

ABOUT THIS RACE

TAX COLLECTOR

Will Roberts

Town: New Smyrna Beach for 1.5 years, previously in Daytona Beach for 19 years.

Born: March 1974

Background, experience, etc.: I am the candidate for Volusia County tax collector with the certification, experience and education to be our first elected tax collector in 50 years. I'm a Florida Certified Assistant Tax Collector.

I have worked in the Volusia County tax office for seven years. For four years, I've worked in the DeLand office as the property-tax lead, supervising the team that collects \$680 million in revenue annually. I have a master's degree in public administration.

I'm a career public servant, not a career politician. I have served in the U.S. Air Force for seven years and as a corrections officer for seven years.

For 20 years, Volusia County has been home with my wife and two children. I am a member of the Rotary Club of DeLand, Volusia Young Professionals, Veteran's Outreach and the Volusia Tiger Bay Club. My family is active in our church community.

Why should someone vote for you over your opponent(s)? I am the best fit for Volusia County tax collector because of my tax experience. My opponent has no tax experience.

I work for the people, not special interests. I have rejected special-interest campaign contributions. More than 90 percent of my opponent's campaign contributions are from special interests and PACs.

Please tell us how you think the new office of tax collector will benefit the residents of Volusia County: Volusia County residents will enjoy streamlined services in one location.

The tax collector will take on property



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taxes, vehicle tag and title services, driver's licenses, birth certificates, concealed-weapon permits, and hunting and fishing licenses.

For the first time in 50 years, the voters will get to choose the person to lead and organize this team. Under my leadership, the Tax Collector's Office will work to provide excellent, convenient customer service.

Why is this year's election important? The elected tax collector must take over the functions that are currently being performed by the county and the state, then operate them independently. This means renegotiating contracts, and performing HR, IT and facilities services. Tax experience is critical to keep the offices operating during this transition.

What will be your top two priorities

during your first term? 1. A two-part transition. The transition to an elected constitutional tax collector is broken in two parts: the county and state transition.

I will collaborate with the county to come up with a budget for the first year of operations. The county is planning for this now. Next, we must ensure the staff are taken care of as we transition away from county employment, which changes how they are paid, benefits, retirement and more.

I will contract with the county for services such as facilities, HR and IT to keep the office running smoothly as we make this transition.

Then we will need to focus on all vendor contracts and removing those from the county and renegotiating with the Tax Collector.

Part 2 of the transition will be to take on the state services. We already have liaisons in Tallahassee that are ready to assist with moving operations under the tax collector that involve state staff, locations and much more.

2. Service expansion. I will look at ways we can expand services to the Deltona area that has been underserved. I will also evaluate technology to ensure we are performing the business of the Tax Collector's Office efficiently.

More information? www.votewillroberts.com. My active Facebook page where I post weekly #TaxTipTuesday videos: www.facebook.com/taxcollector2020. Instagram at www.instagram.com/will_roberts4taxcollector. Email to vote4willroberts@gmail.com or call 386-566-3938.

Candidate David Santiago did not respond to our questionnaire.

VOTING BY MAIL — EVERYONE IS ELIGIBLE

As of July 20, the Volusia County Elections Office had already received 10,706 votes by mail for the Tuesday, Aug. 18, primary election.

Of those, 4,127 were voted by Democrats; 4,406 were voted by Republicans, and 2,173 were voted by individuals registered with minor parties, or with no party affiliation.

All registered voters are eligible to vote by mail. **The deadline to order a vote-by-mail ballot for the Aug. 18 primary is Saturday, Aug. 8.** It can be done by phone, by calling 386-736-5930, or online at www.volusiaelections.org.

THE JOB

■ The office of tax collector is a new one in Volusia County, created by the passage of Amendment 10 in 2018.

■ Volusia County government has challenged Amendment 10 in court, arguing that Volusia's home-rule charter supersedes this new state law.

■ Assuming Amendment 10 is upheld, the Office of Tax Collector will be charged with taking over collection of county and state taxes paid by Volusia County residents. The tax collector will negotiate contracts, supervise a team of employees, and establish and manage an office or offices.

■ The tax collector will be elected for a four-year term, and will be paid \$152,690 per year (more than the governor of Florida).

THE CANDIDATES

■ Will Roberts, a current employee of the Volusia County tax office, and David Santiago, currently a state representative in the Florida Legislature, are running.

JURISDICTION

■ All of Volusia County

WHO CAN VOTE

■ The race is partisan, and both Roberts and Santiago are Republicans. However, since no one from any other party filed to run, this is a "universal primary." All registered voters who live in Volusia County may cast ballots.

■ The race will be decided Tuesday, Aug. 18. The candidate who gets the most votes wins.