



***March Madness
Sweet Sixteen
Weekend!***



The Briefing for Thursday, March 26, 2026

The Last Briefing was Sunday, March 22, 2026

Note – All previous Briefings can be accessed at www.smallcountycoalition.org or www.ssdcc.org

Click the Briefing button at the website!

What's the weather outlook?

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

IN MEMORIAM

Carolyn Thomas

February 8, 1958 – March 16, 2026

Carolyn Thomas, 68, passed away on March 16, 2026. Carolyn was a devoted wife to the love of her life, Kenrick, (currently serving as a County Commissioner in Gilchrist County) who lovingly described her as the perfect wife. If they weren't working, they were side by side, sharing life together. She was his everything and his greatest supporter, and their bond was one built on deep love, companionship, and quiet moments. For over 30 years, Carolyn dedicated her career to Bell Elementary School, where she worked as a guidance clerk. She poured her heart into her work and cherished every child she encountered. Fiercely protective and deeply caring, she kept in touch with many of them over the years, leaving a lasting impact on countless lives.



Carolyn was a good person who accompanied Commissioner Thomas to State meetings of the Small County Coalition and FAC where she always helped with pre-meeting arrangements.

March Madness Men's Sweet 16 schedule

<u>Thursday, March 26, 2026</u>	<u>Friday, March 27, 2026</u>
No. 2 Purdue vs. No. 11 Texas - 7:10 p.m. ET	No. 1 Duke vs. No. 5 St. John's - 7:10 p.m. ET
No. 4 Nebraska vs. No. 9 Iowa - 7:30 p.m. ET	No. 1 Michigan vs. No. 4 Bama - 7:35 p.m. ET
No. 1 Arizona vs. No. 4 Arkansas - 9:45 p.m. ET	No. 2 UConn vs. No. 3 Mich. - 9:45 p.m. ET
No. 2 Houston vs. No. 3 Illinois - 10:15 p.m. ET	No. 2 Iowa State vs. No. 6 Tenn. - 10:10 p.m. ET

2026 NCAA Women's NCAA Tournament schedule

<u>Friday, March 27: Sweet 16</u>	<u>Saturday, March 28: Sweet 16</u>
No. 2 Vanderbilt vs. No. 6 Notre Dame, 2:30 p.m.	No. 2 Michigan vs. No. 3 Louisville, 12:30 p.m.,
No. 1 UConn vs. No. 4 North Carolina, 5 p.m.,	No. 1 Texas vs. No. 5 Kentucky, 3 p.m.,
No. 1 UCLA vs. No. 4 Minnesota, 7:30 p.m.,	No. 1 South Carolina vs. No. 4 Oklahoma, 5 p.m.,
No. 2 LSU vs. No. 3 Duke, 10 p.m.,	No. 3 TCU vs. No. 10 Virginia, 7:30 p.m.,

Some Interim Thoughts As we wait for the next step!

Property Tax conversation?

As State leaders struggle to develop a proposal to cut property taxes, is there a developing concern regarding the impact on local services? Local governments are working through budget reduction exercises to decide which program reductions will occur if the elimination of Homestead Property taxes is put on the ballot. No agreement yet! Will rural counties be wards of the state or just left out to fend for themselves? Governor DeSantis continues to explore a proposal to eliminate homestead property taxes, but key details — including when the change would take effect — remain unresolved. DeSantis said timing is a central issue as policymakers consider how quickly primary residences could be excluded from taxation. During the recent Legislative Session, the House passed HJR 203, sponsored by **Monique Miller**, but the Senate did not take it up. Incoming Speaker **Sam Garrison** has raised concerns about aspects of the plan, including potential state subsidies for certain counties. Polling from the University of North Florida shows support below the 60% threshold required for passage.

Accountability and Transparency in State Voucher Programs?

Months after the state's auditor general found a "myriad of accountability challenges" with Florida's K-12 school voucher system, the Legislature failed to pass a bill providing better oversight of the \$4 billion program. The Senate unanimously passed a bill (SB 318) aimed at keeping better track of where the money goes. But the House never took up the measure. The proposed legislation included: requiring DOE to cross-check scholarship applicants against the latest district enrollment; student eligibility must be confirmed prior to each payment, and scholarship payment installments would increase from quarterly to monthly; and the scholarship funds would be separated into their own silo within the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP). A 2024-2025 report on the Family Empowerment Scholarship released in November showed overspending and delays in scholarship payments that resulted in a funding shortfall and a system without proper controls to verify where students who received the voucher payments were being educated. DOE, in its response to the auditor general's report, also agreed with the recommendation that the scholarship money should be moved to its own plank within FEFP. Even though DOE included this change in its legislative budget request, lawmakers haven't adopted the change. The DOE suggested changes – the House did not consider any changes.

Cost of School Transportation?

With gas prices escalating and the closure of schools around the state resulting in more students being transported – will the Legislature consider increasing funding for school transportation. School transportation costs are heavily subsidized by operating funds provided through the FEFP. Currently, the House proposal provides a \$4 million increase – the Senate proposes no increase! This is an issue where current events require a serious look at providing additional funding.

Special Election Results

Tuesday's special election results saw two Republican held seats flip to Democrats. In House District 87, the seat that covers the Palm Beach County, Emily Gregory defeated Republican Jon

Maples. And in the Senate District 14 race in Hillsborough County, Brian Nathan defeated current House member Josie Tomkow in the seat vacated by Jay Collins.

Finished Business

1896 Bills and PCBs filed

237 Bills passed both chambers

 [Summaries of All Bills That Passed the 20256 Regular Session.docx](#)

Unfinished Business

General Appropriations

Status of funding important to Small Counties

 [26-27 - Budget Proposals Small County Programs_.docx](#)

Word Searchable Appropriation Proposals

Senate Budget Proposal - [SB 2500](#)

House Budget Proposal - [HB 5001](#)

Rural Renaissance

Unfinished Issues

Modification of Fiscally Constrained Formula
Increased funding for Regional Education Consortia
Establishment of Rural District Supplement Program

Education Funding

Status of K-12 Funding

[House FEFP CProposal for 26-27](#)

[Senate FEFP Proposal](#)

Education Provisions in the GAA.

[Comparison of House and Senate Current Budget Provisions](#)

Unfinished Issues

Providing additional funding for School Transportation
Accountability and Transparency in Scholarship Programs
Special Facility Construction Funding
Regional Consortium Funding
Safe Schools Funding/Formula
Funding for Declining Enrollment – current year and 26-27

DATA SETS ON STATEWIDE MILLAGE RATES AND LOCAL TAX ROLLS

[Report on Millage Rates and Taxes Levied](#)

[Data Sets on County Tax Roll Components](#)

[Florida Association of Counties Property Tax Report](#)

[Florida DOGE Report Jan 2026 – Adobe cloud storage](#)

[Florida TAXWATCH Report How Florida Counties Compare!](#)

[Fiscal Structure & Revenue Resilience of Florida Municipalities](#)

Here are some links that will assist you in monitoring the session.

<https://www.flhouse.gov/>

<https://www.flsenate.gov/>

[The Florida Channel To Watch Proceedings](#)

[House Directory](#)

[Senate Directory](#)

Headlines Around The State

FlaPol: Spring Break, honeymoons, golf trips: Ron DeSantis believes free Cuba could be American playground

FlaPol: Al Lawson says Michael Kirwan will 'deliver' in CD 4

FlaPol: 'Who knows how all this stuff evolves?': Ron DeSantis coy on future political plans, warns 2026 will be tough for GOP

FlaPol: Ron DeSantis says legislators not all on board with push to eliminate homestead property tax as he fleshes out plan

WLRN: Florida's AIDS Drug Assistance Program gets stopgap funding

Times: Players in Hope Florida saga could keep grand jury report secret for months

CBS Miami: Florida Democrats flipped two legislative seats in 2026 special election, their best performance in years

Politico: Special election shocker has Florida Republicans nervous about redistricting

FlaPol: Florida Democrats flipped 2 legislative seats Tuesday. Is it a harbinger of trouble for the long dominant GOP?

WUSF: Democrat Brian Nathan is Hillsborough's newest state Senator — pending a possible recount

WLRN: Legislature eyes fixes for voucher program despite inaction so far

FlaPol: Wayne Padgett joins Sheriffs backing Jay Collins for Governor

WLRN: New law lets state sell 'surplus' conservation land to be used for agriculture

Times: Trump says he'd consider hiring DeSantis next year: 'He's doing a good job'

FlaPol: Source: Evan Power a favorite to secure Donald Trump endorsement in CD 2

Democrat: With the clock ticking, Florida budget negotiations continue
FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis trying to figure out 'timing' of property tax phaseout
FlaPol: 'Leaders in the world': Byron Donalds outlines ambitious education vision
FlaPol: Paul Renner seeks crackdown on Muslim immigration, Sharia law
Times: In Florida schools, a debate unfolds: What does civics mean in 2026?
WLRN: Florida health officials report another seven measles cases
Democrat: Final cuts: Leon County School Board slashes \$7.8 million from budget
Democrat: Limited Apalachicola oyster season delivers 'a breath of fresh air'
Politico: Beyond the brackets, Florida seeks college sports solutions amid possible Trump action
WUSF: Florida Board of Governors task force delves into the fiscal future of college sports
Democrat: Florida higher education leaders grapple with college sports changes
WLRN: The fruit that made Florida is quickly disappearing
Bradenton Herald: Ron DeSantis says he isn't ruling out another presidential bid: 'We'll see'
FlaPol: Byron Donalds says if Ron DeSantis can't get property taxes repealed, he'll finish the job
News4JAX: DeSantis suggests eliminating TSA. Critics warn of potential safety risks while supporters say it could boost efficiency
CBS Miami: Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signs sweeping farm bill banning local gas-powered equipment restrictions
FlaPol: Governor signs 'really significant' Florida Farm Bill
FlaPol: 2025 extended Session cost Florida taxpayers more than \$259K
Post: FIU student sues university over inquiry into offensive group chat
News-Press: How could Florida union law change SW Florida teacher, worker rights?
WUSF: Mosaic wants to expand its waste pile near Tampa Bay, raising environmental concerns
Post: FWC offering reward for info on mutilated great hammerhead shark
WUSF: Largest 'marine bioinvasion' of sargassum ever recorded heading to Florida, Caribbean
Herald: Florida has a new way to file complaints about prayer suppression in schools
Times: These students opposed cellphone restrictions. They still see problems

ON THE DOCKET THIS WEEK

FRIDAY, March 27

- INDEPENDENT EDUCATION - Friday, 9 a.m. - The Commission for Independent Education under the state Department of Education is holding a meeting on reports involving non-degree granting institutions. Location: Orlando Marriott Lake Mary, 1501 International Parkway, Lake Mary.

Here are key dates for 26-27

TBD -	Special Session to deal with Budget and other unfinished business
Mid-April -	Special Legislative Session to deal with Congressional Redistricting
June 9-12	FSBA Summer Meeting – Tampa
June 11 –	Small District Breakfast – SSDCC Annual Meeting
June 23-26 –	FAC Annual Conference – Orlando
June 24 -	Small County Coalition Summer Meeting
August 18 –	Primary Elections
Sept 16-17 –	FAC Policy Conference – Jacksonville
Nov 3 –	General Election
Nov. 17-19-	Rural Summit – Ocala – Sponsored by FREDA
Dec 2-4 –	Florida Association of Counties Legislative Conference
Dec 2 -	Small County Coalition Breakfast –
Dec 2-4 –	FSBA Legislative Conference – Tampa
Dec 3 -	Small District Breakfast – SSDCC Legislative Meeting
Dec - Feb. -	Legislative Committee Meetings
March 2 -	Legislature convenes
March 16 -	Small County Coalition – Legislative Reception
March 17 -	Small School District Council Consortium
March 17-18-	Rural Days 2027 – Tentative
March 17-18 –	FSBA Days in the Legislature
March 17 -	Florida Association Counties – Legislative Day
April 30 -	Legislative Session 60 Days – Sine Die!

The Briefing is prepared by Chris Doolin

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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

If you want to see all of the latest briefings – you can go www.smallcountycoalition.org or www.ssdcc.org and click on the red Briefing button

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