

Instructions for nominees: The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation asks you to provide typed answers to each of the following questions. It is requested that the nominee type the question in full before each response. Do not leave any questions blank. Type "None" or "Not Applicable" if a question does not apply to the nominee. Return printed answers to Committee. Begin each section (i.e., "A", "B", etc.) on a new sheet of paper.

#### **A. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION AND QUALIFICATIONS**

1. Name (Include any former names or nicknames used):

- Joseph Ryan Gruters  
"Joe"

2. Position to which nominated:

- Amtrak Board of Directors

3. Date of Nomination: February 5, 2018

4. Address (List current place of residence and office addresses):

- [REDACTED]
- Sarasota CPA Office 2953 Bee Ridge Rd, Sarasota FL 34241
- Venice CPA Office 209 S. Nassau Dr #104, Venice FL 34285
- Sarasota Legislative Office 381 Interstate Blvd, Sarasota FL 34240
- Tallahassee Legislative Office 1101 The Capitol, 402 South Monroe St, Tallahassee FL 32399

5. Date and Place of Birth:

- Tampa, FL 07/06/1977

6. Provide the name, position, and place of employment for your spouse (if married) and the names and ages of your children (including stepchildren and children by a previous marriage).

- Sydney Spence Gruters – USDA Rural Development Director –  
Florida & US Virgin Islands



7. List all college and graduate degrees. Provide year and school attended.
- University of South Florida – MBA + 5<sup>th</sup> Year of Accounting, 2002
  - University of Costa Rica – MBA classes, 2002
  - Florida State University – BS (Finance, Real Estate and Multi-National Business Operations), 1999

8. List all post-undergraduate employment and highlight all management-level jobs held and any non-managerial jobs that relate to the position for which you are nominated.

- a. *Paoli & Gruters CPA's – Sarasota, Florida*  
(8/15 – Present)
  - i. *Managing Partner of multi office firm.*
  - ii. *Acquired and integrated staff and office of two different firms over last 3 years.*
- b. *State Representative - Sarasota, Florida District #73*  
(11/16 – Present)
  - i. *Serves on the Joint Auditing Committee along with Commerce and numerous business sub-committees.*
  - ii. *Won initial election with 65.1% of the vote.*
  - iii. *Received numerous recognitions and awards including being named a Champion by the Orlando Sentinel for my work trying to eliminate "dark money"*
- c. *Shinn & Company Certified Public Accountants– Sarasota, Florida* (1/10-7/15)
  - i. *Managed and worked various projects in both attestation and non attestation engagements including government audits.*
- d. *(YCOA) Yacht Clubs of the Americas - Fort Myers, Florida*  
(12/06- 2/08)

- i. Served as Executive Vice President and manager of home office during development and construction of multi-location \$400+ million-dollar project.
  - ii. Coordinated and managed task and staff to ensure timely completion of projects on budget.
- e. Vern Buchanan for Congress – Sarasota, Florida  
(5/06 -12/06 & 2/08 -12/09)
  - i. Managed all aspects of campaign including staff, consultants and budget.
  - ii. According to Politico Congressman Buchanan had the largest head to head increase in victory margin
- f. Githler Development – Sarasota, Florida  
(9/04-5/06)
  - i. Coordinated various entitlement and project management related task for several developments.
  - ii. Created budgets and revenue projections for various projects.
- g. Dr. Frank Schwerin for Congress - Naples Florida  
(2/04-9/04)
  - i. Coordinated all campaign activities for open congressional seat.
  - ii. Organized and managed campaign staff and consultants.
- h. Buchanan Enterprises – Sarasota, Florida  
(11/00 – 05/04)
  - i. Served in numerous government affairs and business roles for Vern Buchanan and his various corporate entities.
  - ii. Assisted and Coordinated numerous projects and assignments as Vern Buchanan's direct special assistant and project manager.

9. Attach a copy of your resume.

- a. Attached

10. List any advisory, consultative, honorary, or other part-time service or positions with Federal, State, or local governments, other than those listed above, within the last ten years.

- a. Florida State University, Board of Trustees Member (2010-2016)
  - i. Chairman – Audit and Business Committee
  - ii. Chairman – Presidential Compensation Committee
- b. Sarasota County Planning Commissioner, Chairman (2004 – 2010)
- c. Florida Sports Foundation, Commissioner (2008 – 2010)
- d. Sarasota City Tax Oversight Committee (2004 - 2008)
- e. University of South Florida, Community Advisory Board (2014 – Present)

11. List all positions held as an officer, director, trustee, partner, proprietor, agent, representative, or consultant of any corporation, company, firm, partnership, or other business, enterprise, educational, or other institution within the last ten years.

Paoli & Gruters CPA's – Officer (2015 – Present)  
SJE Realty, LLC – Officer (2016 – Present)  
AuditConfirm.com – Officer (2015 – Present)  
GGD1, LLC – Officer (2017 – Present)  
Florida State University, Board of Trustees (2010 – 2016)  
State of Florida House of Representatives (2016 – Present)  
Harbour Point Real Estate – Officer (2006 – 2010)  
Humane Society of Sarasota – Treasurer (2010-2014)  
Republican Party of Sarasota – Chairman (2008 – Present)  
Republican Party of Florida – Vice Chairman (2014 – 2016)  
Florida Right to Life – PAC Chairman (2007-2010)

12. Please list each membership you have had during the past ten years or currently hold with any civic, social, charitable, educational, political, professional, fraternal, benevolent or religious organization, private club, or other membership organization. Include dates of membership and any positions you have held with any organization. Please note whether any such club or organization restricts membership on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, or handicap.

- A. Donald Trump for President
  - a. Co-Chair of Florida (2016)
- B. Republican National Committee
  - a. Platform Committee (2016)
  - b. Co-Chairman of Restoring the American Dream Committee (2016)
- C. Republican Party of Florida
  - a. Member (2008-2018)
  - b. Vice Chairman (2014-2016)
- D. Republican Party of Sarasota
  - a. Member (2000-2018)
  - b. Chairman (2008-2018)
- E. Florida Institute of Certified Public Accounts
  - a. Member (2010-2018)
- F. Sarasota Kiwanis Club
  - a. Member (2014-2017)

None of these organizations restrict membership on any of the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age or handicap.

13. Have you ever been a candidate for and/or held a public office (elected, non-elected, or appointed)? If so, indicate whether any campaign has any outstanding debt, the amount, and whether you are personally liable for that debt.

Yes

State House 1998, 2000 & 2016

Zero debt

State Senate 2018

Zero debt

14. Itemize all political contributions to any individual, campaign organization, political party, political action committee, or similar entity of \$500 or more for the past ten years. Also list all offices you have held

with, and services rendered to, a state or national political party or election committee during the same period.

No Contributions have been made in the amount of \$500 or more.

15. List all scholarships, fellowships, honorary degrees, honorary society memberships, military medals, and any other special recognition for outstanding service or achievements.

- a. Associated Industries of Florida – Champion of Business Award (2018)
- b. Florida Chamber of Commerce – Distinguished Service Award. (2018)
- c. Florida Crime Stoppers – Legislator of the Year Award. (2018)
- d. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) – Legislative Voice for Animals. (2018)

16. Please list each book, article, column, or publication you have authored, individually or with others. Also list any speeches that you have given on topics relevant to the position for which you have been nominated. Do not attach copies of these publications unless otherwise instructed.

I have authored numerous guest columns and op-eds over the years for our local papers.

- a. Sarasota Herald Tribune - Gruters: County should not be pursuing a tax increase (May 2017)
- b. Sarasota Herald Tribune - Gruters: Invest in Jobs and Tourism (March 7, 2017)
- c. Not Published - Gov. Scott and Legislature right to defund Planned Parenthood (April 2016)
- d. Sarasota Herald Tribune - Gruters: Scott is right on Medicaid (May 12, 2015)
- e. Observer Group Papers - Gruters: Forget the punditry, Rick Scott matters because results matter (January 2015)

f. Sarasota Herald Tribune Gruters: Best way to help the Mexican People is to seal the Border (April 28, 2010)

17. Please identify each instance in which you have testified orally or in writing before Congress in a governmental or non-governmental capacity and specify the date and subject matter of each testimony.

N/A

18. Given the current mission, major programs, and major operational objectives of the department/agency to which you have been nominated, what in your background or employment experience do you believe affirmatively qualifies you for appointment to the position for which you have been nominated, and why do you wish to serve in that position?

I am honored to be selected for this position and hope that I can be a productive and contributing member in providing the corporate governance necessary to ensure Amtrak's long-term success. As a business owner, a Certified Public Accountant and former Finance and Audit Chair of a \$1.7 Billion government entity, I am well equipped to bring a business perspective that will be a valuable asset to the board.

19. What do you believe are your responsibilities, if confirmed, to ensure that the department/agency has proper management and accounting controls, and what experience do you have in managing a large organization?

My experience includes serving as the Finance and Audit Chairman and as a member of the Board of Trustees of Florida State University. The annual Budget exceeded \$1.7 Billion and the University was ranked the most efficient in the country while I was a member of the Board and Chairman of the Finance and Audit Committee. I would bring this experience and a keen eye to the Board to ensure appropriate management and accounting controls.

20. What do you believe to be the top three challenges facing the department/agency, and why?

1) **Safety/Public Perception.** Safety should always be a top priority and would be for me. Numerous safety incidents in the news have damaged the perception of Amtrak in the public eye, making safety improvements a double priority. Amtrak recently hired a new Chief Safety Officer reporting directly to the CEO and will lead Amtrak in its implementation and operation of a Safety Management System. I'm also aware of the importance of implementing Positive Train Control (PTC), and I fully support and expect Amtrak to meet its obligations consistent with the law. Safety must be the top priority, and I will work to help achieve Amtrak's goal of being the safest railroad in North America.

2) **Capital Funding.** This is increasingly important for aging assets and directly connects to safety issues. Much of Amtrak's infrastructure and equipment are at or near the end of their useful life and must soon be addressed. I am aware that Amtrak is looking at a new fleet strategy plan aimed at improving, replacing and modernizing locomotives and passenger cars. There are also serious infrastructure needs, especially on the Northeast Corridor (NEC). According to the NEC Commission, there is an approximate \$40 billion state of good repair backlog. This aging infrastructure already causes disruptions and costs the economy in lost productivity while adding to passenger frustrations. It is evident that sufficient long-term capital funding should be made available to ensure continued support of passenger rail.

3) **Operational Efficiency.** Amtrak's focus should be on maximizing the transportation value it creates with the Federal dollars it receives. To do this, the company needs to constantly grow revenue, drive down costs and deliver excellent customer service — just like any other business. One area of concern is the number of train delays, as I know that delays make for unhappy customers, and unhappy customers make for lost revenue as they seek alternative options.



Solid operational oversight can improve service and limit delays for passengers. That being said, I know Amtrak's National Network is dependent on their host railroads and their on-time performance is poor and declining. For the issues where Amtrak is reliant on others for its operating performance, I would look to working with our partners, including Congress, to find the most appropriate solution. Amtrak is doing what it can to be a responsible steward of taxpayer funding and is continually looking for ways to maximize the benefit of the public investments it receives. I am encouraged by the corporation's recent progress in reducing its operating loss to historic levels, and I hope that one day Amtrak can eliminate its operating loss completely.

## **B. POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1. Describe all financial arrangements, deferred compensation agreements, and other continuing dealings with business associates, clients, or customers. Please include information related to retirement accounts.

I currently receive a salary from both the State of Florida and my CPA firm Paoli & Gruters, CPA's. If confirmed I plan on continuing employment in both capacities.

2. Do you have any commitments or agreements, formal or informal, to maintain employment, affiliation, or practice with any business, association or other organization during your appointment? If so, please explain.

Yes, as listed above in question 1, I plan on continuing employment as a CPA and if the voters allow as a member of the Florida Legislature.

3. Indicate any investments, obligations, liabilities, or other relationships which could involve potential conflicts of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Governmental Ethics and Amtrak's Ethics Officials to identify potential conflicts of interest. Any potential

conflicts of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with Amtrak and that has been provided to this Committee. I am not aware of any other potential conflicts of interest.

4. Describe any business relationship, dealing, or financial transaction which you have had during the last ten years, whether for yourself, on behalf of a client, or acting as an agent, that could in any way constitute or result in a possible conflict of interest in the position to which you have been nominated.

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Governmental Ethics and Amtrak's Ethics Officials to identify potential conflicts of interest. Any potential conflicts of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with Amtrak and that has been provided to this Committee. I am not aware of any other potential conflicts of interest.

5. Describe any activity during the past ten years in which you have been engaged for the purpose of directly or indirectly influencing the passage, defeat, or modification of any legislation or affecting the administration and execution of law or public policy.

As a local and statewide party leader I have advocated on behalf of the Republican Party and conservative principles on numerous issues.

6. Explain how you will resolve any potential conflict of interest, including any that may be disclosed by your responses to the above items.

In connection with the nomination process, I have consulted with the Office of Governmental Ethics and Amtrak's Ethics Officials to identify potential conflicts of interest. Any potential conflicts of interest will be resolved in accordance with the terms of an ethics agreement that I have entered into with Amtrak and that has been provided to this Committee. I am not aware of any other potential conflicts of interest.

### C. LEGAL MATTERS

1. Have you ever been disciplined or cited for a breach of ethics, professional misconduct, or retaliation by, or been the subject of a complaint to, any court, administrative agency, the Office of Special Counsel, professional association, disciplinary committee, or other professional group? If yes:
  - a. Provide the name of agency, association, committee, or group;
    - i. Florida Board of Accountancy
  - b. Provide the date the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action was issued or initiated;
    - i. Complaint filed against me in June, 2017.
  - c. Describe the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action;
    - i. Complaint was filed against me by client of firm purchased due to actions of past owner.
  - d. Provide the results of the citation, disciplinary action, complaint, or personnel action.
    - i. Complaint was investigated and dismissed at probable cause hearing and is not public record as it did not move forward to Board for consideration.
2. Have you ever been investigated, arrested, charged, or held by any Federal, State, or other law enforcement authority of any Federal, State, county, or municipal entity, other than for a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

NO
3. Have you or any business or nonprofit of which you are or were an officer ever been involved as a party in an administrative agency proceeding, criminal proceeding, or civil litigation? If so, please explain.

NO
4. Have you ever been convicted (including pleas of guilty or *nolo contendere*) of any criminal violation other than a minor traffic offense? If so, please explain.

NO

5. Have you ever been accused, formally or informally, of sexual harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, or any other basis? If so, please explain.

NO

6. Please advise the Committee of any additional information, favorable or unfavorable, which you feel should be disclosed in connection with your nomination.

N/A

#### **D. RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMITTEE**

1. Will you ensure that your department/agency complies with deadlines for information set by congressional committees?

Yes

2. Will you ensure that your department/agency does whatever it can to protect congressional witnesses and whistle blowers from reprisal for their testimony and disclosures?

Yes

3. Will you cooperate in providing the Committee with requested witnesses, including technical experts and career employees, with firsthand knowledge of matters of interest to the Committee?

Yes

4. Are you willing to appear and testify before any duly constituted committee of the Congress on such occasions as you may be reasonably requested to do so?

Yes

(Nominee is to include this signed affidavit along with answers to the above questions.)

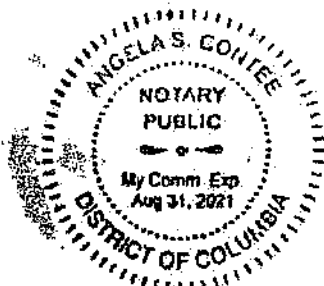
**F. Affidavit**

Joe Gruter being duly sworn, hereby states that he/she has read and signed the foregoing Statement on Biographical and Financial Information and that the information provided therein is, to the best of his/her knowledge, current, accurate, and complete.

Joe Gruter  
Signature of Nominee

Subscribed and sworn before me this 10 day of MAY, 2018.

Ad. Boyle  
Notary Public



# Joseph Ryan Gruters

## EDUCATION:

### University of South Florida - Tampa, Florida

- Masters of Business Administration (December 2002)
- Specializations: Finance, International Business, Management
- Fifth Year of Accounting

### University of Costa Rica - San Jose, Costa Rica

- Completed graduate work during a summer semester (Summer 2002)

### Florida State University - Tallahassee, Florida

- Bachelors of Science (December 1999)
- Triple Major: Finance, Real Estate, & Multi-National Business Operation

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY:

### Paoli & Gruters CPA's

August 15 -

Present

#### CPA - Owner

- Manage firm and serve as trusted professional for numerous businesses and families.
- Purchased Paoli & Company and merged firms together.
- Developed and currently marketing two computer applications to Financial Institutions and CPA Firms.

### Shinn & Company

Jan 10 - July 15

#### CPA - Tax Manager

- Prepare/Review Federal & State Returns
- Prepare various special engagement projects for clients.

### Vern Buchanan for Congress - Sarasota, Florida

Feb 08 - Dec 09

#### Campaign Manager

- Created and implemented strategy to increase win from 369 votes in 2006 to over 66,415 in 2008. Following the 2008 election, Congressional Quarterly reported that Buchanan had the largest increase in victory margin in the entire country
- Coordinated efforts of all Campaign Consultants, Volunteers and Staff

### YCOA - Fort Myers, Florida

Dec 06 - Feb 08

#### Executive Vice President - Government Relations and Operations

- Coordinate entitlement activities for five projects.
- Prepare Budgets and Pro-Forma's for current and potential projects
- Negotiate various contracts with contractors for various aspects of project
- Coordinate all information and project managers for five projects being developed simultaneously.

### Vern Buchanan for Congress - Sarasota, Florida

May 06 - Dec 06

#### Political Director

- Coordinated all ground game and field operations for open congressional seat.
- Coordinated efforts of 15 campaign staff members and numerous volunteers.
- Originally offered Campaign Manager position but came in May to fill GAP in STAFF.

### Githler Development - Sarasota, Florida

Sep 04 - May 06

#### Project Manager/Coordinator, Government Relations

- Coordinated various entitlement and project management related task for several developments.
- Created budgets and revenue projections for various projects and potential projects.
- Responsible for finding, applying for and lobbying successfully on behalf of a project to receive a \$100,000 grant from government

### Dr. Frank Schwerin for Congress - Naples, Florida

Feb 04 - Sep 04

#### Campaign Manager

- Coordinated all campaign activities for open congressional seat.
- Organized and managed campaign staff and consultants.

### Buchanan Automotive Group & Buchanan Enterprises - Sarasota, Florida

Oct. 00 - May 04

#### Director of Governmental Affairs & Special Assistant to Vern Buchanan

- Handled all Government Affairs and Community Relations projects over a four year period full time and continued on as Consultant for next 5 years.

Cardinal Mooney High School – Sarasota, Florida  
Swim Coach

Fall 00 – 01

Richard Bass Real Estate Appraisals  
Real Estate Appraiser

March 00 – Oct 00

Florida State University, Student Government Association  
Director of Student Lobbying

May 99 – Dec 99

## Community

### Present

- Florida House of Representatives
  - Elected in November 2016 representing Sarasota and Manatee Counties to represent Florida's 73<sup>rd</sup> State House District.
  - Leading the fight on economic development bills in coordination with Governor Rick Scott.
- Donald Trump for President Campaign.
  - Florida Co-Chairman
  - Recruited and organized all original County Grassroots Chairman and was one of the lead press contacts in Florida during primary. Continued as press surrogate throughout general election and was the Master of Ceremonies in majority of Florida events
  - Served as Co-Chairman of the Economy Jobs and Debt Subcommittee at the Republican Convention and served as one of two Trump Point people during full committee hearings.
  - One of 29 Electoral College Members
- Florida State University, Board of Trustee (Appointed by Governor Rick Scott)
  - Chairman, Finance and Audit Committee overseeing a \$1.6 Billion Dollar Budget
  - Former Chairman, Presidential Compensation Committee
  - Former Chairman, Student Affairs Committee
  - Former AD Search Committee Member
- Republican Party of Florida, Vice Chairman
  - Chairman, Voter Turnout Committee
  - Former Chairman, Technology Committee
  - Former Chairman, 16<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Caucus
- University of South Florida, Community Leadership Council Sarasota Branch Member
- Republican Executive Committee of Sarasota, Chairman
  - Extensive Media experience, regular appearances on local and statewide television as well as source for Political Stories throughout Florida.
  - Hosted several of the largest political fundraisers and rallies in Florida
  - Took top of ticket from 211 vote margin in 2008 to 15,385 votes in 2012 and to 26,422 votes in 2016. Led State in AB return percentage.

### Past

- Florida Right to Life PAC Chairman
- Florida Sports Foundation Board Member (Appointed by Governor)
- Mitt Romney Florida Delegate, 2012 Republican National Convention
- Sarasota County Planning Commissioner, Chairman
- Humane Society of Sarasota, Treasurer
- City of Sarasota, Citizens Tax Oversight Committee
- Conference Center Task Force, Finance Committee Chairman
- Downtown Partnership of Sarasota, Board Member
- Young Professionals Group, Board Member, Leadership Chairman
- USTA Men's League Coordinator for Region #5, Florida
- Greater Sertoma Club of Sarasota, Board Member
- Young Republicans of Sarasota, President
- Doubles for Deb, Board Member
- Winefest – Uncorked, Board Member
- Leadership Sarasota graduate
- WLSS 930 AM Cardinal Mooney High School football color commentator
- USTA, Team Captain, Regional Champs Men's team 2001, 2002 & 2003, Mixed Team 2000, 2003 & 2005
- Tomahawk Party, Founding Member and Nominee for Student President at Florida State University
- Florida State University Water Polo, Team Member
- Cardinal Mooney H.S., Class President, Editor-In-Chief/Newspaper, 14 Varsity Letters