

# Senator Arthenia L. Joyner, Florida Senator

Senator Arthenia Joyner has spent her life standing up for what she believes and paving the way for others. Born in Lakeland FL and reared in Tampa, she grew up in a time of segregation and has always been determined to end it. That commitment began in high school, where she began her protests against racial discrimination, and continued at college, when she was arrested twice during protest marches. Later, as President of the National Bar Association, it was a protest against apartheid in South Africa outside of that country's embassy that led to her incarceration once again in Washington, D.C. As a state lawmaker, Senator Joyner continued her struggle for equality, passing legislation requiring the state to compensate wrongfully incarcerated persons, the unshackling of pregnant female inmates when giving birth, and prohibiting the mutilation of female genitals. She was also at the forefront of the drive to restore civil rights for ex-felons, and held ongoing workshops for those who needed assistance navigating the often-difficult process.

A graduate of Florida A&M University's College of Law, she was Florida's fifth black woman lawyer, the first black female lawyer in Hillsborough County, the first black lawyer in Polk County and the first black female lawyer in the Florida Senate. Upon her graduation, she could not find anyone willing to hire a black woman lawyer so she hired herself, opening her own successful practice. Joyner has practiced law for forty-eight (48) years – longer than any black woman in the history of Florida.

Joyner entered politics in the early '70s when she chaired the Shirley Chisholm's presidential campaign, and subsequently chaired Jesse Jackson's 1984 and 1988 presidential campaigns and Bill Clinton's presidential campaign in 1992 in Tampa, Florida.

Joyner was elected to the Legislature in 2000, first serving in the House of Representatives, followed by the Florida Senate. In 2014, her colleagues elected her to serve as the first black

woman to lead the Senate Democratic Caucus. As a senator, Joyner worked to preserve the legacy of Tampa's historic Central Avenue

district, though she is most proud of the millions of dollars procured for her district including the black infant mortality study, the Prodigy program, and the Computer Mentors Program. She has been a champion for women's rights, affordable health care, education, civil rights, and reforming Florida's criminal justice system.