL-13 had long been represented by Republican Bill Young. Following his death, infighting among the Republicans and a redrawn district tilted the 2016 election toward the Democrats. These conditions may have been unique to 2016, as the NRCC evidently had significant problems with the then-incumbent Jolly. At the heart of the NRCC's ire was the fact that Jolly was touting a proposal to prohibit Congressional candidates from personally seeking campaign contributions.

### Higher Education

There are five colleges or college campuses in the district, including Galen College of Nursing and Stetson University College of Law. The largest is the University of South Florida St. Petersburg with 3,900 students. Students are a great voter registration opportunity!

### Sports

District 13 is home to two professional sports stadiums: Tropicana Field, home of the Tampa Bay Rays (MLB), and Al Lang Stadium, home of the Tampa Bay Rowdies (soccer). The Tampa Bay Buccaneers are based in nearby Tampa.

### Industries

Around 60% of workers are employed in the healthcare, education, retail, and tourism industries. Clearwater and St. Petersburg make up the second-largest manufacturing base in Florida.

### Tourism

Tourism is a large part of the district's economy, with beach tourism as a major commercial driver. There are more than a dozen museums and performing arts venues in the district.

## FL-13: Facts & Stats

### Population Centers

- St. Petersburg, 257,000
- Clearwater, 108,000
- Largo, 84,500

### 2016 Presidential Results

- Clinton: 179K (50%)
- Trump: 167K (46%)

### 2016 House Results

- Crist (D): 185K (52%)
- Jolly (R): 171K (48%)
- Registered, didn't vote: 126K
- Eligible, not registered: 138K

### 2014 House Results

#### (Special election)

- Sink (D): 86K (47%)
- Jolly (R): 89K (48%)
- Other: 9K (5%)