JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
(850) 482-9633 www.jacksoncountyfl.gov 2864 Madison St. Marianna, Fl. 32446

PRESS RELEASE **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contact
Mary Smith / Public Communications Officer
smithm@jacksoncountyfl.gov
(850) 482-9633

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Jackson County Welcomes Incoming Commissioners and Elects Chairman

Jackson County, FL. – The Jackson County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) held a special meeting on Tuesday, November 17, 2026, to officially welcome newly elected District 2 Commissioner Peter "Sonny" Fortunato and re-elected District 4 Commissioner Donnie Branch.

Commissioner Fortunato was administered the oath of office by Judge Wade Mercer, while Commissioner Branch was sworn in by Judge Ana Garcia.

Following the swearing-in ceremonies, the Board selected District 5 Commissioner Jamey Westbrook to serve another term as Chairman.

Under the Board's organizational procedures, the Chairman serves two-year terms and may be reappointed for additional terms. The Chairman is responsible for presiding over Commission meetings, maintaining order, and facilitating the Board's official business.



Meet the Commissioners

Newly elected Commissioner **Peter "Sonny" Fortunato** brings a background in law enforcement, military contract service, small business ownership, and community involvement to the Board.

Fortunato has been actively involved in local charitable and service organizations, including Innovative Charities, the Alford Community Organization (ACO), and the Graceville Lions Club. Through these organizations, he has supported food

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distribution efforts, community outreach, and service projects benefiting Jackson County residents.

A husband and active member of New Hope Baptist Church, Fortunato has emphasized the importance of faith, family, and community service throughout his personal and professional life. His experience in public safety, business, and volunteer service provides a foundation for his new role representing the residents of District 2.



Re-elected Commissioner **Donnie Branch** has represented District 4 since November 2022. A longtime Jackson County resident with deep family roots in the Shady Grove community, Branch is a graduate of Grand Ridge High School and resides in Shady Grove with his wife, Debbie. Together, they have three sons and seven grandchildren.

Branch brings more than 40 years of law enforcement and public service experience to the Commission. His career included service with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, from which he retired in 2007, followed by eight years as Undersheriff for the Jackson County Sheriff's Office under former Sheriff Lou Roberts.

Since joining the Board, Branch has focused on issues important to Jackson County residents, including fiscal responsibility, public safety, road improvements, and the preservation of natural resources. His extensive background in law enforcement and local government continues to inform his approach to serving District 4 and the County as a whole.

Looking Ahead

With the swearing-in of Commissioners Fortunato and Branch and the selection of Board leadership, the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners begins its next chapter of service to the community.

The County congratulates both Commissioners and looks forward to the continued work of the Board in addressing community priorities, supporting essential services, and advancing opportunities for Jackson County's future.

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