

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SESSION WEEK 3: WEEK OF MARCH 17

FLORIDA'S ECONOMY AND THE UNCERTAINTY OF BUDGETS THIS SESSION

State economists raised Florida's general revenue projections by nearly \$1.3 billion over the next two years, providing additional funds for the 2025-26 fiscal year budget. Economists point to tax collections, specifically sales taxes and investment earnings, as the driving force. They believe it is due to Florida's high balances and favorable interest rates. As of January this year, revenue is already exceeding the original projections by \$600 million. For the 2025-26 fiscal year, total projections were set to be over \$50 billion. However, uncertainty and volatility still loom overhead. Economists specifically warn that economic challenges could impact revenue collections long-term.

Despite the state economists' findings, Legislators still warn that budgets are going to be much lower than anticipated due to the lack of COVID-19 funding, and the state should be prepared when it comes to member projects. With this said, Chair Snyder was the first to release his chair budget proposal for the 2025-26 fiscal year. The House Information Technology Budget & Policy Subcommittee can be viewed [here](#). The Senate begins next week with a round of appropriation meetings, so the outlines of the budget will take shape by week's end.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & AGRICULTURE

RURAL RENAISSANCE

Senate President Albritton's main priority, sponsored by Republican Senator Simon, was unanimously passed by the entire Senate. The \$200 million economic development package (SB 110), deemed the "Rural Renaissance", focuses on funding transportation and economic development projects in rural areas; it also creates a state Office of Rural Prosperity. Moreover, it increases funding for fiscally constrained counties and provides \$1 million block grants for eight counties facing a population decline. The Senate President and the bill sponsor believe this measure will bolster areas in the state that need help; Senator Simon states this will be a "game changer" for areas that have been left out of the state's economic success. The package now heads to the House for consideration. The most recent staff analysis can be found [here](#).

AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER SERVICES

Legislation (HB 651), backed by Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson, focusing on agriculture and consumer services passed its first committee stop on Tuesday with a 14-3 vote. The 155-page bill encompassed numerous provisions including but not limited to banning local governments from adding fluoride to public water systems and restricting the labeling of plant-based products as meat, milk, poultry, or eggs. During committee, members expressed concerns related to the labeling restrictions and sought more information concerning farmland-to-solar conversions. Republican Representatives, sponsoring the bill, Kaylee Tuck and Danny Alvarez head to the House Criminal Justice Subcommittee next for the legislative package to be considered. The similar Senate proposal, sponsored by Republican Senator Keith Truenow, is awaiting consideration from its second committee stop. Bill analysis located [here](#).

HEMP LAW

Sponsored by Republican Senator Colleen Burton, SB 438 would impose new restrictions on hemp and delta-8 THC products including but not limited to stricter definitions and standards for hemp

and its extract, limits locations that THC-infused beverages can be sold, mandates testing to ensure safety, and imposes fines for violations related to sales and marketing. This legislation is in alignment with one of Governor DeSantis' priorities as it also prohibits hemp retailers from operating within 500 feet of daycare centers, gas stations, schools, and other hemp retailers. Though some members voiced some opposition to certain components of the bill, it ended up passing unanimously out of its first committee, and now heads to Fiscal Policy for consideration. The most recent bill analysis can be found [here](#).

POLITICS, ELECTIONS, & CULTURE

LOCAL TERM LIMITS PROPOSAL MOVES IN HOUSE

Sponsored by Republican Rep Michelle Salzman, a proposed constitutional amendment (HJR 679) would pose a question to voters on the November 2026 ballot to implement eight-year term limits for both school board members and county commissioners across the State of Florida. Passing on a party line vote (12-5), Democrats opposed the measure highlighting possible discrepancies when it came to implementing this measure in larger counties versus smaller counties statewide. However, it still passed favorably out of the House Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee. It will be considered next in the House Education Administration Subcommittee. The staff analysis of the bill can be found [here](#).

ENFORCEMENT OF PARTY AFFILIATION RULES

SB 280, Candidate Qualification, passed unanimously once more out of its last committee stop. Sponsored by Democrat Senator Kristen Arrington this measure has received ample bipartisan support where many highlight and thank the sponsor for closing the loophole on this election rule. Currently, candidates are to affirm their party affiliation; however, there is no effective enforcement mechanism, and the Division of Elections and courts lack the authority to remove candidates for false claims related to party affiliation. If signed into law by Governor DeSantis, this measure would allow candidates and political parties to seek injunctive relief for violations. The bill analysis is located [here](#).

DEI AND STATE AGENCIES

A bill (SB 1710), sponsored by Republican Senator Nick DiCeglie, will eliminate DEI programs in state agencies and forbid state agencies from utilizing funds to establish or support any DEI offices or positions, if signed into law by the Governor. Members of the public expressed their opposition to the bill, specifically around Florida's healthcare workforce who serves a diverse patient population. Committee members discussed whether DEI initiatives unfairly influence the hiring process for state positions and end up creating "reverse discrimination" unintentionally. The legislation passed (6-2) in its first committee stop and will now head to Senate Education Postsecondary Committee for further consideration. The staff analysis can be found [here](#).

EDUCATION AND COLLEGIATE SPORTS

TIME TO WAKE UP... A LITTLE LATER?

The House Education Administration unanimously approved House Bill 261, sponsored by Republican Representative Anne Gerwig, on Wednesday. The bill amends state regulations to remove the requirement that middle schools start no earlier than 8 A.M. and high schools start no earlier than 8:30 A.M. Further, it mandates local school boards to make their local community aware of the impact of sleep deprivation. The bill is backed by evidence of the impracticality of implementing a provision of such magnitude that created a "logistical nightmare" according to Republican Representative Jeff Holcomb. The bill received support from both sides of the aisle for

its recognition of the impracticality of mandated school start times and the committee passed the bill in a 16-0 vote. Many members of the subcommittee complimented the sponsor on her efforts, but some reminded the other members of their potential concerns. The bill will be heard next in the House Education and Employment Committee. The bill analysis is located [here](#).

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS

On Wednesday, members of the House Education Administration Subcommittee approved House Bill 1321 in a 15-0, bipartisan vote. This bill seeks to increase transparency by changing how public university searches are done when they are in the process of searching for a new president.

This would reverse the 2022 law that keeps the names of applicants seeking to be named the president at a Florida university unless they were finalists for the position. The bill's sponsor, Republican Representative Michelle Salzman, says this bill will safeguard financial accountability for university board members, endow students with clear information on course and textbook costs, and will move presidential searches into the sunshine. Moreover, she states it reaffirms the Legislature's commitment to providing the best higher education universities in the nation. The bill will be heard next in the House Education & Employment Committee. The most recent staff analysis can be found [here](#).

NIL

House Bill 981, sponsored by Republican Representative Yvette Benarroch, amends Florida's current laws and creates new ones that change the current system for athlete representation and compensation. This is another new development in the new Name Image Likeness (NIL) system that seeks to get players their rightfully owed compensation. The major provision in this bill is that it will cap sports agent fees at 5% if they represent Florida college and high school athletes. The bill also requires the Department of Business and Professional Regulation to manage a newly created public database that contains registered athlete agents and allows high school athletes to earn compensation for NIL with parental consent being required for athletes under 18. Additionally, it will codify high school rules on NIL and create basic rules for coaches and others seeking to guide students through NIL. On Wednesday, the bill passed the House Industries & Professional Activities Subcommittee in a 15-1 vote with Republican Representative Fiona McFarland being the lone dissenting vote, raising concerns over the cap potentially putting Florida's athletes at a disadvantage. Bill 981 will head to the House Education & Employment Committee for further consideration. The bill analysis can be found [here](#).

LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

HAVE PLACES TO BE?

Republican Senator Nick DiCeglie has filed an amendment on his bill, Senate Bill 462. This bill seeks to amend Florida's transportation laws to increase highway safety, streamline transportation project processes, and improve the state's infrastructure. Among other things, the bill with the new amendment would increase the limited-access highway max speed from 70 mph to 75 mph and would also increase the max speed of roads with four or more lanes and a median from 65 mph to 70 mph. Florida's Department of Transportation would also be given the authority to set a max speed of 65 mph on roads they manage if they deem it safe to do so. Democratic Senator Kristen Arrington voiced her opposition to the amendment, expressing concern about increased utility expenses being passed on to constituents. Democratic Senator Tracie Davis also was opposed to the possibility of mandates on providers who already pay right-of-way fees but ultimately voted in favor of the bill. The legislation was passed and now heads to the Senate Regulated Industries Committee for review. The bill analysis is [here](#).

CHILD ABUSE INVESTIGATIONS

On Wednesday, Senators unanimously passed Senate Bill 7012 off the Senate Floor. This bill seeks to modify child welfare statutes to enhance recruitment, assessment, and treatment programs in child welfare services. One aspect of this is done by allocating \$3.3 million to create a foster care pilot program to improve Florida's child welfare workforce. This pilot program would be created by the Department of Children and Families, and offer family-like living arrangements for children with behavioral problems rather than a traditional group home setting. Republican Senator Erin Grall, the bill's sponsor, has said she will monitor the pilot program intensely to guarantee it truly does improve outcomes for children with behavioral issues. The bill will also create a recruitment initiative to prioritize former military personnel, law enforcement, first responders, teachers, and health care workers to serve as case managers and child protective investigators. The bill's companion bill, House Bill 1127, sponsored by Republican Representative Meg Weinberger, unanimously cleared its committee and only must pass the House Health & Human Services Committee before it reaches the House Floor. The staff analysis for bill 7012 is located [here](#).

LICENSE PLATES

Republican Senator Joe Gruters has proposed a new requirement that would require license plates on the front for cars registered in Florida. The provision is part of a wider vehicle safety bill, Senate Bill 92, that adds new motor vehicle and repair shop requirements. The bill is named the "Lilly Glaubach Act" after the 13-year-old girl who was tragically killed in a hit and run accident in 2022. Senator Gruters filed a similar bill in 2023, but it died in committee last legislative session. It still needs to be determined how the added license plate would impact registration fees, but this bill has received broad support from both parties. The bill requires motor vehicle repair shops to require a written police report on the crash from customers when the estimated costs to repair the vehicle, due to an accident/collision, either reach or exceed \$2,500. It also creates penalties for non-compliance and updates requirements on what needs to be included in a repair estimate. The overall goal of the bill is to catch people who commit hit-and-runs by having a front license plate and ensuring repair shops work with the authorities to help bring closure to families who lose a family member. The bill was passed unanimously by the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government on Wednesday and will be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee next. The bill analysis can be found [here](#).

INSURANCE

On Friday (3/14), Florida Representatives in the House Insurance and Banking Subcommittee held a hearing that investigated property insurance practices, concentrating on companies transferring money to affiliates and shareholders while asserting they suffer financial losses. During the hearing, committee members questioned Michael Yaworsky, current Insurance Commissioner, and David Altmaier, the former Insurance Commissioner, about a report from 2022 that revealed companies were transferring money. The report was commissioned under David Altmaier's tenure, and it highlighted how insurers used affiliates to sidestep profit regulations, resulting in inflated fees for services like claims handling. The report found that affiliates made \$1.8 billion in profits and that insurers paid \$680 million in dividends to shareholders while posting a net loss of \$432 million combined in 2022. Despite these figures, Representatives were confused on why they never received the report, with Republican Representative Susan Valdés asking, "Why did the investigation stop?"

Lawmakers, concerned by the lack of transparency, have called for further inquiries into the issue, with the House Insurance & Banking Subcommittee's members being granted the ability to issue subpoenas, put witnesses under oath, and hire outside specialists for their inquiries. House Speaker Daniel Perez expressed concern that property insurance companies might be unfairly

maintaining high rates and holding out on Floridians, prompting the subcommittee to continue its investigation.

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 4

- House Authorized Schedule for March 24-28, 2025, can be found [here](#).
- Senate Weekly Schedule for March 24-28, 2025, can be found [here](#).

REGULAR SESSION BILL STATISTICS

- *HOUSE*: 833 general bills filed; 0 have passed the House.
- *SENATE*: 894 general bills filed; 17 have passed the Senate.