

# Naples attorney elected to Legislature unopposed

By I.M. STACKEL (Contact)

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JENNIFER WHITNEY / Staff

**A portrait of House Representative elect Tom Grady in his office in downtown Naples Thursday, September 25.**

## ABOUT TOM GRADY

**Name:** Tom Grady

**Position:** Newly elected representative for District 76, formerly held by Garrett Richter

**Education:** Florida State. Majored in finance. Duke Law School, with a focus on corporate and security law.

**Family:** Wife and two grown children.

NAPLES — Representative-elect Tom Grady, R-Naples, is a big fan of Peter F. Drucker, the Austrian-born American management consultant, who died in 2005.

Grady's philosophy, with a nod to the Drucker school, is: "When you wake up in the morning, it is not 'What can I do today?' but 'What can I undo today?'" Grady explained in the conference room of his law office on Fifth Avenue South.

Grady may well be one of the ultimate Florida insiders — he was elected unopposed, was encouraged, and somewhat financed, by Florida politicians and attorneys, and, is the son of a former small town mayor in Florida — but he dearly wants to make life easier for fellow residents.

For starters, he'd like to remove barriers to accomplish every day tasks.

Cut the burdens on normal folk, when they want to build something: "Less regulation, less taxing, less litigation, greater accessibility to insurance, greater choice of insurance, choice of retirement opportunities," said Grady, 50.

Fix healthcare and its relationship to insurance, he said.

Asked about "ping-ponging," a phrase used to describe how hospitals and insurers negotiate payment over the course of months, without letting consumers in on the secret ping-pong match until they're stuck with bills they could have sworn were already paid, Grady noted he has some experience in that area.

Having served on the board of Naples Community Hospital, Grady said he does have some knowledge of the healthcare system, as well as some of the hardships endured by medical providers.

"I am also a consumer," Grady said, showing the surgery scars on his hand from an operation recently performed.

His hospital and insurance bills were "very hard to decipher," Grady said.

In fact, joking that he's the "new kid on the block" who is about to sound off about a national health care crisis, Grady said this: "Health care is the most unusual service in the nation. The consumer — you, me — (are) so disconnected from the payer. If you were going to buy a car, you would know how much it would cost, what the options are, how much the payments would be, whether you could get a better price on the Internet, whether Ford is better than Chevrolet," Grady said. "You'd do homework." But with health care "you don't — you can't," Grady said.

"The core problem in health care (for the consumer) is a totally different level of accountability between you and your physician."

Without addressing plans proposed by presidential candidates, Grady said this: "I think it is important to bring choice to health care decisions, and reconnect with the payment aspect, and that means choice. It's a horrible system of payment, affected and impacted by government ... primarily (based) on the federal reimbursement rates through Medicare," he said. "That is the benchmark for everything (while) the benchmark level may not have anything to do with cost of service."

It's as if Grady was born to politics, although he never ran for anything until Garrett Richter's District 76 seat became available.

For as far back as he can remember, Grady's been fascinated by politics. When he was in his early teens he served as a page in the Florida House of Representatives.

Under the supervision of the House Sergeant at Arms, pages work in the house chamber during the hours when the House is in session. Each representative may appoint a page.

So, yes, the interest was always there. But why now? When the economy is a mess?

"I've been told I'm in for a lot of excitement," Grady admits.

He was also encouraged by some impressive leaders including Gov. Charlie Crist, who Grady has known for a decade.

Grady was actually asked to run in 2006 by people here and in other parts of his state, including his native Brevard County, where his dad R.W. Grady resides.

A Naples resident since 1982, Grady is delighted that he was elected unopposed, even though he campaigned from day one, and acquired a healthy contribution total of more than \$200,000.

He was clearly the Republican party's choice, but why didn't the Democrats run a candidate against him?

"My goal is to have someone run for every office in the future. We've coming off some slow times, but we're pushing our growth strategy," said Steve Hemping, chairman of Collier's Democratic Party. "Tom Grady's seat is the most Republican seat in Naples. He's a Naples insider. A big bucks guy linked to Charlie Crist."