

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SESSION WEEK 4: WEEK OF MARCH 24

BUDGET

This week the remaining budget chair recommendations were rolled out; moreover, the House and Senate released their proposed general appropriations bills for FY 2025-26. The Senate proposed a \$117 billion budget, which is \$1.3 billion less than the adjusted total for the current year budget. Chair Hooper explained this budget is the return to a more normal budget spending pattern for the state; and although revenues are increasing, Florida is going to pay down debt, set aside reserves, and push for tax relief. On the other hand, the House proposed a budget \$4 billion less than the Senate at \$112 billion. ([Senate](#), [House](#))

VETOES

This week, the Florida House unanimously voted to restore four budget items that were previously vetoed by Governor Ron DeSantis. These projects include \$2.5 million for a Rockledge water treatment project, \$1 million for a timesheet management and payroll data system for the Department of Corrections, more than \$1.5 million for sewer and water work in Baldwin, and \$280,000 for the Florida Senior Veterans in Crisis Fund. Following the news, the Governor took his frustrations to social media claiming the Florida House has undone over \$60,000,000 in cost savings. Moreover, he restated his belief that the Legislature is not focusing on the current issues, and should instead turn their attention to property taxes, illegal immigration, and condominium reform. The overrides still need approval from the Senate; however, it can once more be observed how the Legislature continues to assert its independence from the executive branch.

TAXES

House Speaker Daniel Perez took the spotlight this week as he announced a plan for Florida's largest tax cut in history; a permanent cut of Florida's sales tax from 6% to 5.25%, resulting in a \$5 billion annual reduction. In lieu of this, Speaker Perez said recurring funding will be scrutinized by budget writers as they look to find methods to decrease spending due to Florida's "spending" problem. If this measure were to pass, Florida would be the first state to permanently cut its sales tax.

Furthermore, the Governor and the Legislature have both expressed their interest in the elimination of property taxes. Several measures have been filed to further reduce the tax burden Floridians continue to face. If passed, the elimination of property taxes would be another historical tax cut, and Florida would be the first state in the nation to do so.

ENVIRONMENT

Over \$398 million in grants to enhance Florida's water quality was awarded by Governor DeSantis this week. The breakdown of the funding is as follows:

- \$189 million: Water Quality Improvement Grants
- \$55 million: Alternative Water Supply
- \$100 million: River Lagoon Protection Program
- \$25 million: Caloosahatchee Watershed Grant Program
- \$20 million: Biscayne Bay Water Quality Improvement Grant Program

LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

REJECTING GUNS ON CAMPUS

In a 4-3 vote, the Senate Criminal Justice Committee voted to block a bill's passage that would have allowed guns on college campuses. SB 814, sponsored by Republican Senator Randy Fine, has been one of the most controversial bills considered this legislative session. Democrat Vice Chair Carlos Guillermo Smith argued that adding firearms to an already high-stress environment where individuals face academic pressures, mental health struggles, drug abuse, alcoholism, and more, is not the answer. Republican Chair Ileana Garcia joined three Democrats in voting against the bill; two Republican Senators, Jennifer Bradley and Corey Simon, were absent during the vote. The only favorable votes stemmed from Republican Senators Joe Gruters, Jonathan Martin, and Clay Yarborough.

DEATH PENALTIES

Republican Representative Berny Jacques and Republican Senator Jonathan Martin are leading the charge on the expansion of death penalty measures with their legislation. House Bill 1283 and Senate Bill 1804 look to allow the death penalty for cases related to human trafficking. Though there has been some concern surrounding legalities, Senator Martin stands firm that public policy should not be tainted by fear of litigation. Other legislation (HB 903 and SB 1604) aims to expand Florida's execution methods beyond just lethal injection and electrocution. If successful, the methods would include, but are not limited to, nitrogen gas and firing squads.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Sponsored by Senator Erin Grall, SB 1318 targets the reduction of distracted driving even further by prohibiting the holding of any mobile device while driving. Though legislation was passed years prior to try and combat texting and driving, Senator Grall believes hands-free driving is essential. The bill now heads to Senate Rules, its last committee stop. An identical House version (HB 501) sponsored by Democrat Representative Allison Tant has yet to be considered in its first committee.

IMMIGRATION

Democrats, Senator Jason Pizzo and Representative Allison Tant, have filed legislation that would require all employers to use the federal E-Verify system. The penalties listed in the bill for noncompliance include employers facing large fines and the possibility of losing their business license. Republican Representative Berny Jacques has filed House Bill 955, which would also increase the range of usage of the system to small employers but without the penalties for not doing so. House Speaker Danny Perez has previously stated that he was open to considering E-Verify bills, however, House Bill 1033 has yet to be heard by its first committee.

EDUCATION

WORKFORCE GRANT PROGRAM

House Bill 1145, sponsored by Republican Representative Jason Shoaf, was considered in the House Education & Employment Committee, and passed with an 18-0 vote on Thursday. This bill, focusing on workforce education, would expand eligibility for the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program so that it includes charter schools. The bill would also revise the Money-back Guarantee Program so that each school district and Florida College System Institution would be required to offer a money-back guarantee on three additional programs. Senate Bill 742, sponsored by Republican Senator Corey Simon, is a similar bill that will be heard in the Senate Education Pre-K - 12 Committee in its next meeting.

AGRICULTURE AND BUSINESS REGULATIONS

FLORIDA FARM BILL

House Bill 651, sponsored by Republican Representative Kaylee Tuck, has been referred to as the 2025 Florida Farm Bill because of its comprehensive reforms to the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. The bill's most controversial provision is one that removes additives from Florida water systems. Democrats voiced opposition to it being a personal choice, while the bill has seen support from Republicans and Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson overall. Republican lawmakers point to examples of local municipalities and counties voting to end the fluoridation of their drinking water. It is not just limited to lawmakers, as Governor Ron DeSantis and Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo also want to remove fluoridation, believing it is a health malpractice. However, health organizations like the Florida Dental Association and the American Dental Association assert that fluoridation is safe for people at the current levels and is essential to prevent tooth decay. House Bill 651 passed through the House Criminal Justice Subcommittee with a 14-4 vote and will now head to the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee. Meanwhile, Senate Bill 700, sponsored by Republican Senator Keith Truenow, will head to the Senate Fiscal Policy after passing the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government with an 8-4 vote.

CITRUS

The citrus industry in Florida would see a massive financial boost if the Senate's proposed budget were to pass as is. The budget currently allocates \$200 million to citrus growers to help them recover from recent setbacks and improve their production, which aligns with Senate President Ben Albritton's goal of a "Rural Renaissance." The majority of the funding, about \$190 million, would go towards trials for large-scale fields to combat citrus greening, rehabilitate trees, and improve overall grove management. The other \$10 million would support citrus packinghouses so they can upgrade their equipment and adopt new technologies (with cost-sharing provisions). The budget reflects Senate efforts to invest in rural areas in Florida.

TEEN WORKFORCE

A proposed bill, sponsored by Republican Senator Jay Collins, seeks to remove limitations on when teens are allowed to work. Senate Bill 918 focuses on removing restrictions for 16-17-year-olds, which would allow teens to work before 6:30 AM, after 11 PM on school nights, and to work more than eight hours a day or work more than 30 hours a week. The bill scraped through its first committee, Senate Commerce and Tourism, but only in a 5-4 vote as many legislators noted that the bill needs tweaks. The legislators highlighted that kids should just be allowed to be kids, but Senator Collins says that this is a parental rights issues; the government should not decide this for families. The bill's next stop will be the Senate Regulated Industries Committee.

THE DEBATE ON MINIMUM WAGE

On Tuesday, two minimum wage waiver bills were passed through their second committee in each Chamber. House Bill 541, sponsored by Republican Representative Ryan Chamberlin, passed through the House Careers & Workforce Subcommittee, while Senate Bill 676, sponsored by Republican Representative Jonathan Martin, passed through the Senate Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee. The measures seek to allow employees to willingly waive away their right to receive minimum wage if they work in limited work-based learning programs. The employee is required to sign a waiver acknowledging that they are waiving their rights and taking a lower wage, and if the employee is under 18, their parent or guardian's signature is required. The bills have faced opposition, as some legislators express concern over employers taking advantage of employees by firing them if they do not take a lower wage. However, Senator Martin

said that no one is forcing the employees to sign the waiver and that the bill will allow young workers the option to get the experience they need. House Bill 541 will be heard next in the House Commerce Committee and Senate Bill 676 will be heard next in the Senate Rules Committee.

RURAL RENAISSANCE

Senate President Ben Albritton has been vocal about his support for House Bill 1427, which implements sweeping economic development improvements and incentives that are aimed at boosting opportunities in the rural areas of Florida. The bill passed its first committee, the House Commerce Committee, on Monday with a 24-0 vote. The bill specifically seeks to enhance consultation, funding, and reporting guidelines across numerous departments and programs. The bill could also provide \$200 million for rural local governments annually, requiring that the money be used for rural infrastructure, housing, education, security, road, and health improvements. The bill's House sponsor, Republican Representative Phillip Griffiths, stated that what the bill provides "is not just rural investment, it's smart economic strategy for Florida's future." Senate Bill 110, sponsored by Republican Representative Corey Simon, has already passed its committees and the Chamber itself. House Bill 1427 will be heading to the House Health & Human Services Committee next.

ELECTIONS

SIBLING RIVALRY

After the passing of Democrat Senator Geraldine Thompson, Representative Lavon Bracy Davis announced her bid for the vacant seat last Friday. In her candidacy for Senate District 15, Representative Bracy Davis will be facing her brother, former Senator Randolph Bracy, in the primary. Representative Bracy Davis has limitations on her fundraising capabilities due to her current role as Representative; moreover, she also has not filed the paperwork to enter the race formally. Representative Bracy Davis has already received verbal support from Thompson's daughter and niece, and she has said she is not focusing on the family dynamics of the race between her and her brother, just serving the district.

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SCHEDULE

The 2025 regular session dates can be found [here](#) and the annual calendar of major events can be found [here](#).

SESSION

Week 5

- House Authorized Schedule for March 31 - April 4, 2025, can be found [here](#).
- Senate Weekly Schedule for March 31 - April 4, 2025, can be found [here](#).

Week 6

- House Authorized Schedule for April 7-11, 2025, has not yet been published.
- Senate Weekly Schedule for April 7-11, 2025, can be found [here](#).

REGULAR SESSION BILL STATISTICS

- *HOUSE*: 845 general bills filed; 10 have passed the House.
- *SENATE*: 898 general bills filed; 32 have passed the Senate.