

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SESSION WEEK 5: WEEK OF MARCH 31

HALFWAY THROUGH SESSION

As of Wednesday, Florida has made it halfway through its 2025 Legislative Session; the countdown is on. With committees meeting for the final times, the Legislature has shifted their focus to floor sessions. In this Legislative Session, just over 1,900 bills were filed and 800 have yet to be considered in a committee. Being halfway through Session, it is very unlikely for them to be taken up. As of Friday, only 44 bills have passed one Chamber. By this time in 2024, 12 bills had passed both Chambers, and in 2023, 19 bills had passed both Chambers. Though bill movement is slow, tensions are still high. This and more below on taxes, budgets, and the main hot button issues.

TAXES

In a unanimous approval, the House Ways & Means Committee approved a \$5.43 billion tax package ([HB 7031](#)) for fiscal year 2025-26 which is projected to reduce state revenue by \$4.9 billion, and local government revenue by \$540 million. Speaker Perez has stated that these reductions would be offset by cuts in state agency spending. Key provisions of the package include the following reductions: sales tax from 6% to 5.25% permanently – potentially saving \$5 billion annually for taxpayers, commercial lease tax from 2% to 1.25%, sales tax on electricity from 4.35% to 3.6%, tax on new mobile homes from 3% to 2.25%, as well as tax on coin-operated amusement machines from 4% to 3.25%. As a result of the broader tax measures, sales-tax holidays may be on the chopping block for the first time in almost two decades as well. Another tax measure ([HB 1485](#)) that was considered looks to repeal the tax on aviation fuel. This proposal is said to potentially have a recurring impact of -\$22.8 million on the State Transportation Fund, and -\$2.0 million on the General Revenue. It ultimately ended up passing on a party line vote (12-5) with Democrats in opposition, this legislation still has two more committee stop before heading to the floor.

Governor Ron DeSantis adamantly opposes the reduction in sales tax, as he believes the Legislature should focus on property taxes. Instead of reducing sales tax, DeSantis unleashed his plan at a press conference in Orlando with the Florida Realtors, stating homesteaded property owners would receive a one-time tax break of \$1,000 rebate check per household. Moreover, he emphasized that Florida voters need to weigh in during the November 2026 election on property taxes. Unlike Speaker Perez, Senate President Albritton favored the temporary relief approach as he believes long term budget issues might occur due to the permanent sales tax cut.

BUDGET

This week the Senate and House members approved their respective budgets for the next fiscal year with about a \$4 billion gap that will need to be worked out during budget conferencing. The Senate approved their \$117.4 billion budget ([SB 2500](#)), while the House's budget plan came in just under \$113 billion ([BUC1](#)). Some major differences lie in the vacant state positions. The Senate has proposed a cut of 1,000 vacant positions and a 4% pay raise for state employees, whereas the House wants to keep the pay the same and eliminate 7,000 vacant positions. Additionally, while the House looks to cut sales taxes, the Senate has not yet taken up the measure. When it comes to the state agencies, the House leadership has expressed great concern related to the lack of cooperation and transparency, specifically regarding their fiscal practices. House Budget Chair McClure wants to hold agencies accountable for their usage of taxpayer dollars, yet finds that the necessary data and information has not been provided. Therefore, the House this week

sent letters to state agency heads demanding answers on their spending. He believes they need to know their spending before making decisions on the House budget. In order for the Legislative Session to end on time, the Chambers must agree on a budget by April 29th.

ELECTIONS

LOCAL TERM LIMITS

Sponsored by Republican Representative Michelle Salzman, a proposed amendment ([HJR 679](#)) would allow voters to impose term limits on their county commissioners and school board members. The bill passed on a near party line vote out of its second committee stop with all five Democrats and one Republican, Representative Dana Trabulsy, in opposition. Much of the opposition stems from individuals stating that voters would be restricted in having to routinely choose leaders to serve their community; it would limit capable, efficient leaders who are doing good work from the positions. The bill has one more committee stop until the House floor. The identical Senate measure ([SJR 802](#)), sponsored by Republican Senator Blaise Ingoglia, has only made it through one committee stop and has two more before the floor.

RANDY FINE WINS CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 6

In a special election to fill Mike Waltz's seat, Republican Randy Fine emerged victorious. However, many Republicans wonder if his win signals a shift in the political landscape. Just in November, the same district was won by President Trump by 30 points, whereas Fine, a Trump-backed candidate, only won by 14 points. Some suggest it is Randy Fine's personality that led to the drop-in Republican support. One of the most significant voices was Governor Ron DeSantis who stated that Fine just "repels people." Fine responded back via X and it was nothing short of explosive as he wrote, "[a] dying star burns hottest before it fades into oblivion." This interaction is nothing new between the two as Randy Fine has been a longtime supporter of Trump and often highlights his disdain for Florida's Governor, especially following the special sessions on immigration.

MAYFIELD IS ONE STEP CLOSER TO REGAINING HER SENATE SEAT

Current Florida Representative Debbie Mayfield just won the Republican primary for her former District 19 Senate seat. She defeated her three Republican opponents: Marcie Adkins, Mark Lightner, and Tim Thomas. This seat was vacated by Randy Fine, who was elected to Congress on Tuesday of this week. In a dominantly red district, Mayfield will now face Democrat Vance Ahrens in the general special election on June 10th. In the race for House District 3, a seat formerly held by Republican Joel Rudman, Nathan Boyles will now face Democrat Dondre Wise. The seat left vacant by Mayfield is now contested between Republican Brian Hodgers and Democrat Juan Hinojosa.

PATRONIS HEADS TO DC

Jimmy Patronis, Florida's Chief Financial Officer (CFO), won the special election for Congressional District 1, a seat vacated by Matt Gaetz when he was considered for the U.S. Attorney General appointment. Due to CFO Patronis' resignation, some worry about the legality surrounding Florida paying its bills on time as authorization is mandated from the CFO for any money paid by the state.

EDUCATION

BANNING OF BOOKS

[House Bill 1539](#), which seeks to limit how school boards can consider whether a book should remain on shelves, passed through the House Education Administration Subcommittee on Wednesday with a 13-4 vote. The bill, sponsored by Republican Representative Doug Bankson, would prevent school boards from considering a book's artistic, political, literary, or scientific value when deciding whether to keep it in schools should stay in the school if a parent or county resident files a complaint. County residents do not need to have a child attending the school to file a complaint. If a local school fails to remove the book within five days of the complaint, the school district would be deemed noncompliant and could have its state funding withheld. Democrats voiced their opposition stating the legislation is unconstitutional. The bill's next stop is the House Pre-K-12 Budget Subcommittee. Republican Senator Stan McClain's similar [Senate Bill 1692](#) was postponed in the Senate Education Pre-K – 12 Committee on Monday.

CLASS IN SESSION, NO PHONES ALLOWED

On Wednesday, [House Bill 949](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Demi Busatta, was passed through the House Education & Employment Committee in a 19-0 vote. The bill will bring large changes to cell phone use in Florida schools as it seeks to ban the use of phones all day in classrooms, including lunch periods. The goal of this ban is to foster an environment where students can learn and succeed without distractions. There have been concerns raised over students who need urgent parent contact and have medical needs, but the sponsor has assured Legislators that school districts will be granted flexibility in how they are implemented. Republican Senator Danny Burgess has introduced a similar bill, [Senate Bill 1296](#), which would require six Florida school districts to implement a bell-to-bell ban. HB 949 will be heard on the House Floor next, while SB 1296 still has to be considered in the Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee.

A HOMERUN FOR ATHLETES

[House Bill 981](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Yvette Benarroch, aims to cap sports agents' name, image, and likeness (NIL) fees at 5% if they represent Florida student athletes. Moreover, the bill also requires the establishment of a public database of NIL agents, allows student athletes to seek advice from coaches or others who want to help guide them, and bans the Florida High School Athletic Association from requiring student athletes to register their compensation with any entity. Gaining full support, the legislation passed the House Education & Employment Committee on Wednesday with a 17-0 vote. It now heads to its last committee, the House Commerce Committee, before being voted upon on the House Floor. The Senate companion bill, [SB 1584](#) sponsored by Republican Senator Corey Simon, has yet to be considered in its first committee.

TERM LIMITS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

[Senate Bill 1726](#), sponsored by Republican Senator Alexis Calatayud, seeks to create new guidelines and procedures concerning the operation and governance of higher education institutions in Florida. Some of these new guidelines would create term limits for members of the Boards of Trustees in the Florida College System, along with in-state residency and term limits for the State University System's Board of Governors. FCS college Trustees would be able to serve for eight consecutive years, university trustees could serve for 10 consecutive years, and members of the SUS Board of Governors would be limited to only one seven-year term. The bill would also require the formation of search committees for college and university presidential appointments in order to avoid direct subordinates and specific education officials. SB 1726 passed the Senate

Education Postsecondary Committee on Monday in a 5-0 vote and now heads to the Senate Appropriations Committee on Higher Education. The identical [House Bill 1321](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Michelle Salzman is waiting to be heard in its last committee.

AI IN BUS ROUTES

Republican Representative Daniel Alvarez legislation, [House Bill 1213](#), would create a K-12 school bus route optimization pilot program in order to enhance student transportation security and efficiency. The goal of this provision is to minimize dangerous walking conditions and changing routes to avoid registered sexual predators, and it comes at no cost to the Legislature. Representative Alvarez said there would be no fiscal impact as AI companies have volunteered their services “pro bono.” These services would include AI-generated school bus routes compared to district planners’ bus routes. This program would first be carried out in Duval, Highlands, Hillsborough, Okeechobee, and Pasco County School Districts and requires each District to create a report on the fiscal and operational impacts associated with the implementation of AI in transportation. The FLDOE is also required to compile a comprehensive report on the program’s implementation to the Legislature by September 1, 2026. HB 1213 will be considered next in the House Pre-K-12 Budget Subcommittee, while the Senate companion, [SB 1424](#) by Senator Jay Collins, has yet to be heard in its first committee.

REGULATIONS

GIFT CARDS

The House Judiciary Committee voted favorably (20-0) on legislation that seeks to rid Florida of gift card fraud. [House Bill 1007](#), sponsored by Democrat Representative Dan Daley and Republican Representative Sam Greco, creates guidelines concerning unlawful activities surrounding gift cards when there is an intent to defraud. Moreover, it heightens penalties for such activities, allows for the aggregation of the value of gift cards or related losses, and defines multiple terms related to gift cards. HB 1007 received wide support from consumer advocacy groups, businesses, and multiple Legislators. Republican Senator Nick DiCeglie is carrying the Senate companion bill, [Senate Bill 1198](#), which also passed its last committee. Both bills will be heading to their respective Chamber floors to be voted on.

FUTURE OF HORSE RACING

On Tuesday, the Senate Regulated Industries Committee passed [Senate Bill 408](#) which looks to address the live racing of horses. The bill, sponsored by Republican Senator Danny Burgess, seeks to allow Tampa Bay Downs Gulfstream Park to end live horse racing at tracks, but would allow them to keep their casino gambling permits. This favorable vote did not come without significant opposition, as around 71 horse advocates spoke out against the bill for around two hours, detailing how it could ruin their \$3 billion industry and their way of life. Senator Burgess created an amendment that would push back the end of track racing for seven (7) more years, as other Senators believe that this is the start of conversations on the future of horse racing. These Senators are urging horse breeders and racers to work with Gulfstream Park and other industry members to find an alternative to preserve the sport in Florida, but they only have seven (7) years to do so. The bill now will be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government. In the House, Republican Representative Adam Anderson has a bill ([HB 105](#)) addressing similar issues.

HEMP PRODUCT SALES

PCB HAT25-01 ([HB 7029](#)) is a provision that was introduced by the House Housing, Agriculture & Tourism Subcommittee and passed with a 15-0 vote on Tuesday. This provision will include hemp

consumable THC products as food items and establish new guidelines for THC products. This includes banning gas stations and convenience stores from selling consumable hemp products, creating certification protocols for testing laboratories for THC products, and authorizing vendors to sell consumable THC products so long as they have the required licenses. Many committee members praised the bill for its focus on public safety while addressing industry concerns. It will now head to the House Floor to be voted on. Republican Senator Colleen Burton has also brought forward a similar measure – [Senate Bill 438](#). This bill would authorize businesses with liquor licenses to sell THC-infused beverages and would cap THC levels in other consumable products at 0.3%, the same as PCB HAT25-01. Senate Bill 438 also focuses on public safety as it forbids the sale of THC-infused beverages to individuals under 21 years of age and creates guidelines for the methods of distribution and sale. Senate Bill 438 will be considered next on the Senate Floor.

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 6

- House Authorized Schedule for April 7-11, 2025, can be found [here](#).
- Senate Weekly Schedule for April 7-11, 2025, can be found [here](#).

Week 7

- House Authorized Schedule for April 14-18, 2025, can be found [here](#).
- Senate Weekly Schedule for April 14-18, 2025, can be found [here](#).

REGULAR SESSION BILL STATISTICS

- [HOUSE](#): Passed Bills – Report; 277 with a favorable House committee report.
- [SENATE](#): Passed Bills – Report; 255 with a favorable Senate committee report.