

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SESSION WEEK 8: WEEK OF APRIL 21

DAYS LEFT

As of Tuesday, the Florida Legislature has officially been in session for 50 days. With less than 10 days remaining before the scheduled end on May 2, time is quickly running out with so much left to get through. At this stage, any bills that have not advanced through committees are effectively out of play. Much of the conversation this week surrounded the Chambers' budget and tax packages. There has been little to no agreement among Republican leadership thus far on the matter. And thus, on Thursday, both presiding officers acknowledged that the 2025 Legislative Session will not end timely. If lawmakers cannot reach an agreement soon, they will likely call a special session in late May or June to finalize the budget before the new fiscal year begins on July 1. This and more below.

BUDGET & TAXES

BUDGET DELAYS, NO END IN SIGHT

With Florida's 2025 legislative session approaching its end, Legislators are preparing for the possibility of an extended session or a special session, as no budget agreement has been reached. Florida's Constitution mandates that passing a budget is the Legislature's sole required obligation – meaning a deal must be reached before adjournment. For the Legislature to finish on time, the final budget must be printed and delivered to lawmakers by Tuesday of next week, allowing for the required 72-hour "cooling-off" period before it can be passed.

If the budget stalls past that deadline, the Legislature can either extend the session or call a special session. Extending the session would require a three-fifths vote of both chambers, while a special session could be called by the Governor or through a joint proclamation from legislative leaders. Both alternatives are costly, with an estimated price of \$40,000 to \$50,000 per day. A significant hurdle remains as the House and Senate are roughly \$3 billion apart in their budget allocations. Senate Appropriations Chair Ed Hooper has indicated the chances of adjourning on time are slim, citing unresolved allocation agreements in key areas like healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

Senate

On Thursday, Senate President Albritton offered insight into the state of negotiations, revealing the Senate proposed over \$3 billion in tax relief: \$1.5 billion in nonrecurring and \$1.3 billion in recurring. Additional measures include a reduction in the business rent tax (from 2% to 1%), a one-time vehicle registration fee credit, the removal of sales tax on shoes and clothing priced under \$75, and an array of tax holidays.

House

During Thursday's House session, after President Albritton provided the above insights, Speaker Daniel Perez expressed criticism, just as Senate President Albritton did in his Chamber, about the Legislature's inability to finalize a state budget before the deadline. The House's comprehensive tax package ([HB 7033](#)) proposes expanded tax exemptions for affordable housing and reshapes several key revenue streams. The goal is to pressure local government into the reduction of their property taxes. Moreover, it would require cities and counties to implement property tax exemptions tied to 2023 Live Local Act. Local government would no longer be able to opt-out of

the “missing middle” exemption. Further incentives would apply for developments on state-leased land with 60-year affordability agreements, where local government would need to fast-track permit approvals. The financial impact of HB 7033 remains unseen, though similar proposals have estimated to cost the state \$1.1 million. However, significant changes to the state's property tax structure would likely require a constitutional amendment, delaying broader reforms until the 2026 ballot. In their budget, the House focused on a general sales tax cut instead of Governor Ron DeSantis’ proposed property tax refunds.

One of the bill’s most contentious elements concerns the usage of the Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue. A new provision would allow counties to redirect some of their TDT revenue away from marketing and tourist infrastructure to broader local projects. However, any debt tied to this revenue could only be refinanced, not increased or prolonged. Critics argue this shift could strain local governments, forcing them to cut infrastructure. The Senate is taking a different approach to TDT revenue. While the Senate’s tax package aims for more targeted investment, the House appears to be broader, and therefore, more controversial proposal.

LEADERSHIP CHANGE

PIZZO CHANGES HIS PARTY AFFILIATION TO NPA

At the conclusion of Thursday’s session, Senator Jason Pizzo resigned as the Senate Minority Leader, revealing his decision to change his party affiliation from “Democrat” to “No Party Affiliation.” Senator Lori Berman has been named as his successor and will be the Minority Leader for the remainder. In response to his announcement, House Minority Leader Fentrice Driskell remarked, “Jason Pizzo has been alienating himself from the Democratic Party for a long time now. He’s completely distracted by his ambition to be governor, and he has clearly lost the ability to lead the Senate Democratic Caucus.” His departure underscores the growing tensions of the Democratic party, as this is the third Democrat to switch parties this Session.

HEALTH CARE

HOPE FLORIDA

Mounting pressure surrounds Hope Florida as legislators demand transparency, yet keep coming up empty. House Health Care Budget Chair Alex Andrade has sent six formal letters demanding detailed records including emails, contracts, and financials documents from both ACHA and the Hope Florida Foundation. Andrade also ordered the release of on any correspondence involving James Uthmeier, Jeff Aaron, and Mohammad Jazil – all closely tied to the DeSantis administration. Andrade’s subcommittee was set to meet on Thursday morning to further investigate the mishandling of the \$10 million; however, Aaron declined to attend citing “personal conflicts.” In an effort to accommodate Aaron’s schedule, Andrade then scheduled another meeting for Friday morning but was rejected once more. Mr. Aaron later stated, “he has been informed that some board members have decided not to waive their attorney-client privilege.” All requested records were due by April 25. Despite the Governor insisting the funds were not taxpayer dollars, evidence appears to contradict that claim, fueling public concern and ongoing investigation.

AED IN SCHOOLS

Republican Representative Taylor Yarkosky and Republican Representative Alex Rizo have sponsored a bill ([HB 1607](#)) aimed at cardiac emergencies that passed the full House unanimously on Wednesday. This legislation would require every Florida public school to have at least one automated external defibrillator on campus and mandate CPR, basic first aid, and defibrillator training for students. A concern from critics is that it does not provide funding for the requirements

– an unfunded mandate. Representative Rizo emphasized that the leading cause of death on school campuses is sudden cardiac arrest, with about 1,400 Florida students dying yearly. There was an amendment added to the bill that will require all school personnel to complete AED training along with their standard emergency preparedness procedures during the start of the school year. [Senate Bill 430](#), an identical Senate companion to HB 1607, was substituted for HB 1607 and passed in a 37-0 vote by the Senate.

RUDMAN RESIGNED

Dr. Joel Rudman ended up resigning from the Pensacola State College Board of Trustees following backlash from Legislators. This now marks the third DeSantis appointee to step down due to Senate confirmations. However, Rudman did not help with his confirmation. Not only did he take to social media to threaten senators not willing to confirm him, but he was recently seen standing with the DeSantis' defending the Hope Florida Foundation against its fiscal distrust. Both actions did not come across favorably to this year's Legislature.

EDUCATION & GOVERNOR'S APPOINTEES

K-12 EDUCATION

School Grading System

[House Bill 1267](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Demi Busatta, would create a new A-to-F grading system for all of Florida's public schools and would redefine low-performing schools as schools in the bottom 10% of all schools. Additionally, the bill would also mandate that school districts report those school grades to parents. This bill passed the House Floor in an 86-27 vote and has been referred to Senate Rules Committee.

Education Modernization

[House Bill 1255](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Dana Trabulsy, seeks to modernize Florida's K-12 and educator related Statutes. It does this by altering membership and recruitment provisions, adjusting academic instruction guidelines, modernizing accountability requirements for school and employees, and limiting expenditures to specific organizations. HB 1255 passed the House in an 86-27 vote has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee.

Educator Training

Both Republican Representative John Snyder and Republican Representative Alex Rizo sponsored [House Bill 875](#), which would prohibit educator training programs from political views. Moreover, it modernizes teacher preparations programs and certifications, as well as emphasize pedagogical training. This bill passed the full House in an 84-27 vote and has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee.

Charter Schools

[House Bill 1115](#), sponsored by Republican Representative Susan Valdés, would return any assets bought by a charter school with local tax dollars to the local school district. Additionally, it would require school districts receiving surtax revenues to share funds with charter schools based on enrollment. The bill passed the House in an 86-26 vote and has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee.

DOWN TO DESANTIS APPOINTEES

Governor DeSantis' appointees – Shevaun Harris, charged to lead ACHA, and Taylor Hatch, with the Department of Children and Families – have come under fire due to their connection to the Hope Florida Foundation. The intense scrutiny, led by Senate Ethics and Elections Committee Chair

Senator Don Gaetz, centers on their connection to First Lady Casey DeSantis' Hope Florida. The House has accused the Foundation of improperly using \$10 million from a \$67 million settlement reached in 2024 by AHCA and Centene.

If the Senate does not confirm Harris and Hatch before the end of the current session on May 2, DeSantis will be required to reappoint them within 30 days; their confirmation would be delayed until the next session. For confirmation this session, both appointees would need be confirmed by the Senate Ethics and Elections Committee and the full Senate, which appears unlikely due to time constraints. However, according to a memo published by Chair Gaetz and Vice Chair Mack Bernard, the Senate President does have the authority to bypass the committee process and move nominations to the Senate Floor. It remains to be seen if the President will advance the appointees forward.

BUSINESS REGULATIONS, WORKFORCE, & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

E-VERIFY

On Wednesday, the full House passed [House Bill 955](#) sponsored by Republican Representative Berny Jacques in an 88-25 vote. The bill would require all private businesses in Florida, notwithstanding their size, to follow the state's E-Verify requirements. Currently, only businesses that have 25 employees or more are mandated to use the federal E-Verify system. Republican supporters argued the measure is a necessary immigrant enforcement tool that should be used in all businesses. The E-Verify system is a free federal system and is operated by the Department of Homeland Security in conjunction with the Social Security Administration to ensure workers are legally in the country. This system guarantees an individual submits personal information and then determines if they are legally allowed to work in the U.S. Republicans also asserted this provision will allow businesses and the state to prioritize American workers, but critics disagree. Democrats believe the provision could exacerbate the current labor shortages in some of Florida's key industries, like construction and agriculture, and could hurt the economy. [Senate Bill 782](#), sponsored by Senate Minority Leader Jason Pizzo, has not passed through any of its committees.

JOB GROWTH GRANT FUND

During a visit to Fort Pierce on Wednesday, Governor DeSantis announced nearly \$9 million in workforce development grants; this comes at a time where legislators are debating whether they should increase funding for the state's Job Growth Grant Fund. The Governor stated that \$4.9 million will go to support an aircraft mechanic training program, while \$4 million will fund advanced manufacturing programs. These grants, awarded through the Job Growth Grant Fund, are used to support regional workforce training programs and infrastructure at the Governor's discretion. Currently, the Senate has proposed \$25 million for the upcoming fiscal year, while the House has not allocated any funds.

RURAL RENAISSANCE

The House is seeking to use Senate President Ben Albritton's rural renaissance initiative to pass last-minute legislation and gain leverage in negotiations. The House is adding certain provisions from Albritton's initiative into multiple bills with unrelated provisions, which allows them to advance the House's broader goals. [Senate Bill 110](#), which was a \$200 million bundle of economic development blueprints, already passed the full Senate, but was inserted into at least three House bills instead of as a standalone bill. Two of these bills, [House Bill 1427](#) and [House Bill 991](#), have passed both of their committees and combine highly contentious proposals with the rural renaissance initiative. This tactic of combining bills, commonly referred to as a legislative "train", is not rare. Both chambers tend to utilize this strategy during the final stretch of the legislative

session. The bills (SB 110, HB 991, and HB 1427) include provisions aimed at strengthening healthcare access and rural communities by establishing grant programs to fund mobile health units for rural hospitals. With HB 991 and HB 1427 set to be considered by the House, the fate of Albritton's rural renaissance initiative now hinges on the passage of these measures carrying related provisions.

CONDOMINIUM REFORM

On Wednesday, the House almost unanimously passed [House Bill 913](#), and it will now head to the Senate Rules Committee. This bill, sponsored by Republican Representative Vicki Lopez, aims to reduce the rising costs for condominium owners due to structural integrity requirements. The requirements were put in place in the aftermath of the Chaplain Towers collapse from 2021. House Bill 913 would give condominium associations financial flexibility in their payment for structural repairs and allow condos to use a line of credit to pay for repairs. This only includes repairs found through the structural integrity survey, which is required by the Legislature. The bill would additionally boost the transparency of condominium boards by improving the accessibility of meeting information and minutes. Governor DeSantis has voiced his opposition of the legislation citing this provision would allow condominium owners to vote virtually on important condominium matters.

FIRST RESPONDERS & PUBLIC SAFETY

SLOWING DOWN

After contentious debate, the House passed (75-38) a measure ([HB 351](#)) establishing a new offense titled "dangerous excessive spending." This legislation targets individuals driving more than 50 mph over the speed limit or exceeding 100+ mph in a way that endangers public safety. Under the measure, a first offense could result in up to 30 days imprisonment, a fine of \$500, or both. Upon second or subsequent convictions, the individual could face up to 90 days imprisonment, a fine of \$1,000, or both. The House measure was taken up by the Senate on Thursday and it passed unanimously. It will next go to the Governor.

BROOKE'S LAW

Legislation ([HB 1161](#)) is now headed to the Governor after passing both Chambers unanimously. This bill combats the posting of non-consensual altered sexual images online, a growing form of abuse in this new digital age. The measure stems from Brooke, a victim to the abuse as someone posted a fake explicit photo of her on numerous social media platforms. She had never talked, met, or ever encountered the perpetrator. Key provisions of the bill require internet platforms to develop and display image removal policies by the end of the year. Additionally, platforms that primarily feature user-generated content must remove images with 48 hours of any victim's request.

DANGEROUS DOGS

Sponsored by Republican Representative Judson Sapp, [HB 593](#) passed unanimously off the House floor following heartfelt testimonies highlighting the impactful legislation. The Rock family was present during the vote and floor remarks, as Representative Sapp recounted the horrific moments that his constituent and their family member, Pamela Rock, was mauled to death by five dogs. These dogs were known to be violent and dangerous by authorities prior to her death. If this legislation were to have been in place, her death could have been prevented, Sapp emphasized. This bill would require dogs deemed as dangerous to be microchipped, and owners to have at least \$100,000 in liability insurance. If an owner were to remove a microchip, it would result in a third-degree felony. Representative Sapp also recounted his own scary run-in as two dangerous dogs

entered his property while his son was playing outside. In that instance, the family's mastiff scared away the dogs. The Senate companion measure has yet to be heard on the floor.

FSU SHOOTING VICTIMS IDENTIFIED

Last week a heinous act was committed by a reckless individual who decided to open fire on FSU campus. In addition to numerous individuals being shot, two unfortunately lost their lives: Robert Morales and Tir Chabba. Both were adults in the service industry. This senseless act has led to heated debates among some members regarding firearm access and underlying factors leading to gun violence. It can be expected that legislation will be filed next session to try and address some of the root causes.

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 9

- House Authorized Schedule for April 28-May 2, can be found [here](#).
- Senate Weekly Schedule for April 28-May 2, can be found [here](#).

REGULAR SESSION BILL STATISTICS

- *HOUSE*: 857 general bills filed; 171 have passed the House; 49 passed both Chambers.
- *SENATE*: 908 general bills filed; 148 have passed the Senate; 4 passed both Chambers.