

## **FSPA member elected to Florida House**

By Charis Tyson, Communications Specialist

For the Florida Swimming Pool Association, election results included a first for the organization, one of its own members was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. On November 16, Larry Ahern, owner/president of Larry Ahern Pool Remodeling Inc., was sworn in as part of the freshmen class. Ahern will represent House District 51, which is in Pinellas County and includes South Pasadena, Seminole and parts of St. Petersburg, Pinellas Park and Largo.

Jennifer Hatfield, FSPA Government Relations Consultant, was happy to hear of Larry's victory.

Hatfield said, "It's great for the industry to have representation in Tallahassee. Larry is someone who understands our issues intimately. He will be able to educate other legislators on the issues affecting the pool and spa industry, and hopefully they will look to him with their questions."

Larry Ahern has a long history in the pool and spa industry; in his twenties he started his own company, a swimming pool maintenance business, and today he owns a swimming pool remodeling and commercial fountain business. He also sits on the Swimming Pool Board for Examining Adjustments and Appeals for Pinellas County.

As a small business owner Larry has created jobs and balanced budgets and understands the many issues small business owners are facing, as well as those specific to the construction industry. His priority is to get the economy back on track and folks working again.

"Ultimately, being a Republican and a conservative, the more we can do to keep money in the pockets of the people and fraud out of government, the more jobs can be made," Representative Ahern said.

Larry also wants to reduce government's size and encourage fiscal responsibility. He decided to run for office for several reasons saying, "A lot had to do with business principles and practices that should be applied to government. Performance-based measurement is used in business; shouldn't we see that in government?"

He went on to say, "They will have to find a way to get more with less money and business people understand that more than anyone."

Larry's new position can certainly affect the swimming pool industry. If someone in the industry is in the public eye and gathers admiration, the perception of the industry will be raised.

Representative Ahern sees additional effects saying, "There is always something happening in energy and conservation and there can be unforeseen consequences of other bills."

Having the perspective of an industry member involved in the process can help prevent unrealized consequences from occurring. Larry hopes that people will also come to him with legislation that will affect businesses like his and those of his peers in the pool industry.

Larry also wanted to be sure to thank the FSPA and his local chapter for all their support. Representative Ahern said, "People sent money and got behind me and volunteered their time. That inspires you and gives the energy to keep going. Having such support goes a long way for someone new (to running for office)."