

# ECHO

**\*Please note this meeting will be at the Dunlap Champions Club**

**Thursday, November 21st**

Lunch Buffet	11:30 AM
Program Begins	12:00 PM
Introductions	12:10 PM
Presentation Begins	12:15 PM
Q&A	12:50 PM
Meeting Adjourned	1:00 PM

## Onsite & Virtual Program

**Dunlap Champions Club**  
**225 Champions Way Bldg B**  
**Tallahassee, FL 32304**

To RSVP, please email  
[mail@economic-club.com](mailto:mail@economic-club.com)  
 or  
 Call: (850) 224-0711

**PLEASE RSVP BY 2PM on**  
**Wednesday, November 20th**

## Contact Us

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## Margaritaville: How a Song Became a Brand

Margaritaville comes to Tallahassee this month as we welcome **John Cohan**, CEO of Margaritaville Holdings of Orlando. It's a relaxing mood – a state of mind – as the famous song by Jimmy Buffett portrays, but it's also become a successful brand that adorns resorts, restaurants, and a variety of retail ventures with branded system-wide sales of about \$2.3 billion annually. Mr. Cohan co-founded the business with Mr. Buffett 27 years ago. He'll treat us to some wonderful anecdotes about the fabled Florida troubadour as well as share some insight on their business model.

"Even though Jimmy wasn't born in Florida, he was very identified with it. It's really remarkable that a person was able to create intellectual property that wasn't their name, and make it stand for so much, mean so much to so many people," Mr. Cohan told Club Officers in a recent conference call. He said there's an interesting corporate finance element he'll explain as well, in that the company was put together without outside

equity, "which speaks to a lot of the financial success," he added.

In honor of Mr. Buffett, who passed away in September 2023, the Florida Legislature this year designated Route A1A from the Florida Keys to the Georgia Line as the Jimmy Buffett Memorial Highway. It also authorized specialty Margaritaville license plates.


Margaritaville Holdings is fundamentally a franchise business. Its core operations are in the diversified hospitality business - including resorts, hotels, cruise ships, vacation and active living residential communities, vacation ownership, gaming and restaurants. Additional branded businesses include alcoholic beverages; lifestyle consumer products; an on-campus college ambassador program and media. Its Radio Margaritaville consistently ranks among the most listened to on Sirius/XM satellite radio.



Prior to joining Mr. Buffett in 1997 to form Margaritaville Holdings, Mr. Cohan held the position of Senior Vice President/corporate finance for TRIARC, a publicly traded holding company comprised of consumer businesses, including Arby's, Snapple, and RC Cola. He graduated from Princeton University in 1979, attended the London School of Economics, and graduated from the Georgetown Law Center in 1984. Mr. Cohan will be introduced by Dr. Jeffrey Sharkey, Managing Partner of The Capitol Alliance Group.

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## Recent New Members

**Georgie Barret**, [Florida Surplus Lines Office](#)

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**John Helms**, [Objective Advisory](#)

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**Gwynn Virostek**, [Capital City Youth Services](#)

## The U.S. Navy's Economic and Strategic Impact from Florida around the Globe

The October Club meeting featured **Meredith Berger**, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and Environment. In her role, she supports what she called the three "C's".



- **Community** – "These are the ecosystems that allow us to survive and thrive, succeed and achieve the economies that support our way of life. It's where our values that we hold and defend reside. It's the institutions you're all a part of, regions, cities, towns. It's where we lead and serve, where our base is and the environment that surrounds them and supports them."
- **Critical Infrastructure** – "These are ports, natural and man-made structures, roads and runways, barracks and depots, utilities, energy and water that connect us, sustain us, prepare us, and ultimately protect us."
- **Climate** – "We consider this a war fighting advantage, a tactical and strategic enabler and significantly, a conflict deterrent."

Ms. Berger also serves as the Navy's Chief Sustainability Officer. "As we think about climate change and whatever term you want to assign to the impact that we're seeing, so extreme weather, heat, drought, floods, resource scarcity, this is a national security threat for us. It's a threat that we take seriously, and we are on the front lines of it."

One way of being on the front lines is by investigating the need for buried power cables. She discussed last year's fires in Maui where above-ground power cables were burned. She also shared how the government is looking at electrification, both in its installations and in its vehicles. (You can read more and listen to the Club's podcast with Meredith Berger on our [Podcasts and Summaries webpage](#))

## 2024 Stan Tait Award Recipient

October 11th, the Club recognized Dr. Raymond E. Bye as the 2024 Stan Tait Award recipient. It's been three years since we awarded the Stan Tait Award. This award is named after a man whose legacy is deeply woven into the very fabric of this Club. Stan Tait, one of the founding members and a former Executive Director of our club, was a driving force behind the growth and prominence of the Economic Club of Florida. Through his leadership, vision, and unrelenting dedication, the Club has become a premier platform for engaging discussion on key issues of our time.

The Stan Tait Award is not just a tribute to his remarkable achievement but a recognition of individuals who embody the same character, class, and compassion that Stan demonstrated throughout his life. We give this award to honor someone who has made exceptional contributions to both our Club and community – someone who puts people first, leads with innovative ideas, acts with integrity, and gives generously of their time, talents, and resources.

Ray continues to serve as a committed ECF board member and is an outstanding volunteer. He has secured great speakers, from featured speaker, Asst. Navy Sec. Berger to securing Former CIA Director and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta as a keynote speaker earlier this year. Ray brings great vision to the ECF Board and is tireless in the pursuit of worldclass speakers which has grown our organization.



Left to Right: Marion Hoffmann, Kathy Bye, Ray Bye, Katrina Rolle, Tom Deison, and Koulla Butler.

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## Upcoming Programs

### Onsite/Virtual Programs

**January 21, 2025**



**Robert Kaplan**

Vice Chairman

Goldman Sachs

**Dunlap Champions Club**

**March 20, 2025**



**Phil Goodman**

District 2 Commissioner

Florida Keys Mosquito Control

**Capital City Country Club**

**December 3, 2024**

**Join us as we  
celebrate this past  
year and look to the  
year ahead.**

**Annual Meeting &  
Elections**

**5:30 PM—7:30 PM**

**First Franklin  
Financial Services**

## Member Spotlight

**Bobby Bacon** is CEO and Chairman of the Earl Bacon Agency, an employee-owned multi-line insurance agency started by his parents, Earl and Jane, in 1963. He joined the firm in 1981, after spending four years as a staff accountant at a local CPA firm. Mr. Bacon also manages three retirement plans.

An Economic Club member since 1981, Mr. Bacon is also a Trustee, a group whose extra financial commitment helps the Club fulfill its mission. "I'm sort of an economics nerd, so business and economics are of interest to me. If we want to have good quality speakers, the Club has to have some resources to be able to offer to defray travel expenses or whatever might be required to get them to travel to Tallahassee. We've gotten a series of really impressive speakers so it must work."

Mr. Bacon was born in Columbus, Ohio but raised in Tallahassee since early childhood. He graduated from Leon High School and Florida State University, earning a bachelor's degree in accounting. He holds designations as a Certified Public Accountant, Personal Financial Specialist, Chartered Property/Casualty Underwriter, Accredited Investment Fiduciary, and Certified Public Pension Trustee. A longtime Rotarian, he was recognized by the Rotary Clubs of Tallahassee with their "Ethics in Business" Award and he was named the Outstanding CPA in Business & Industry by the Florida Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Mr. Bacon and his wife Debbie have two adult children, Gregory and Lauren. When he's not in the office, you can find him in the kitchen. A "prodigious cook," he's the graduate of a number of cooking schools around the world.



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