



Diane Mack

GUEST VIEW

Top advisor is coming to Pensacola

In 1988 upstart Florida senate candidate Vince Bruner defeated long-time senator and dean of the senate Dempsey Barron in the first million-dollar Florida legislative race on record. Bruner, who served only one term, still credits Marian Johnson, considered to be the state's most seasoned political advisor, with his upset victory.

Ms. Johnson, who is senior vice president of political strategy for the Florida Chamber of Commerce and executive director of the Florida Chamber Political Institute, will be the keynote speaker at the fourth annual meeting of the Institute for Women in Politics of Northwest Florida. We anticipate a lively and fascinating program as Ms. Johnson talks about her long career, her successes in a field predominantly engaged in by men, and her present strategic work for the Florida Chamber.

Our annual meeting will be held on Thursday, June 22, beginning with a reception at 6:00 p.m. at Pensacola Yacht Club. While this event is conducted for the benefit of Institute members, it will also be open to the public due to interest in our distinguished speaker. The cost to the public is \$20 per person, paid in advance (by June 19) via PayPal through our website, iwppflorida.org.

Marian Johnson got her start in politics as a volunteer in the 1964 presidential campaign and was involved in every presidential race from that date through 1984, when she coordinated voter contact efforts in eight southern states for Ronald Reagan's re-election. In 1988 she ran a successful statewide amendment campaign.

In December 1993 Ms. Johnson created and managed Florida Business United, a research organization and the political arm of Associated Industries of Florida. She also served as senior vice president of Associated Industries of Florida Service Corporation, where she developed and implemented a one-of-a-kind tracking mechanism consisting of a six-week polling program for statewide offices. Results were featured statewide and nationally on political broadcasts of CNN and C-Span.

In 2003 the Florida Chamber asked her to build a political machine for the organization as she had done for Associated Industries. She thought the assignment would be a short-term deal.

"Instead of just staying long enough to set up a program, as I thought I would, I ended up hoping I will never have to leave." Ms. Johnson was quoted as saying last fall (*Sunshine State News*, August 15, 2016). "That's how much I love this job."

Sunshine State News writer Nancy Smith: "Marian knows...the voter registration statistics and demographics of every county in the state. She gets her kicks from dissecting polls and scanning data that can help establish a strategy for a campaign the chamber wants to win. If you've ever run for state office, you've met Marian Johnson. Each election cycle she interviews every legislative candidate in every district in Florida, Republican, Democrat and Libertarian."

Politics are only a part of Ms. Johnson's life. Being a Muskogee Creek Indian, she says, her love for her heritage has inspired her to teach a Muskogee language class. She has recorded a language CD, written four language manuals, and made a music CD, *Pum Afvketvn, We Will Sing Hallelujah*.

She is married to the pastor of Tama Community Church, a Muskogee Creek church, where she teaches Sunday school and serves as music director. She holds Ph.D.s in biblical studies and biblical counseling. The couple has three children and two grandsons and two granddaughters.

We look forward to hosting this remarkable woman!

Diane Mack is a former Pensacola City Councilwoman and was the founding president of the Institute for Women in Politics of Northwest Florida. She currently serves as treasurer. This Viewpoint is offered on behalf of the IWP Board of Directors. To inquire about membership in the Institute, email contact@iwppflorida.org.