

LOCAL & STATE | B

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IN MY OPINION
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Zombies are preferable to these pols

Until I caught a glimpse of former Miami Mayor Maurice Ferre campaigning for Gov. Rick Scott in a television ad, the only thing I dreaded more than the deluge of sleazy political ads on TV was the commercial for Halloween Horror Nights at Universal in Orlando.

But seeing the stalwart Democrat endorsing the tea party governor was such a shock to my system that I'll take the bloody walking dead piling up on my television screen and bursting through a locked door ready to devour my tranquility.

I mean to turn away every time I come upon both zombies and politicians, but they get me every time. They're like the flu — finds you when and where you least expect to catch it and makes you feel all icky.

"You wouldn't have this problem if you had TV's," one of my progeny says when I complain about the seasonal onslaught of undesirable content.

She's a fan of zombie fun, and one of the Millennials and Florida Hispanics with no plans to vote in this midterm election — which leaves me stunned when she casually tells me. She was once so opinionated that we joked that any argument she couldn't win, she left so complicated you wouldn't be able to tell the difference.

I try to coax her out of her malaise.

Up for reelection, I tell her, is the governor whose \$1.3 billion in cuts to education affected her ability to graduate on time. She had to wait an extra semester to take a required course that was canceled because of budget cuts. And worse, after she graduated, because of Scott's cuts to education and teacher layoffs, there were no job openings in South Florida. It didn't matter that she worked hard to graduate at the top of her class with a desirable specialty.

"Hashtag #parentalrant," she retorts, unmoved. I make a mental note to disinherit her.

But, truth be told, this is such a disgusting election that I envy her ability to disconnect.

And unfortunately, we're far from being the only ones uninspired.

According to pollsters, African American and Hispanic voters in Florida — across the country in other states with also defining midterm elections — are voicing disappointment with the political process and the failure of both parties to address issues important to them.

In Florida, where Scott and Democratic challenger Charlie Crist are in a virtual tie, the turnout of black and Latino voters is crucial. It would send a terrible message to politicians who already feel we're expendable if we allowed our disenchantment to turn into disengagement.

Or macabre payback — like Ferre is dishing.

The lifelong Democrat is holding a grudge because the Democratic Party didn't support his 2010 bid for the U.S. Senate when his poll numbers were in single digits, and so he's campaigning for an incumbent Republican governor who has stood against virtually everything the Democratic Party stands for — particularly voting rights, women's rights and a more compassionate treatment of immigrants.

None of these are small issues; if anything, they should motivate people to vote early, and to request and track your ballot online to make sure it's counted if you vote absentee.

In this campaign, it may be hard to tell the public servants from the zombies, but voting is still the only line of defense.

CAMPAIGN 2014

Fla. candidates draw millions

■ Cabinet candidates Adam Putnam and Jeff Atwater are headed toward \$3 million each in campaign contributions, and some see the heavy hauls as a sign of larger ambitions.

BY KATHLEEN MCCRODY AND TIA MITCHELL
Herald/Times Tallahassee Bureau

TALLAHASSEE — Both Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam and Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater are shoo-ins for reelection on Nov. 4.

But that hasn't stopped either man from major fund-raising ef-

orts: Each candidate is headed toward more than \$3 million in campaign contributions.

The heavy hauls may be a sign of their larger ambitions.

"Putnam, especially, has been moving very aggressively toward a governor's run [in 2018]," said Miami pollster and Florida International University professor De-



ATWATER PUTNAM
rio Moreno. "He's raising money. He's going to meetings of Republicans across the state. He's reaching out to Republican leadership." Both men were coy about their

ambitions after completing another four-year term in their Florida Cabinet offices. Putnam said he is "entirely focused on the awesome job of agriculture commissioner."

Atwater had a similar response to the rumors: "As humbling as it is to hear it said from time to time, I just don't allow myself to be distracted by the conversation."

The former vice mayor of

• TURN TO CABINET, 2B

DORAL



LEARNING TO SHARE: A view of the off-road bike-path that runs along the western edge of Doral. The paths also are open to pedestrians. Below, a 'sharrow' on Northwest 14th St.

PHOTOS BY DANIEL BOCK/FOR THE MIAMI HERALD

Doral's 'sharrow' plan draws criticism

■ Doral's plan to add so-called 'sharrows' has drawn criticism from some bicyclists who say the shared lanes are not safe enough.

BY REBECA PICCARDO
South Florida News Service

To make life easier for cyclists, Doral is implementing a plan to add more than 30 miles of bike paths across the city.

But cyclists are giving the plan mixed reviews. They're excited about some of the paths — those that aren't part of a regular street.

"They're not so happy about other paths — so called 'sharrows,'" which are regular traffic lanes shared with cars and painted with markings to indicate bikes are welcome. Unlike traditional on-street bike lanes, or off-road paths, sharrows give cyclists no separate area in which to ride. Instead, cyclists must share the lanes with cars on an equal footing.

Sometimes the result is motorists getting impatient as they ride behind bicycles, and cyclists getting pressured by motorists to move out of the way.

Doral resident Susana Maya said she loves biking on the weekends but wouldn't dare ride on the road and deal with cars swerving to pass her.



"I don't like the bike lanes in the streets — I don't feel safe, and I feel like the bikers that use it interrupt the traffic," said Maya, 27.

The city agrees that sharrows are not ideal, but on some streets there isn't enough room to build an off-road path without disrupting the sidewalk.

"The off-street trails are most desirable. They're much safer," said Doral's public works director, Jose Olivo, adding that shar-

rows will be built only in areas with wide lanes and low speed limits.

The first sharrow the city added runs along 14th Avenue, a four-lane road surrounded by condos and single-family homes on either side. The street crosses through a school zone and past an entrance to Florida's Turnpike.

Doral has plans to add only

• TURN TO BIKES, 2B

BALLOT FRAUD

Former Garcia aides not off hook

■ Prosecutors will have more time to decide whether to charge two aides caught up in a 2012 absentee-ballot request scheme that landed one man in jail.

BY PATRICIA MAZZEI
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U.S. Rep. Joe Garcia fired his chief of staff last year for orchestrating an unlawful absentee-ballot request scheme in 2012. Jeffrey Garcia ended up serving 65 days in jail.

But the legal wrangling didn't end with him.

Two more aides who prosecutors say helped submit hundreds of ballot requests online without voters' permission still have pending cases with the Miami-Dade County state attorney's office.

Prosecutors initially had two years to press misdemeanor charges against John Estes and Giancarlo Sopo. The statute of limitations was set to expire in July for Estes and this Sunday for Sopo. Had no charges been filed by then, the two men would have been in the clear. The congressman was not implicated in wrongdoing.

Yet prosecutors now have a third year to make their case against Estes and Sopo — because their defense attorneys have agreed to a limitations-statute extension, in a bid to try to talk the prosecution out of charging their clients with anything. The defense has maintained the aides were unwitting participants duped by Jeffrey Garcia, no relation to the congressman.

"Because they are still thinking about filing charges, and deciding whether or not to do it, we decided to extend the statute of limitations," said Sabrina Puglisi, Estes' attorney. "We're being cooperative with them and trying to come to a resolution."

"We've always been trying to convince the state attorney's office not to file any charges," added Gus

• TURN TO AIDES, 2B

CORAL GABLES

Three veteran local leaders vying to be Gables manager

■ Coral Gables will meet with potential candidates over the weekend and next week.

BY MONIQUE O. MADAN
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The former head of the Beacon Council, a Miami deputy city manager, and the current Hollywood city manager who was a Coral Gables development director are three top contenders for the Gables city manager position, city sources said Friday.

Frank Nero, who resigned as CEO of the Beacon Council last year, Alice Bravo, the Miami deputy city manager who has been the point person on the cleanup of the city's parks, and Holly-

wood City Manager Cathy Swanson-Rosenbark, who for 20 years ran the Gables' Economic Development Department, have all expressed interest in the top job in Coral Gables, city sources said.

"We do not have the list of finalists yet," Leen said. "Once we have that list, it will be made public. They will be chosen at a public meeting where the public will have an opportunity to speak and have their views considered."

There are no public records to con-

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LEARNING TO SHARE: A view of the off-road bike-path that runs along the western edge of Doral. The paths also are open to pedestrians. Below, a 'sharrow' on Northwest 114th St.

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rows will be built only in areas with wide lanes and low speed limits.

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Doral has plans to add only

• TURN TO BIKES, 2B

DORAL

Some in Doral unhappy over ‘sharrows’

•BIKES, FROM 1B

one traditional bike lane, in which bicycles ride on the same street as cars but in their own painted lane. It will be near the proposed park on Northwest 114th Avenue and 82nd Street.

Hank Sanchez-Resnik, founder of several cyclist and pedestrian advocacy groups in Miami-Dade County such as Green Mobility Network and Bike Coconut Grove, said that adding sharrows seems like a cop-out because it is easy and inexpensive to paint a sign on the road, but it doesn't do enough to protect cyclists.

“Sharrows are better than nothing, but they're not a lot better than nothing,” he said. “Cyclists are so vulnerable.”

Sanchez-Resnik said that the safest structure for cyclists are off-road paths, but those are hard to fund and find the space for, especially in an urban setting. The next best thing to an off-road path is a protected bike lane — with a physical barrier to separate cars from cyclists. After that, a painted bike lane is still a safer choice than sharing a lane with cars.

“There's a lot of confu-

sion about sharrows and what motorists are supposed to do,” Sanchez-Resnik said. “Are they not supposed to pass the cyclist? Do bicyclists have a legal right to do whatever they want?”

Doral's bike pathways plan came up after the city did a transportation study and realized the streets were not very hospitable for cyclists or pedestrians.

The city's bike network is supposed to help manage the population growth by giving residents different transportation options in the city. The overall plan would add about 33 miles of bike lanes in the city's infrastructure, creating a transportation network for residents.

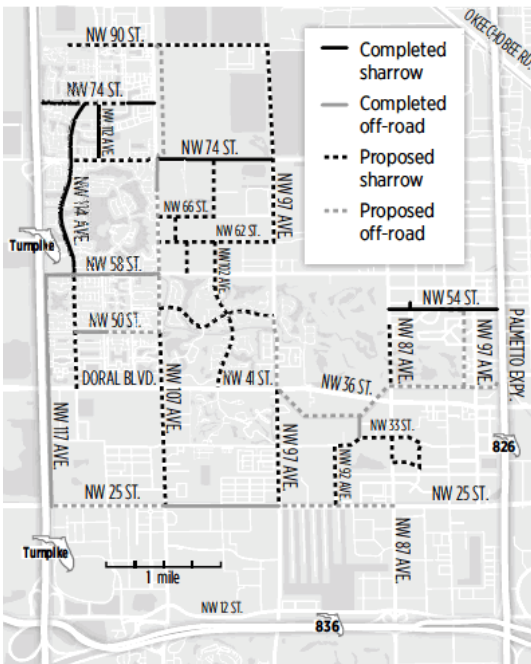
The paths are included in the city budget, and each fiscal year, the public works department presents what portion it plans to work on and how much it would cost.

To speed up the bike path construction and save money, the city has asked some developers to accommodate for the paths already in the plan and fund and build off-road paths along the sidewalk near their properties.

In the northern part of the

Doral bike paths

The city of Doral is working in phases to create a bike network throughout the city. The network will include off-road paved paths and sharrows — lanes shared between cars and bikes.



Source: City of Doral

MARCO RUIZ / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

city, for example, developers building east of 107th Avenue will add the off-road bike paths as part of an agreement with the city,

Olivo said.

The bike network the city intends to build in the coming years will create alternative routes for residents to

travel to the city's parks and other public facilities.

Once the lanes are built, the Parks and Recreation Department will handle maintenance and improvement projects, such as lighting the paved pathways, so residents can safely use them after dark.

Barbara Hernandez, parks and recreation director, said the lights are solar-powered posts that will stand three feet tall so bikers, joggers and dog-walkers can use the trail and feel safe.

Improving the paths is a priority to the department because it helps further its “Get Fit” initiative and green initiative, Hernandez said, as well as alleviate traffic.

“Doral is a very active community,” she said. “As I drive into the city in the morning, I see people walking, jogging, biking.”

For Maya, the best part is that the off-road bike path connects her house to the dog park.

“I can't ride my bike with my dog, but I follow the path walking with him,” she said. “If there were more trails like this, I could bike all over the city and not have to go to Key Biscayne for that.”