



On this day in 1965, U.S. President [Lyndon B. Johnson](#) delivered the first prime-time televised [State of the Union](#) address, transforming a traditionally somewhat boring afternoon speech to Congress into a media event aimed at the American people.

## *The Briefing – Saturday, January 3, 2026*

*The Last Briefing – Thursday - January 1, 2026*

### *What's the weather outlook?*

[10-Day Weather Forecast for Tallahassee, FL – The Weather Channel |](#)

The coming week will be relatively quiet in the Capitol. The session starts January 13 for the 60 day Regular Legislative Session. Barring an extended session or special sessions, this year's early start means lawmakers should be done in mid-March. With the significance of several legislative issues – extended session it likely! Here's a look at some of the issues –

Property Tax Reduction  
Congressional Redistricting  
Voucher Accountability

Constitutional Proposal for Term limits for County Commissioners and School Board members  
Reducing the number of Florida Counties

### **State of Florida Auditor General - Operational Audit** **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION** **2024-25 School Year Funding Accountability Challenges** **State of Florida Auditor General - Operational Audit**

#### **Finding**

The administration and oversight of State education funding for the 2024-25 school year was met with a myriad of accountability challenges that left a Statewide funding shortfall and a system where funding did not follow the child. Improving accountability and predictability in a State education funding landscape faced with greater student mobility will require a multifaceted and coordinated approach.

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Legislature should create a separate Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) silo for the Family Empowerment Scholarship (FES) Program for Educational Options and FES Program for Students with Unique Abilities, align scholarship application timelines with funding decision time frames, and ensure adequate financial support to avoid disruptions in scholarship and public school funding.

2. The Department should collaborate with scholarship-funding organizations to enforce balance limits, strengthen controls to ensure the prompt processing of membership surveys and completion of FEFP calculations, and standardize and document transparent processes for cross-checks and fund recoupment that promote the prompt halting of duplicate payments, maximize the return of funds due to the State, and facilitate the timely adjustment of State funds allocated to school districts.
3. The Department should work with the Legislature to revisit scholarship program account balance limits and whether, individually or in total, such limits balance the needs of the programs with overall education funding needs.

### **Senator Gaetz Files Legislation to Address Voucher Accountability Issues**

[Senate Bill 318](#) has been filed by Senator Don Gaetz making changes to education choice and school funding programs to improve student tracking, ensure funding follows the student, enhance budget predictability, create consistency across scholarship programs, and incorporate recommendations made by the Auditor General. Under the legislation, the state would be able to recoup funds from inactive accounts after one year, as opposed to two years in current law. This shift is predicted to have a “positive” impact on state revenue by speeding up the funding recovery process, according to a [Senate analysis](#) of the legislation. At the same time, the bill would require scholarship administering organizations to notify parents about voucher balances when students reach 16 years old. It also ramps up accountability by calling on the Department of Education to keep track of how many accounts are closed and the amount of funding reverted to the state. SB 318 is on the fast track in the Senate and is already primed for consideration on the floor ahead of the opening day of session on Jan. 13.

### **67! 67! Does Florida have too many counties?**

#### **House Ways and Means Chairman Wyman Duggan has raised the issue!**

With Constitutional proposals to reduce property taxes, fiscally constrained counties will be further financially strapped leading House of Representative Wyman Duggan suggesting that lawmakers should seriously consider whether the state really needs 67 counties.

*“Should this county even exist by itself, or should it be combined with some other county, so we can lower the overhead that we have to backfill?”* said Duggan.

According to new articles, Duggan has indicated that eliminating or consolidating counties is something the legislature has the ability to do on its own, as county boundaries are [defined in state statute](#).

*“I just think it’s time for a perhaps a conversation around reexamining those assumptions, and do we continue to go forward with 67 counties? Maybe we should only have 40,”* said Duggan.

Duggan noted that state lawmakers could not change at least some county names, as they’re mentioned in the state constitution.

### **Small County Coalition Legislative Reception to Kick Off Week of County and Rural Activities**

Small County Coalition Annual Legislative Reception

Tuesday, January 20<sup>th</sup> – 2026 - 5:00 PM - 7:15 PM

Entertainment Provided by Nassau County Commissioner [Hupp Huppman](#)

Doubletree by Hilton - [Oasis Pool Deck](#)

101 South Adams Street -Tallahassee Florida 32301

### **Rural Counties Day 2026** is set for **January 21-22, 2026 –**

Here’s the link to register to attend the reception-<https://floridaruralda.org/rural-counties-day/>

***Legislative Priorities of the Small County Coalition***

 [The Small County Coalition - 2026 Legislative Program - November 2025.docx](#)

***Legislative Priorities of the Small School District Council Consortium***

 [SSDCC 2026 Legislative Program - December 2025.docx](#)

***Links to Monitor the Legislative Session***

[\*Link to the Florida Senate\*](#)

[\*Link to the Florida House of Representatives\*](#)

[\*The Florida Channel\*](#)

The following Reports provide a comprehensive analysis of Florida Ad Valorem structure

- **FAC PROPERTY TAX REPORT** - <https://www.fl-counties.com/report-property-taxes/>
- **FLORIDA TAXWATCH REPORT** - [How-Florida-Counties-Compare-2025.pdf](#) –
- **Fla. League of Cities** - [Fiscal Structure & Rev. Resilience of Florida Municipalities](#)

***Headlines Around The State***

[\*FlaPol: Florida public universities had a banner 2025, state says\*](#)

[\*FlaPol: Department of Management Services says it raised the bar in 2025 under Ron DeSantis\*](#)

[\*Florida Phoenix: David Jolly campaign says he's raised \\$3 million-plus so far in race for governor\*](#)

[\*FlaPol: Anastasios Kamoutsas says he is proud of his accomplishments in first year\*](#)

[\*Herald: DeSantis appoints former UF football coach Urban Meyer to New College board\*](#)

[\*FlaPol: Personnel note: ABC Florida Gulf Coast names Jason Spears as 2026 Chair\*](#)

[\*WLRN: Lower interest rates help brighten the outlook for South Florida real estate in 2026\*](#)

[\*PNJ: UWF to interview Many Diaz, vote on his permanent hire Jan. 8\*](#)

[\*WUSF: Proposed 'Blue Envelope Program' could help make traffic stops safer for drivers with autism\*](#)

[\*WUSF: A look at Florida Democratic lawmakers' 'affordability' agenda\*](#)

[\*Bradenton Herald: Is development affecting Bradenton's bird population? What latest count says\*](#)

***ON THE DOCKET THIS WEEK***

***MONDAY, JANUARY 5, 2026***

- **SCHOOL ENROLLMENT ANALYZED** - Monday, 1:30 p.m. - The Education Estimating Conference will analyze enrollment in the pre-kindergarten through 12th grade system. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.
- **HAIR DISCRIMINATION** - Monday, 5:30 p.m. - U.S. Rep. Maxwell Alejandro Frost, D-Fla., state Sen. LaVon Bracy Davis, D-Ocoee, and state Rep. Anna Eskamani, D-Orlando, will take part in an event hosted by Black Girls Govern about hair-based discrimination in schools and workplaces - Eatonville Branch Library, 200 East Kennedy Blvd., Eatonville.

***TUESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2026***

- **UTILITY ISSUES** - Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. - The Florida Public Service Commission will meet. - Betty Easley Conference Center, 4075 Esplanade Way, Tallahassee.
- **UNEMPLOYMENT TRUST FUND** - Tuesday, 1 p.m. - The Revenue Estimating Conference will analyze issues related to the unemployment compensation trust fund. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.

- HIGHWAY SAFETY MONEY - Tuesday, 1:30 p.m. - The Revenue Estimating Conference will analyze highway safety revenues. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.
- DEVELOPMENT FINANCE BOARD - Tuesday, 2 p.m. - The Florida Development Finance Corp. Board of Directors will meet. - Florida Development Finance Corp., 156 Tuskawilla Road, Suite 2340, Winter Springs. <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89796276446?pwd=nPOJkZbi1VHyNNDbHRnQyL0cS4w8bK.1>. Meeting ID: 89796276446. Code: 820772. Call-in number: 1-646-558-8656
- INTERCHANGE PROJECTS - Tuesday, 4 p.m. - The Florida Department of Transportation will hold a meeting about interchange projects at Interstate 75 and Toledo Blade Boulevard and Sumter Boulevard in Southwest Florida. - Suncoast Technical College, North Port Branch, 4445 Career Lane, North Port,

### **WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2026**

- PAROLE CASES - Wednesday, 9 a.m. - The Florida Commission on Offender Review will meet. - Florida Commission on Offender Review, 4070 Esplanade Way, Tallahassee. Call-in number: 1-877-309-2073. Code: 337350165
- UNEMPLOYMENT CASES - Wednesday, 9:30 a.m. - The state Reemployment Assistance Appeals Commission is scheduled to meet. - Reemployment Assistance Appeals Commission, 1211 Governors Square Blvd., Suite 300, Tallahassee. Call-in number: 850-988-5144. Code: 282335254
- JOBLESS NUMBERS RELEASED - Wednesday, 10 a.m. - The Florida Department of Commerce will release a November unemployment report.
- TOBACCO SETTLEMENT - Wednesday, 1 p.m. - The Revenue Estimating Conference will update a forecast about money coming to state as part of a legal settlement with the tobacco industry. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.
- TOBACCO TAXES - Wednesday, 1:30 p.m. - The Revenue Estimating Conference will analyze tobacco taxes. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.

### **THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2026**

- UWF TRUSTEES - Thursday, 9 a.m. - The University of West Florida Board of Trustees will meet. - University of West Florida, UWF Conference Center, Pensacola. <https://uwf.zoom.us/j/88363017667?pwd=4pcV3IPpatE7XIJRzcLYRaPsRaw8I#success>. Webinar ID: 88363017667. Code: 158613
- EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE - Thursday, 9 a.m. - The Self Insurance Estimating Conference will analyze expenditures in the state employees' health insurance program. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.
- CHILD ABUSE DEATHS - Thursday, 9 a.m. - The Florida Child Abuse Death Review Committee is scheduled to meet. - Information at <https://www.floridahealth.gov/about/sunshine-info/public-meeting-notices/index.html>
- GAMBLING ISSUES - Thursday, 9:30 a.m. - The Florida Gaming Control Commission will meet. - Betty Easley Conference Center, 4075 Esplanade Way, Tallahassee.
- NORTHEAST FLORIDA ISSUES - Thursday, 10 a.m. - The Northeast Florida Regional Council will meet. - WJCT, 100 Festival Park Ave., Jacksonville. <https://nefrc-org.zoom.us/j/87499770491>. Meeting ID: 87499770491

- GULF COAST COLLEGE BOARD - Thursday, 10 a.m. Central time. - The Gulf Coast State College Board of Trustees is scheduled to hold a workshop. - Gulf Coast State College, Administration Building, Panama City.
- PROPERTY TAXES - Thursday, 10:30 a.m. - The Revenue Estimating Conference will analyze issues related to ad valorem, or property, taxes. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.
- SUPREME COURT RELEASES OPINIONS - Thursday, 11 a.m. - The Florida Supreme Court is scheduled to release opinions.
- FLORIDA GATEWAY TRUSTEES - Thursday, 5 p.m. - The Florida Gateway College Board of Trustees will meet. - Florida Gateway College, Administration Building, Lake City.
- AUTISM ISSUES - Thursday, 5:30 p.m. - Agency for Persons with Disabilities Director Bob Asztalos is expected to take part in an event hosted by the Autism Society of Greater Orlando to discuss autism issues. - Boone High School, 1000 East Kaley St., Orlando.

**FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2026**

- ‘IMPACT’ CONFERENCE - Friday, 9 a.m. - The Revenue Estimating Conference will hold an “impact” conference, which involves estimating potential costs of legislation. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.
- OPTOMETRY ISSUES - Friday, 9 a.m. - The Florida Board of Optometry will meet. - Information at <https://floridasoptometry.gov/>
- MED MAL ISSUE - Friday, 11:30 a.m. - The Capital Tiger Bay Club will host a discussion about a controversial medical-malpractice law that prevents people who are 25 years old or older from seeking what are known as “non-economic” damages in medical-malpractice cases involving deaths of their parents. Also, parents cannot seek such damages in malpractice cases involving the deaths of their children who are 25 or older. The House has moved forward with a bill (HB 6003) to try to repeal the law during the 2026 legislative session. Attorneys Andrew Bolin and Dana Brooks will discuss the issue. - Donald L. Tucker Civic Center, 505 West Pensacola St., Tallahassee.
- ARTS AND CULTURE - Friday, 1 p.m. - The Florida Council on Arts & Culture will meet. - <https://dos-myflorida.zoom.us/j/84989866543?pwd=sNIOOYfYWbdfGuEuTheX6f3q13KImb.1>. Meeting ID: 84989866543. Code: 987879
- GAMBLING MONEY - Friday, 1:30 p.m. - The Revenue Estimating Conference will take up issues involving slot machines, Indian gaming and pari-mutuel facilities. - 117 Knott Building, the Capitol.
- FINANCE REPORTS DUE - Candidates in special elections in Senate District 14, House District 51, House District 52 and House District 87 face a Jan. 9 deadline for filing reports detailing campaign financial activity.

**CALENDAR OF MEETINGS AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES FY 25-26**

**2026**

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|-----------------|---|
| January 13 -    | <b>2026 Regular Session Begins</b>                  |
| January 20 -    | <b>Small County Coalition Legislative Reception</b> |
| January 21 -    | <b>FAC County Legislative Days</b>                  |
| January 21-22 - | <b>Rural Counties Day 2026</b>                      |
| January 28 -    | <b>Small District Legislative Briefing</b>          |
| January 28-29 - | <b>FSBA Day in the Legislature</b>                  |

March 13 -	<b>Regular Session Ends</b>
June 10-12 -	FSBA Summer Meeting
June 11-	Small District Breakfast – Summer Meeting
June 23-26	FAC Annual Summer Meeting - Orlando
June 24	Small County Coalition Annual Business Meeting - Orlando

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The Briefing is compiled to provide information to elected officials and staff in counties that are members of the Small County Coalition and the Small School District Council Consortium. It is also sent to Professional Colleagues and Associates. For Questions Email = [cdoolin@DoolinandAssoc.com](mailto:cdoolin@DoolinandAssoc.com)

If you want to see all of the latest briefings – you can go [www.smallcountycoalition.org](http://www.smallcountycoalition.org) or [www.ssdcc.org](http://www.ssdcc.org) and click on the red **Briefing** button

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