

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SESSION WEEK 6: WEEK OF APRIL 7

40TH DAY IN SESSION

In the final weeks of Florida's Legislative Session, legislators race to push their remaining bills through committees, with attention now shifting significantly to the floor for final bill considerations. On the 40th day of Session, 804 bills – representing 47.5% of the total bills filed – have yet to be taken up by the Legislature. As noted last week, the impact of the canceled committee weeks is becoming increasingly clear, with many proposals still waiting to be heard. While many bills are fighting to stay alive, one of the bills ([SB 880](#)) that dominated conversation this week included making the American Flamingo the new state bird, and designating the Florida scrub-jay as the official state songbird. After passing unanimously out of its second committee, it heads to last committee stop for consideration. Other measures ([HB 575](#), [HB 549](#)) included renaming the Gulf of Mexico to the "Gulf of America" in not only state statutes, but also textbooks for schools as well. This legislation has passed each Chamber, with some Democrats opposing, and have now been sent to the Governor for consideration. On the fiscal front, the budget remains to be a central focus for the Legislature; with competing priorities and limited resources, budget conference will be especially critical this year. This and more below.

DeSANTIS & HOPE FLORIDA

This week, tensions grew extremely high as Hope Florida, through representatives of the Agency for Health Care Administration (ACHA), was grilled by legislators about their spending. Hope Florida was launched by First Lady Casey DeSantis in 2021, with the goal of connecting people to community resources to reduce the reliance on public welfare programs. Though starting with good intent, legislators grew increasingly concerned with controversial developments being unveiled. For instance, Hope Florida received a \$10 million contribution from ACHA; Republicans questioned the legality of the fund transfer and if this was an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars. Further investigations revealed that \$8.5 million was potentially steered toward donations to political committees opposing the recreational marijuana referendum, which was a main priority of Governor DeSantis. Though there has been pushback from the organization on these allegations, ethical and legal questions have been elevated. One of the lead voices scrutinizing Hope Florida and Casey DeSantis is the House Health Care Budget Chair, Republican Representative Alex Andrade. In committee, he criticized the lack of transparency and oversight regarding Hope Florida and ACHA and demands a more accountable process moving forward. Shevaun Harris, Secretary of ACHA, defended the agency and the organization stating the funding was not taxpayer dollars and they were utilized to help Florida families. Mallory McManus, also on the defense, was very quiet and chose to not answer many questions asked by Andrade. Following the hearing, she went to social media to criticize the Chair for his misunderstandings and misrepresentations of the organization; however, this was not received very well by many legislators. The full hearing can be viewed [here](#). The discourse on Hope Florida begins at the 30:20 mark.

LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

DEATH OF AN UNBORN CHILD

A new bill that is drawing both support and criticism is [Senate Bill 1284](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Erin Grall. This bill would allow parents of an unborn child to receive civil damages in the case of death. It does this by expanding the States' Wrongful Death Act but ensures that mothers and healthcare providers who give legal medical care cannot be sued for the wrongful

death of an unborn child. Parents would be allowed to seek damages for any incurred mental anguish and for the loss of support because of the unborn child's death due to their potential lifetime earnings. Dissenters, such as the ACLU and The Doctors Company, have brought up many concerns, such as the threat of litigation deterring the treatment of high-risk pregnancies, the language in the bill being overly broad, the inability of pregnant women to escape abusive relationships, and the worsening of the healthcare shortage. However, some groups are saying the bill does not go far enough. Several religious and anti-abortion groups like the Christian Family Coalition Florida believe the bill should do more to protect fetuses and should specify its application to embryos created and stored outside a woman's body as well. [House Bill 1517](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Sam Greco, is a similar measure and has already passed the House Floor after a 79-32 party-line vote with Democrats disapproving of the bill. SB 1284 must pass its last committee, Senate Rules, before it is voted upon on the Senate Floor.

HAVEN ACT

On Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee on Criminal and Civil Justice approved a measure that would allow victims of domestic and dating violence to gain a new, discreet way to find help. [Senate Bill 240](#), called the "HAVEN Act", would do this by requiring the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to develop a special app that would allow victims to contact the authorities without alerting the abuser. The bill's sponsor, Democrat Senator Lori Berman, said the FDLE has already assured her that the creation of such an app is possible. The bill would also align the definitions of domestic and dating violence in Florida Statutes, allow dating violence victims to participate in the Attorney General's address confidentiality program, and permit stalking victims to have their public records exempt to protect their identities. The HAVEN Act has to pass its last committee, Senate Fiscal Policy, before it is heard on the Senate Floor. The identical House companion bill, House Bill 19 sponsored by Democrat Representative Yvonne Hinson, has two more committees to clear before it is considered on the House Floor.

LURING A CHILD

On Wednesday, the House approved a measure ([HB 777](#)) that would strengthen penalties for adults attempting to lure or entice a child. Under current law, in-person offenses are classified as misdemeanors, while online luring is treated as a felony. Sponsored by Republican Representative Rachel Plakon, this legislation looks to ensure children are kept safe, and predators are held accountable. The bill now heads to the Senate for further consideration.

BUDGET & TAXES

TAX RELIEF

Senate President Ben Albritton has proposed an idea that he believes will help a broad proportion of Florida's population in the form of tax relief. This would be the elimination of sales tax on clothing and shoes costing up to \$75. President Albritton views this as an opportunity to help all citizens, and this tax relief would be coupled with grocery tax relief, as most groceries are already exempt from sales tax. This proposal would also request a study to be done on the possibility of decreasing or eliminating property taxes on residents' permanent homes. These proposals come after House Speaker Danny Perez's proposals to cut the sales tax rate down to 5.25% from 6%, along with Governor Ron Desantis' push for a cut in property taxes. President Albritton believes all three proposals have merit and has not ruled out a combination of all three ideas. However, Speaker Perez says that his proposal and the House budget are his focus.

BUDGET CONFERENCE

The Senate and House have made strides in their vision of the Florida budget for the fiscal year of 2025-2026, as both passed their budget proposals on Wednesday. However, there are large discrepancies between their proposals, totaling around \$4 billion in differences. The Senate's budget, [Senate Bill 2500](#), totals \$117.4 billion and provides a clothing and shoes sales-tax for items costing \$75 or less and creates multiple tax holidays. Meanwhile, the House's budget, [House Bill 5001](#), proposes a budget of just under \$113 billion and would reduce Florida's sales tax from 6% to 5.25% along with other tax reductions. Lawmakers will have just over three weeks to work in their conference committees to hammer out any discrepancies. Both Senate President Ben Albritton and House Speaker Danny Perez seem optimistic that they can meet in the middle and create a budget that pleases both chambers.

The following table illustrates the current budget numbers (in billions).

Silo	House	Senate	Difference
Education	\$33.363	\$34.178	\$0.814
Health & Human Services	\$46.998	\$48.736	\$1.737
Criminal Justice	\$6.623	\$6.864	\$0.241
Natural Resources/Environment/ Growth/Transportation	\$21.182	\$21.814	\$0.631
General Government	\$6.522	\$7.485	\$0.963
Judicial Branch	\$0.776	\$0.789	\$0.13
Total	\$112.953	\$117.355	\$4.402

If you are wondering what is the normal timeline going forward, the answer is that nothing is ever the same, but there are some trends. See below for the previous two odd year timelines.

Odd Year Timeline of Florida's Budget Process							
Year	Senate President	House Speaker	House and Senate Budget Difference (Total Funds)	Budget Passed Both Chambers	Allocations Issued	Conference Report Passed	Finished on Time?
2025	Albritton	Perez	\$ 4,402,614,802.00	Apr-9			
2023	Passidomo	Renner	\$ 697,219,494.00	Apr-4	Apr-23	May-5	Yes
2021	Simpson	Sprowls	\$ 2,119,697,366.00	Apr-8	Apr-16	Apr-30	Yes

ENVIRONMENT

DRILLING

On Thursday, [Senate Bill 1300](#) passed the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government unanimously. This bill, sponsored by Republican Senator Corey Simon, would tighten permitting regulations for drilling oil and gas near sensitive waterways and shore areas. The bill, coming at a time when tensions are rising over the exploration of these resources in Northwest Florida, constricts these rules by specifying distances from areas where drilling operations are allowed to be constructed. Moreover, it requires a balancing test to determine how well protective measures hold up against potential harm, and requires the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to evaluate whether natural resources will be protected in case of an accident or blowout. A significant reason for the bill's drafting is in response to environmentalists' and residents' backlash against the risks a Louisiana-based company's drilling plan poses to the local community in Calhoun County. The legislation now heads to the Senate Rules Committee before it will be heard on the Senate Floor. A similar companion bill ([HB 1143](#)) in the House, sponsored by Republican Representative Jason Shoaf and Democrat Representative Allison Tant, is currently waiting for the full House to vote on it after passing its last committee.

EDUCATION

PRESIDENTIAL SEARCHES

Republican Representative Michelle Salzman's bill ([House Bill 1321](#)) seeks to enhance transparency in higher education by imposing new board residency and term requirements while also amending the presidential appointment process for universities. Two key provisions in the bill include removing public record exemptions for college and university president applicants and that it decreases the influence the governor has over the schools' presidential searches. It does this by forbidding state and local university officials to discuss presidential vacancies or possible future vacancies with the governor or a member of his administration. The bill would also give more power over university leadership to local school leaders by removing the requirement that the State University System's Board of Governors confirm presidential hires. Instead, each university board would be granted the ability to select and confirm a president of its choosing. This bill's provisions come after growing concern over Governor Ron DeSantis' efforts to mold the state's university leadership in a way that aligns with his values. This concern has been heightened after former Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nuñez assumed the position as interim president at Florida International University. Governor DeSantis has weighed in on the bill, saying on the X app that it will make universities woke again and would provide the political left a pathway for the "re-wokification" of Florida's higher education system. The bill will now head to the House Floor after passing the House Education & Employment Committee on Tuesday.

ELECTIONS

SIBLING RIVALRY HEATS UP

Democratic Representative Lavon Bracy Davis has announced her resignation as of September 1 to run for Senate District 15 seat, vacated by Senator Geraldine Thompson due to her passing. The primary election is set to take place on June 24th where she will face her brother, former Democratic State Senator Randolph Bracy. Though others have filed for the seat, thus far they have prevailed as the top two contenders. Both candidates, especially Randolph Bracy, have taken to social media to express their disdain for one another, turning the race into a highly personal

and increasingly tense family rivalry. Due to Bracy Davis resigning, it will trigger yet another special election to fill the House District 40 seat based in Central Florida. It is rumored that her legislative aide, RaShon Young, will run to replace her.

AMENDMENT PROCESS

On Tuesday, the Senate Fiscal Policy Committee passed [Senate Bill 7016](#) along party lines, and it now heads to the Senate Floor for consideration. The bill would reform Florida's citizen-initiative amendment process by creating stricter requirements and penalties. These new provisions would apply to sponsors and petition circulators, would expand enforcement and oversight, and revise the current verification process. Governor Ron DeSantis has championed provisions like this since the last campaign cycle in which there were controversial battles over multiple proposed ballot initiatives. This stems from accusations of fraudulent signatures and a general lack of transparency in the process. Opponents of the bill assert that it would impede ordinary citizens' ability to push for citizen initiatives and that it could create unnecessary hurdles to an already difficult signature-gathering process. The bill will be voted upon by the Senate Floor and is scheduled to be heard on Wednesday, April 16.

IMMIGRATION

E-VERIFY

The House Commerce Committee voted favorably upon a bill Monday that would require all Florida employees to use the federal E-Verify system. This system is used to check potential employees' legal work status but only applies to businesses that have 25 or more employees. This bill would remove that threshold and require all private employers to use the system, regardless of their size. The bill ([HB 955](#)) was brought forward by Republican Representative Berny Jacques and will now be considered by the full House after passing its last committee. Supporters of the bill say it will change the current situation where employers and employees are allowed to break the law; it will raise wages in multiple industries because of an "undocumented workers' exodus." Critics say that undocumented workers are entwined in Florida's economy and serve an important role by working jobs that many Americans do not desire.

HOUSING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & BUSINESS REGULATIONS

GUARANTEED INCOME PROGRAMS

On Wednesday, the House Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee passed [House Bill 1193](#), which is sponsored by Republican Representative David Borrero. This bill would ban local governments from creating guaranteed unconditional basic income programs for individuals and would allow the state Attorney General to create penalties for violators. These programs give unconditional cash payments without requiring any training or work and have been found in other states. One pilot program in Alachua County gave formally incarcerated people an initial payment of \$1000 and then payments of \$600 for 11 months to help them reintegrate into society. From the pilot, the county observed reduced recidivism rates along with higher levels of "hope" found among the group who received payments compared to the control group who did not. The bill has to pass the House State Affairs Committee before it will be considered by the full House. A similar bill, [Senate Bill 1772](#), was filed by Republican Senator Jonathan Martin, but has not been heard in any of its committees yet.

HEMP-DERIVED, THC

[Senate Bill 438](#), sponsored by Republican Senator Colleen Burton, passed the Senate Floor, and now heads to the House for consideration. The bill seeks to create new restrictions on hemp and

delta-8 THC products through means such as capping the amount of hemp-derived delta-9 at five milligrams per serving and banning all synthetic cannabinoids. 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 legislation 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 and venues of distribution and sale along with many other regulations. Another hot topic addressed by the bill is the banning of packaging resembling food products or toys that could target children. The beer and wine industry support provisions in the bill, but small businesses say certain sections threaten them as they believe it would undermine sober alternatives for alcohol. [House Bill 7027](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Michelle Salzman, is a similar measure, and it still has two more committee to pass through.

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 7

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

Week 8

- House Authorized Schedule for April 21-25, 2025, can be found [here](#).
- Senate Weekly Schedule for April 21-25, can be found [here](#).

Week 9

- House Authorized Schedule for April 28 – May 2, 2025, has not been published.
- Senate Weekly Schedule for April 28 – May 2, can be found [here](#).

REGULAR SESSION BILL STATISTICS

- *HOUSE*: 856 general bills filed; 50 have passed the House; 4 passed both Chambers.
- *SENATE*: 906 general bills filed; 97 have passed the Senate; 6 passed both Chambers.