



The Briefing – Friday – May 13, 2022

The last Briefing was Thursday – May 12 – 2022

The Briefing is compiled **2-3 times a week** to provide information to County Commissioners and staff in counties that are members of the Small County Coalition and School Board members, Superintendents, and staff in districts that are members of the Small School District Council Consortium. It is also sent to Professional Colleagues and Associates. For Questions Email – Cdoolin@DoolinandAssoc.com

Important Information and Resource Links

[*Small County Coalition Website*](#)

[*Small School District Council Consortium Website*](#)

The Quick

Whistleblower Alleges Rural Districts Over-charged for Textbooks

The following article was written by [Brian Burgess](#) published by [The Capitolist](#)

A whistleblower has sent a follow-up letter to the Florida Department of Education outlining specific examples purportedly showing that publishers have offered lower prices on instructional material to Florida's bigger school districts, while simultaneously violating [Florida law](#) by overcharging rural districts – in some cases to the tune of millions of dollars.

It is illegal in Florida for publishers to charge more for instructional materials when the same materials are offered for less to any other state or school district in the United States. The law also requires prices to be automatically reduced when those reductions are offered elsewhere in the country. Materials must also be provided free of charge when they are provided free to any other state or school district.

The [letter](#), written on behalf of an anonymous whistleblower (“John/Jane Doe”) by attorneys **William Spicola** and **Adam Komisar** (the [Komisar Spicola](#) law firm), also suggests that Florida Department of Education General Counsel **Anastasios Loannis Kamoutsas** is looking into the claims.

“We write you in response to your request for further information on behalf of our client, John/Jane Doe (Doe)...” the letter begins.

The letter also includes specific allegations that Lee County may have been overcharged for a handful of textbooks by about \$485,940.83, while other counties appear to have been overcharged by similar amounts. The letter stresses that their analysis of the evidence also suggests that even larger counties, like Miami-Dade, may have been illegally overcharged for English Language Arts (ELA) materials. The attorneys estimate that just for procurement of ELA materials for kindergarten through 1st Grade, the county appears to have overpaid by more than \$1.2 million.

Finally, the letter suggests that those are only a small handful of examples from only a few counties, and that more overcharges are likely. The attorneys say that there is no authority in Florida with direct oversight of how textbook publishers comply with the state's textbook procurement law.

Unlike the original allegations contained in a letter [first published by Florida Politics](#), the new letter includes exhibits including price sheets from textbook publisher McGraw Hill, as well as copies of purchase orders from the Lee County School District, Miami-Dade School District, and Franklin County School Districts showing the higher purchase price.

Under Florida law, a publisher who violates the act could be required to pay the Department of Education three times the total they charged in excess of the legally allowed price, or three times the value charged for any instructional materials that should have been provided to school districts for free.

According to the [original letter](#) provided to Florida Politics, the whistleblower also alleged that similar transactions occurred in 2021 with free or reduced prices being offered and used by Hillsborough County compared to Hamilton County in purchases from McGraw Hill, for Volusia County compared to Charlotte County, and for Miami-Dade County compared to Madison County.

Secretary of State Laurel Lee Stepping Down – May Seek Congressional Seat!

Secretary of State Laurel Lee is stepping down. Lee has served three years in the post. Her resignation is effective Monday and came as Florida prepares for the Aug. 23 primary elections and the Nov. 8 general election. The Secretary of State serves as Florida's chief elections officer, oversees the Division of Corporations, the Division of Historical Resources the Division of Library and Information Services, and also leads FL's Arts & Culture programs. It is anticipated that Lee will run in a newly redrawn Congressional District 15, a Republican-leaning district in the Tampa Bay region. Lee, who is married to former state Senate President Tom Lee, previously served as a Hillsborough County circuit judge. The governor's office did not immediately name a permanent or interim replacement.

Representative Ramon Alexander Not Seeking Re-election

Rep. Ramon Alexander has announced he will not seek re-election this year to his North Florida seat. His decision comes after recent claims involving sexual-harassment allegations. A report in the Tallahassee Democrat, earlier the week, indicated what Alexander described a consensual relationship with a former employee of FAMU. Alexander, who represents Gadsden County and part of Leon County. Alexander issued a statement Thursday about his decision to forego re-election to the House. The statement did not mention the allegations against him. Alexander was six months away from becoming the state House Democratic leader. It is not clear who might run for Alexander's House seat. Alexander was the only candidate who has opened a campaign account in House District 8, according to the state Division of Elections website.

Headlines from Around the State

[*FlaPol: Ramon Alexander, expected House Dem Leader, drops re-election bid after harassment allegations*](#)

[*FlaPol: Laurel Lee leaves Secretary of State post amid talk of congressional run*](#)

[*Capitolist: National Association of Attorneys General ripped by parade of Republicans, but Florida's Ashley Moody staying quiet for now*](#)

[*Times: Florida schools stirred up over library books, textbooks*](#)

[*Times: Florida rejected dozens of math textbooks. But only 3 reviewers found CRT violations.*](#)

[*Sentinel: Florida Citizens Alliance, other groups were pulling the oars as state rejected math books*](#)

[*WUSF: Tampa Bay educators weigh in on legislation changing the discussion of race in schools*](#)

[WUSF: Polk County Schools Superintendent gives final ruling on 16 books flagged by a conservative group](#)

[FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis signs firefighter workers compensation eligibility bill](#)

[FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis signs bill cracking down on traveling criminals](#)

[FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis signs bill fortifying rights for crime victims](#)

[FlaPol: Double jeopardy: Gov. DeSantis approves juvenile expunction bill after last years veto](#)

[FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis signs law defining, deregulating cryptocurrency](#)

[WUSF: CFO Jimmy Patronis announces proposals to combat insurance fraud in Florida](#)

[FlaPol: Citizens Property Insurance withdraws lawsuit in exchange for \\$1 million under terms of settlement agreement](#)

[News Herald: Panama City wants to double funding for program to help residents relocate from flood zones](#)

[Today: Florida legislators from Brevard promise property insurance reform after hearing residents](#)

[Bradenton Herald: 'Unprecedented.' Sarasota Bradenton airport had a year's worth of travelers in 4 months](#)

[Herald Tribune: Sarasota School Board to resume adjourned meeting after audience was deemed too unruly](#)

[Today: Retiring Brevard health administrators Stahl reflects on four decades in public health](#)

[FlaPol: Judge issues formal order to rewrite Gov. DeSantis congressional map with different North Florida lines](#)

[FlaPol: Newly challenged for re-election, Lauren Book posts strongest fundraising month of career](#)

[FlaPol: Lauren Book submits 2.6K petitions to qualify in SD 35](#)

[FlaPol: Operation BlackOut staffs up ahead of 2022 election](#)

[FlaPol: Florida Chamber endorses Jimmy Patronis for re-election](#)

[FlaPol: Garrett Dennis stretches cash lead in HD 14 Democratic Primary](#)

[FlaPol: Lincoln Project 'Crazy Ones' ad spotlights Ron DeSantis, Rick Scott, Matt Gaetz](#)

[My News 13: Florida's average gas prices breaks another record](#)

[Bradenton Herald: 'We're setting new records in Florida and not in a good way.' Why is gas going up again?](#)

[Democrat: 'It's scary': Baby formula sold out in many Florida stores due to shortage](#)

[Sun-Sentinel: 'A silent surge': While the newest omicron subvariant drives up COVID cases in Florida, effects are mild](#)

[WLRN: A nonspeaking valedictorian with autism gives her college's commencement speech](#)

[Sentinel: 'You get to go to school for free': Osceola pays to send 2022 grads to college or tech school](#)

DBNJ: Amazon recruitment efforts target Florida high schools and colleges, offering student incentives

Capitolist: Disney theme park revenue nears \$7 billion in second quarter

Axios: Florida water activists get bitter over 'Big Sugar'

NBC: A gay teen sued Florida over its LGBTQ law — then got a warning about his graduation speech

Axios: Manatee County debates arming employees

News4Jax: Judge says he'll block Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis redistricting plan

The Floridian: Scott Appointed Judge Blocks DeSantis map

Bradenton Herald: Judge throws out DeSantis congressional map, orders new map drawn by expert

FlaPol: Al Lawson praises court decision to toss Gov. DeSantis' 'unconstitutional' congressional map

Politico: 'Stop being so doom and gloom': Democrats launch \$15M effort to 'Blue Shift Florida'

Herald: Democrats bet on Florida 'getting its act together' with new \$15 million effort

Sun-Sentinel: Florida Democrats push Republicans to own potential overturn of Roe v. Wade

FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis warns against social media companies getting involved with feds' disinfo board

WLRN: Hundreds of thousands of Florida residents may become uninsured in 2023 without premium tax credits

Sentinel: Disney theme park revenues double even amid scuffle with DeSantis, GOP

FlaPol: Disney earnings call: Parks 'firing on all cylinders,' mum on 'Reedy Creek'

The Capitolist: Commercial gaming's strong Q1 boosted by Florida's \$182 million quarterly record

WUSF: A shortage of baby formula is causing stress for Florida families

The Floridian: Jackie Toledo Appears to Blur Florida's Campaign Fundraising Line

The Floridian: Team Rubio: Demings Supports 'Abortion up Until Birth'

CBS Miami: Eileen Higgins Dropping Out Of District 27 Race Less Than 2 Weeks After Announcing Bid

TCPalm: Blue-green algae: Rep. Mast's South Florida Clean Coastal Waters Act heads to Biden's desk

FlaPol: Laura Branker, former health official in Jeb Bush administration, dies

The Capitolist: Florida is the best state to start an e-commerce business

Post: 2022 hurricane season forecast calls for another active year

Axios: Manatee County debates arming employees

Herald: How did another endangered Florida panther die? The killer was on the road

WLRN: Gov. Ron Desantis' reelection campaign has about \$105 million and recently added \$10 million more

Democrat: Ron DeSantis raised more than Charlie Crist and Nikki Fried combined

FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis plans \$430M infrastructure spending, padded by federal funds

[Times: Florida Democrats struggle to find spotlight in race against DeSantis](#)

[FlaPol: Charlie Crist leads Democratic gubernatorial field again in money chase](#)

[Herald: Taddeo recommits to governor's race as 'rumors' of congressional bid scramble Democrats](#)

[FlaPol: Federal judge dismisses lawsuit over bill to dissolve Disney's Reedy Creek](#)

[WLRN: Florida will consider property insurers' requests to raise homeowner rates](#)

[The Capitolist: Hearings next week on proposed 20 percent property insurance rate hikes](#)

[Bradenton Herald: Sugar's campaign donations reach \\$6 million; water advocates want candidates to abstain](#)

[Sentinel: Mystery group behind ads in '20 Central Florida primary must reveal donors, judge rules](#)

[Democrat: Florida teachers, staff fear 'gotcha police', lawmaker seeks firing](#)

[The Capitolist: Attorneys for textbook whistleblower sends evidence that Florida school districts were overcharged millions](#)

[AP: Gov. DeSantis still hasn't made decision over sheriff's lies](#)

[NBC Miami: Lawyers Say Surfside Condo Collapse Victims Will Share in More Than \\$1B in Recovery Funds](#)

[Sun-Sentinel: Surfside condo lawsuit ends with staggering settlement: \\$997 million](#)

[Herald: Father of Surfside victim says \\$1 billion settlement won't bring families closure](#)

[FlaPol: Dan Daley raises more than \\$20K to defend his seat representing western Broward](#)

[FlaPol: Chip LaMarca raises nearly \\$60K to defend coastal Broward House District](#)

[FlaPol: Bruno Portigliatti kicks off HD 45 run with \\$116K month](#)

[Herald: Miami-Dade closer to 30-year building inspections in proposal after Surfside collapse](#)

[Herald: Homeowners revolt over huge fee hikes. They're pushing to recall board at Florida's largest HOA.](#)

[Democrat: Leon County's LGBTQ+ advisory committee discusses 'gender,' trans athletes, bathrooms in support guide](#)

[FlaPol: Tallahassee assisted living facility fights states efforts to reject, revoke its license](#)

[FlaPol: 'Put it to a vote': Lee Co. school superintendent could soon be elected, not selected](#)

[Today: Moms for Liberty challenges 17 more books, bringing total to 41](#)

Upcoming Meeting of State Associations

June 8-10 - [FSBA/FADSS Annual Summer Conference](#) – Tampa

June 9 - Small District Breakfast – Annual Joint Business Meeting of the FSBA Small District Council and the SSDCC

[June 28 - July 1 –](#)
June
29th -

[FAC Annual Conference - Small County Coalition Annual Meeting -](#)
[Orlando](#) The Small County Coalition will meet for breakfast on Wed.

On the Docket

FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2022

- REAL ESTATE ISSUES: The Florida Real Estate Commission is scheduled to meet. (Friday, 9 a.m., Zora Neale Hurston Building, Suite N901, 400 West Robinson St., Orlando.)
- DIABETES: The state Diabetes Advisory Council is scheduled to meet. (Friday, 10 a.m. Call-in number: 1-866-899-4679. Code: 607586013)
- MEDICAL EXAMINERS: The state Medical Examiners Commission is scheduled to meet. (Friday, 10 a.m., Wyndham Grand Jupiter at Harbourside Place, 122 Soundings Ave., Jupiter.)

SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2022

- TAX BREAK STARTS FOR CHILDREN’S BOOKS: Shoppers will be able to buy children’s books from May 14 to Aug. 14 without paying sales taxes, under a tax package passed this year by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis.