



Drew Willison

  
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To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to apply for the Palm Beach County Administrator position.

At first glance, I may appear to be a non-traditional candidate for this position. I have spent most of my 30+ year career on Capitol Hill in a variety of government and non-profit leadership positions that I describe below and in greater detail in my attached resume and biographical statement. Despite a relatively long detour, I originally went to college and graduate school to become a city manager and have brought that practical training to bear throughout my career in executive leadership.

The County Commission position is an opportunity to tie my passion for local community governance with my skills in organizational management, executive leadership, finance and budgeting, human resources, strategic planning, information technology, and communications. Through my work in senior leadership positions in the US Senate and the private/non-profit sectors, I bring experience and skills that will benefit Palm Beach County in a broad range of areas.

As the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer of the US Senate Sergeant at Arms, an organization with over 800 employees and an annual budget of \$200 million, I led day-to-day operations and strategic planning to make the large and diverse service delivery organization more efficient and effective in driving results in an extremely challenging, yet non-partisan, environment. Balancing the often competing needs of a Capital complex that serves as the home to a national legislature, an historic site, an office building, and one of our country's most popular tourist destinations gives me the necessary insight to work with the county commission and a wide array of stakeholders to address the varying needs of Palm Beach County and its residents, business community, and visitors.

As the Chief of Staff to Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid, I was responsible for managing a team of 150 in a complex political environment to achieve policy goals, coordinating internal and external communications, building relationships with Members of Congress and external organizations, and overseeing the daily operations of the Democratic Leader's office.

More recently, my consulting and lobbying practice has served environmental and conservation clients (and others) as diverse as the National Fish and Wildlife

Foundation, the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Bullsugar (recently merged with Friends of the Everglades), a Veterans health care provider, Preservation Ranch—a conservation mitigation bank for the desert tortoise, the Friends of Walker Lake, the national securities bar, a company seeking to raise the age for tobacco consumption to 21, several local governments seeking grants and congressionally-directed funding, and several others. My combination of leadership, policy expertise, and proven results will serve the community in addressing its priorities and executing its key operational functions.

Recently, I spent a year on a temporary assignment with a long-time client, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). I was charged with raising hundreds of millions of dollars from the federal and state governments, corporations, foundations, and individuals to fund thousands of conservation projects throughout the United States, its territories, and a handful of foreign countries. During my time with the Foundation, my team and I were able to expand total external funding available for conservation from \$350 million per year to over \$700 million in FY 2023 and FY 2024.

I am happy to provide any further expanded information on my career and skill sets that you may require. Thank you for considering me for this position.

All the best,

Drew Willison

## DREW WILLISON

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### EXPERIENCED LEADER

Mission driven leader with over 30 years serving in the highest levels of government, non-profits, and in the private with demonstrated experience and commitment in driving legislative and other solutions forward. Substantive experience working with both Democratic and Republican Members of Congress, federal agencies, state and local governments, and the private sector on policy, budget, and leadership issues. Strong skills in negotiating complex deals, navigating political environments, building diverse partnerships, and communicating with the public.

Executive & Thought Leadership | Fundraising | Inclusive Workplace Creation | Partnership Development | Strategic Planning & Implementation | Budgeting | Financial Management | Organizational Management | Conservation, Energy, Climate & Infrastructure Policy | Non-Profit Board Leadership | Public Speaking | Transparent Decision-making | Communications & Outreach

### CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- Raised over \$700 million for wildlife conservation, wildfire prevention, coastal restoration and rehabilitation, and other conservation projects across the United States and its territories.
- Principal Democratic Senate staff architect of the \$1.8 trillion fiscal year 2016 appropriations and tax package and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015, the two-year federal budget deal that lifted sequestration caps.
- Served as the Sergeant at Arms and Deputy Sergeant at Arms of the U.S. Senate, the largest and most diverse organization within the body with over 850 employees and an annual budget exceeding \$200 million.

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### **Attorney at Law/Managing Partner**

**Oldaker & Willison, LLC**

2017 - Present

Partner in a Washington, DC-based bipartisan government relations & law firm and its affiliated firms National Health Advisors, a collaborative venture with Epstein, Becker, & Green, the nation's largest health care and labor law firm, and the National Group, a government relations and lobbying firm.

- Manage the firm's conservation and environment, state and local infrastructure, renewable energy and energy efficiency, and the federal budget and appropriations clients.
- Advise and develop strategies for clients on engagement with Congress, the White House, executive agencies, and the media.

#### **Senior Vice President for Corporate and External Affairs**

**National Fish and Wildlife Foundation**

2023 – 2024

Cultivated private and public financing for the nation's largest conservation grant-making organization.

- Responsible for government relations and development team that raised over \$700 million in federal, other public, private sector, and individual resources for the Foundation's conservation program.
- Assess, evaluate, and respond to legislative, policy, and regulatory efforts that impact the Foundation's mission and programs.
- Align key external affairs functions of the Foundation – Development, Communications, Executive, Congressional and Agency Relations – with the conservation and financial strategy of the Foundation, the Board of Directors, and the Department of the Interior.

### **Chief of Staff**

**U.S. Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid**

2015 – 2016

Led and oversaw a diverse staff of 150 and facilitated all aspects of the Senator's leadership communications, policy, and national and Nevada political operations, including fundraising.

- Maintained working relationships with all 100 Senators regarding legislative and policy matters, and advised Democratic Senators on legislative, policy, and institutional matters.
- Lead Democratic Senate staff negotiator for budget and appropriations legislation, including the 2016 appropriations and tax package and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. The legislation provided significant resources for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to acquire new public lands.
- Maintained close ties with the Nevada State government and dozens of local governments, including working with the State government and the Obama Administration on the creation Gold Butte and Basin and Range National Monuments.
- Created the Senate Democratic Caucus' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative to attract and retain highly qualified minority applicants to high level policy jobs in Democratic Senate Member and Committee offices.
- Maintained thorough knowledge and understanding of the legislative process, Senate Floor procedures and the Federal budget, including day-to-day relationships with Cabinet-level officials.

### **United States Senate Sergeant at Arms and Deputy Sergeant at Arms**

**United States Senate**

2007 – 2010 and 2013 - 2015

Supervised and managed senior organization leadership staff responsible for all day-to-day operations of the U.S. Senate, including the Chief Information Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, the Contracting Officer, the General Counsel, human resources, facilities management, security and emergency preparedness, and police operations.

- Led the organization through a comprehensive strategic planning exercise to overhaul the annual budget and the Key Performance Indicators.
- Designed and implemented an organization-wide restructuring and buy-out program that realigned staff and budget to meet agency needs and goals while maintaining and improving services, including overhauling the Senate Hair Care operations that turned an annual operating loss of \$1 million into a net profit.

- Developed an employee engagement program that actively sought employee input on programs, operations, and policies and implemented employee morale programs such as Capitol Dome tours and Senate Floor tours.
- Maintained day-to-day relationships with Senate and House Leadership and committee staff, police, leaders from other federal agencies and departments, and the media.
- Member of the Capitol Accessibility Services Board, the oversight body for the U.S. Capitol Guide Service.

### **Vice President of Public Policy and External Relations**

#### **Battelle Memorial Institute**

2010 - 2013

Implemented Battelle's government business strategy on behalf of its Energy, National Security, and Life Sciences' global businesses.

- Served as Battelle's principal interface with Congress, the White House, executive agencies, agencies, Foreign Embassies and public policy organizations.
- Reorganized and streamlined the office to increase efficiency, strengthen services and reduce costs to provide more support to clients.
- Led Battelle's participation in the Smithsonian's Great American Hall of Wonders, an exhibition celebrating the American spirit of innovation.

### **Senate Democratic Staff Director**

#### **Appropriations Subcommittee for Energy and Water Development**

1999 – 2007

Responsible for developing the \$35 billion annual spending bill for the U.S. Department of Energy, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and related agencies.

- Specific expertise in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and power generation technologies.
- Provided fiscal and programmatic oversight of federal departments and agencies.
- Worked with Democratic and Republican Senators and the Federal Government on special project requests.

## **EDUCATION**

**Juris Doctorate**, George Washington University Law School, admitted to the Virginia Bar

**Masters of Public Administration**, The Ohio State University,

**B.A. with Honors in Government**, College of William and Mary

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE**

**Humane Rescue Alliance**, Vice Chair (current), 2008 – Present

**Thomas Jefferson Program in Public Policy at the College of William and Mary**, Advisory Board Member, 2014 – Present

**Cheetah Conservation Fund**, Trustee, 2018 - Present

**Wine & Spirit Education Trust**, Sommelier Level 3, 2021

**Stennis Center for Public Service**, Congressional Staff Fellowship, 2001 - 2002

**NASA and U.S. EPA**, Presidential Management Intern, 1990 – 1992