

INTRODUCTION TO THE
REVIEW OF FLORIDA LEGISLATION

THE LEGISLATIVE CHALLENGE

RHEA CHILES

Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power.

—Abraham Lincoln

I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce to you the *Florida State University Review of Florida Legislation*. It serves us well to reflect on the important work of the Florida Legislature, and it is fitting for this fine law school to dedicate an annual volume to illuminating the importance that the legislative exercise of power has upon our lives and the institutions of our state.

From 1958 to 1970 my husband, Lawton Chiles, served as a member of the Florida House and the Florida Senate. I think that, in his forty years of public service, those years were the most fulfilling. Our state legislative body closely reflects the geographic and cultural diversity of the people whom they represent. The deliberations of the members during committee work and floor debate can be a conduit for innovative ideas and solutions to old and seemingly intractable problems.

We don't always know exactly how we want our Legislature to accomplish our objectives, but we are very clear that we want them accomplished. We want to know that our representatives to the two separate houses of the Legislature will carry the day for our hopes and aspirations as citizens of this state. We recognize that, as a people, we are only as strong as our weakest link, and we need the Legislature to enact measures that ensure a level playing field so that all may live and thrive in our great state.

The Lawton Chiles Foundation is founded on the public policy of Lawton Chiles. We advocate that the capacity of our children is our most precious resource. We know that every dollar properly invested in quality health care for mothers and babies and the early stages of a child's life is a tax dollar well spent. We affirm the power of strong families to provide for children. We support programs that provide for foster care and protection for children who have no one else to care for them. We believe that investment in children from birth to five creates the foundation for future pillars of strong communities.

We respect the institution of the Legislature, and we recognize the power that the Legislature has through lawmaking. We also trust that our liberty is most ensured when there is fidelity to the separation of legislative, judicial, and administrative powers of state government. We ask for fidelity to that trust. Given the challenges fac-

ing such a large, diverse, and complex state as Florida, it is a great deal to ask. But it is not too much.