

Alan Suskey's latest move

As the managing partner at Shumaker Advisors' Tallahassee practice, **Alan Suskey** leans on his personal experience and legislative expertise to provide clients with a unique perspective.

Like all of the best lobbyists, **Alan Suskey** shapes perspective, the attribute that comes with time and distance from the task at hand, just as the muscles of the eye adjust to light. The managing principal of Shumaker Advisors Florida has a deep background in legislation, technology and procurement, which the Tallahassee firm leverages for national reach into regulated industries, state agencies and public policy.

An unforgiving clash of worlds shaped his own perspective. Suskey is old Florida, at least six generations away from the grandfather who numbered among one of North Florida's first settlers. He grew up in Cottondale in Jackson County, an hour's drive from the Capitol building where an uncle from Fort Lauderdale, **Jim Scott**, served 24 years in the state Senate, including a stint as President. Suskey was drawn to his uncle's stories and what he saw of Tallahassee.

"Through him I always had a love for politics," he said. "But I never knew where I was going to fit in the political world."

After graduating in 1999 from Cottondale High, Suskey enlisted in the Army. Around the same time, U.S. and NATO forces were bombing Serb positions in defense of ethnic Albanians, part of the Kosovo War. That campaign had ended by the time the 18-year-old Suskey deployed to Germany, his base for the next six years between two tours in Iraq.

His unit was on a remote training exercise Sept. 11, 2001, when a commanding officer arrived and gathered the soldiers to tell them the news: Hijacked planes had attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

"We were two or three hours away from where we were stationed in Germany," Suskey said. "We made the drive back and put our gear away, and that was the first time we saw the footage of what happened. And the conversation quickly turned to, 'Well, life is different now, especially for us. We all knew that we were very quickly going to be deployed.'"

Suskey was part of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the leading edge of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He remained in Baghdad a year, returned to Germany for eight months and then back to Iraq an additional 13 months. Facing bullets and roadside bombs while fighting a dictatorship left deep impressions.

"I can remember standing in a field in southern Iraq," he recalled. "We had taken some dignitaries on a tour, including in a Chinook over one of the mass burial sites. And as far as you could see, there were nothing but garbage bags. These were mass graves. And people were going through, trying to find some sort of personal memento of



a family member who had been killed under the Saddam Hussein regime. "And I think that anybody who sees that will very quickly know that we were there for the right reasons."

Suskey participated in numerous Best Warrior competitions, the Army's annual competition testing physical and mental skills across all major categories of service. The exams are supposed to be challenging, virtually impossible to study for, and include a second phase in which senior officers grill contestants on military bearing and responsibilities down to specific regulations and their numbers.



Over eight years of service, Suskey distinguished himself repeatedly, starting with winning Company Soldier of the Month as a private first-class. He racked up wins as Battalion Soldier of the Quarter, Brigade Soldier of the Quarter and Brigade Soldier of the Year. He won the competition for Fifth Corps (now V Corps), a command and control corps in Europe; then Soldier of the Year for U.S. Army Europe.

The only honor that remained was the

big one — the Army's Best Warrior Competition held each year in Fort Lee, Virginia. He came within a few points of winning that, too, the equivalent of a photo finish. He left the Army as a staff sergeant and worked on Capitol Hill as a military aide for then-U.S. Rep. **C.W. "Bill" Young**.

Suskey moved to St. Petersburg in 2008, where he managed legislative policy and appropriations requests for SRI International, a research institute working



with the Department of Homeland Security. Two years later he co-founded Three Bridges Advisors with former U.S. Rep. **David Jolly**, himself a Bill Young protege.

In 2014 he founded Suskey Consulting in Tallahassee. The former firm's Vice President, **Donovan Brown**, put his lengthy legal and political background to use communicating with legislators and advising several state agencies. He has since moved on to found Capital Advocates but continues to work alongside Suskey as of counsel to Shumaker Advisors Florida. Meanwhile, government consultant **RJ Myers**, channeled knowledge gained in more than two dozen campaign wins into relationships with elected officials and fluency in health, energy and transportation. He joined Suskey at Shumaker when the firms merged in October.

Once or twice a year, Suskey escapes to Napa Valley for wine tasting with **Sarah**, a Tallahassee lobbyist and his wife since 2018. He also reserves time each year to spend with men he served with in Iraq. Here he can talk about experiences he has shared with no one else, including his wife.

The slivers of beauty and lessons from those years still guide his path and help him think on his feet.

"A lot of times you have to go with your gut," he said. "And what your gut tells you is either the right answer or the right thing to do. You're making split-second decisions."



PHOTOS: The Workmans