

5 days left in Regular Session

A lot still alive!

The Briefing for Sunday, March 8, 2026

The Last Briefing Wednesday, March 4-, 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 |](#)

House and Senate will be on the floor for the rest of the session!

Legislative Calendar for Final Week of Regular Session

[Current House Calendar](#)

[Current Senate Calendar](#)

A Focus on Proposed Changes to the School Voucher Program

Content from the Wires

SB 318 a proposal from former Senate President Don Gaetz, R-Crestview, addresses problems with the school voucher system detailed in a state audit. It passed the Senate but has not been heard in the House. The [state audit](#) found that voucher money was not moving the way it was supposed to. The audit concluded that “funding did not follow the child,” counter to the rallying cry of school-choice proponents that tax dollars should be allocated to students, not schools. In 2024-2025, the program dished out \$3.17 billion in Family Empowerment Scholarship vouchers and recorded another \$804.5 million in scholarship programs funded through corporate tax credits, totaling nearly \$4 billion dollars.

While the House discussed the audit and accounting shortfalls in the school voucher program, it did not propose its own solution.

[SB 318](#) proposes better management of billions of tax dollars. The Senate budget separates money for school vouchers from public K-12 schools for accounting purposes in the budget while the House budget does not. What will happen if another year passes without a voucher fix? Here's what Senator Gaetz says,

“Everything will get worse. There will be more students who won't be able to be tracked. Taxpayers will be paying for them but we won't know where they are. We won't know if the right money is going to the right place or the right student. More families who are relying on family empowerment scholarships to support homeschooling will be waiting for payments for weeks and months longer than they should.”

Which legislators are Term-Limited?

18 House members and 4 Senators face term limits.

Term-limited House Members		Senators Serving their final term
"Alex" Andrade	Chip LaMarca	Lori Berman
"Chuck," Brannan, III	Lawrence McClure	Joe Gruters
James Buchanan	"Toby" Overdorf	Darryl Rouson

Fentrice Driskell Wyman Duggan Dr. Anna V. Eskamani Michael "Mike" Gottlieb "Ms Dee" Hart-Lowman Dotie Joseph	Daniel Perez "Will," Robinson, Jr. Tyler I. Sirois David Smith Josie Tomkow Susan L. Valdés	Tom Wright
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Finishing On Time? No Way!

To finish on time, the House and Senate would have to complete negotiations on a proposed budget for FY 26-27 by Tuesday. As you may know, the constitution requires a 72-hour “cooling off” period before lawmakers can vote on the budget agreement. .

Where are some of the key bills?

This past week – some bills moved – a lot of bills didn’t! As the clock ticks toward the 60 day authorized time for the 2026 Regular Session, the House and Senate are not any closer to a deal with the State Budget than they were a week ago.

Budget Gap!

- Big picture – there is a \$1.5 billion difference between the House and Senate budget proposals. The Legislative leadership have yet to reach agreement on how much to allocate for negotiations between budget conference committees.
- The Bigger Picture – there is a fundamental difference in what the House and Senate would like to do! The House position – spend less money! The Senate proposal is less than FY 25-26 but is higher than the House proposal. The Senate proposes spending 115 billion. The House proposal totals \$113.58.

High Profile Bills

‘School Bill of Rights bill moves closer to passage – HB 1073 and SB 1620 contain identical language relating to a School Board member right to ask for information, meet with district staff, and speak about district issues publicly are both ready for floor action. The Senate Bill was amended in Senate Rules to be identical to the House Bill. The House bill has passed the House and is in Senate messages. The Senate considered SB 1756 would expand vaccine exemptions for public K-12 schools and create a new “conscience” category for parents to opt out of immunizations. The Senate is scheduled to take final action on the bill on Monday.

Senate Passes Union Certification Bill – The Senate has passed SB 1276 – revising the procedures for recertification of Unions representing teachers and other public sector workers as the designated bargaining agent. – HB 995 is on 2nd Reading and ready for House action. The bill is likely to pass!

Local Government Budget Transparency – SB 1566 and HB 1329 are bills outlining requirements for posting budget information and timeframes on county websites have moved in both the House and Senate. The current status is that the text of SB 1566 was amended onto HB 1329 and sent back to the House for consideration. The House will have to consider the bill amended by the Senate next week.

Blue Ribbon Sits on Senate 3rd reading. - For the second day, the Senate did not consider SB 534 for final action. The bill passed on 2nd Reading but will sit on 3rd reading until pulled up for consideration next week. That could be on Monday when the Senate convenes. The bill a new category of land planning for mega sites that could cover multiple counties. The proposal is only available to applicants with a minimum of 15,000 acres seeking approval for development and conservation plans. The Senate Bill faced significant opposition in its final committee and when it was considered Thursday afternoon on the Senate floor. There is significant opposition from both Democrats and Republicans. The House proposal, HB 299 has passed all committees and is waiting to be considered on the House floor. This will be one to watch closely!

Sovereign Immunity - SB 1366 raising liability caps from \$200,000 to \$350,000 and from \$300,000 to \$500,000 is reading for floor action in the Senate. The House bill – HB 145 – passed 3 weeks ago and is in messags to the Senate. Concerns exist regarding cost to rural school districts and small counties. There is likelihood that the caps could be increased higher before final action this session.

Status of Rural Renaissance - Important provisions in the Rural Renaissance proposal are included in the Senate tax package and the appropriation implementing bill.

- **SB 2502 – Budget Implementing Bill - Sections pertaining to Rural Renaissance** – Sections – 4, 5, 6, 7, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, and 99 - [Staff Analysis of SB 2502](#)
- **SB 7046 – Senate Tax Plan - Sections pertaining to Rural Renaissance** - Sections 8, 10, 11, and 18 through 38 -- Distribution Change and Definition Change for Fiscally Constrained Counties - [Staff Analysis of Senate Bill 7046](#)

Status of Tax Package

Senate Bill 7046 - Taxation - [SB 7046 - Staff Analysis of Senate Tax Package](#)

House Bill 7031 - Tax Package - [Staff Analysis for HB 7031](#)

Word Searchable Appropriation Proposals

Senate Budget Proposal - [SB 2500](#)

House Budget Proposal - [HB 5001](#)

Status of K-12 Funding

[Senate FEFP Proposal](#)

[House FEFP Proposal](#)

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

[Democrat: In Florida, 2 Capitols, 1 historic legacy: Why you should visit](#)

[FlaPol: Ron DeSantis pushes for AI reform as bill dies in Session](#)

[FlaPol: Differences emerge between Senate, House on transportation package](#)

[News-Press: Ideas dead or dying as Legislature staggers toward finish line](#)

[FlaPol: Senate honors Darryl Rouson's legacy of recovery advocacy](#)

[FlaPol: Senate temporarily postpones Blue Ribbon projects bill, but it's not dead yet](#)

[Florida Phoenix: House votes to spike local government net zero policies to reduce climate change](#)

[FlaPol: House passes HOA bill allowing owners to dissolve Boards, clarifying dispute resolution paths](#)

[Floridian: DeSantis Awards Over \\$9 Million Through Florida Job Growth Grant to Northeast Florida](#)

[Florida Phoenix: Florida Senate votes to ban local governments from spending on DEI](#)

[Sun-Sentinel: Florida House OKs tax cuts for guns, camping gear and American-made beer](#)

[FlaPol: Legislature passes DCF bill to prevent child separations based on false abuse accusations](#)

[FlaPol: Jerry Demings lands endorsements from Darren Soto, Buddy Dyer and more](#)

[The Capitolist: House passes tax cut bill that excludes corporate breaks](#)

[WUSF: Federal judge blocks DeSantis' foreign terrorist label of Muslim groups](#)

[Sun-Sentinel: Florida taxpayers likely on the hook for Alligator Alcatraz](#)

[News4JAX: USDA signs disaster declaration after Florida takes \\$3.1B in winter freeze losses](#)

[Floridian: Former State Rep. Charlie Stone Endorses Paul Renner for Governor](#)

[The Capitolist: Americans for Prosperity Action Backs Byron Donalds for Florida Governor](#)

[The Capitolist: Report: Government-owned broadband networks underperforming](#)

[WLRN: Pollen counts reach highest levels of year across Florida](#)

[WLRN: Florida House, Senate remain far apart on budget as session nears end](#)

[WUSF: Florida's 'medical freedom' bill heads to Senate floor](#)

[Herald: Florida Legislature won't pass vaccine exemption bill this session](#)

[FlaPol: Senate passes AI Bill of Rights as lawmakers debate parental opt-out](#)

[WLRN: Farm bill, stripped of food libel language, is headed to the governor](#)

[Democrat: Florida GOP's latest attack on DEI may threaten events, programs](#)

[FlaPol: DEI on chopping block \(again\): State lawmakers look to ban local diversity programs](#)

[FlaPol: House passes Live Local Act update further preempting localities on development, zoning](#)

[Democrat: Florida may expand Capitol Police patrols in Tallahassee](#)

[FlaPol: 2 firefighter organizations endorse Blaise Ingoglia in CFO race](#)

[FlaPol: House Republicans pass campus political activity bill amid Democrats' warning of 'chilling effect'](#)

[Herald Tribune: Push to speed up Florida public records release stalls at finish line](#)

[Times-Union: Rodman Dam removal for Ocklawaha River restoration clears state House](#)
[FlaPol: House approves Ocklawaha River restoration bill despite lawmakers fears for rural Florida](#)

On The Docket

MONDAY, MARCH 9

--- Legislative ---

Senate

- SENATE FLOOR SESSION - Monday, 1 p.m. The Senate Chamber, the Capitol. - The special order calendar before the Senate includes:
 - --- Blue Ribbon projects for developing large tracks of land (SB 534)
 - --- enhanced penalties for domestic violence if the offender has a prior conviction the same crime (SB 682),
 - --- the ability for a court to appoint a different Office of Criminal Conflict and Civil Regional Counsel instead of private counsel for an indigent defendant in some death penalty cases (SB 762),
 - --- to clarify and limit the amount of time a person has to file a civil action for employment discrimination after filing an employment discrimination complaint with the Florida Human Relations Commission or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (SB 1096),
 - --- to amend laws regarding septic systems and wastewater restrictions, including the removal of a requirement owners of residential properties of 10 acres or more within the Indian River Lagoon Protection program must connect to sewer or upgrade their septic system (SB 1510),
 - --- to clarify individual school board members' oversight authority (SB 1620),
 - --- and to increase penalties in sex offense crimes (SB 1750).
- FAREWELL ADDRESS - Sen. Joe Gruters, R-Sarasota, who was first elected to the Senate in 2018, is expected to give his farewell remarks on the floor around 11 a.m.
- SPECIAL ORDER CALENDAR - - Monday, 15 minutes after the completion of the floor session. - The Special Order Calendar Group will set the special order calendar for the following day. 401 Senate Office Building, the Capitol.

House

- HOUSE FLOOR SESSION - Monday, 1 p.m. The House Chamber, the Capitol. - The special order calendar for the House includes:
 - --- a measure to extend the life of a trust fund controlled by Gov. Ron DeSantis for emergencies (SB 7040),
 - --- nature-based coastal resiliency (SB 302),
 - --- in part allows coaches to be paid additional compensation from funds raised by boosters and other support organizations (SB 538),
 - --- that would lead to municipalities allowing people outside their boundaries to connect to utility services (SB 1014),
 - --- creates the Electric Bicycle Safety Task Force to recommend state laws regarding electric bicycles (SB 382),
 - --- prohibit the possession, sale, furnishing of nitrous oxide (SB 432),

- --- and in part require Citizens Property Insurance Corporation to establish a commercial lines clearinghouse for offers of coverage from approved surplus lines insurers (SB 1028).
- FAREWELL ADDRESSES - Farewell remarks are expected from Rep. Dianne Hart-Lowman, D-Tampa, Rep. Dotie Joseph, D-North Miami, Rep. Susan Valdés, R-Tampa, and Rep. Will Robinson, R-Bradenton.
- SPECIAL ORDER CALENDAR - Monday, 15 minutes upon adjournment of Session
- - Rules & Ethics Committee. Sumner Hall, 404 House Office Building, the Capitol.
- DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS - Monday, 10 a.m. - House Minority Leader Fentrice Driskell, D-Tampa, Leader Pro Tempore Christine Hunschofsky, D-Parkland, and Rep. Kelly Skidmore, D-Boca Raton, are set to hold a Zoom call with reporters. <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89173194224#success>

TUESDAY, MARCH 10

--- Legislative ---

Senate

- SENATE FLOOR SESSION - Tuesday, 10 a.m. - The special order calendar before the Senate includes:
 - --- a proposal to expand Florida's 'school guardian' program to colleges and universities (SB 896),
 - --- to modify the definition of a 'criminal gang member' as it pertains to criminal investigations and charges against suspected gang members (SB 536),
 - --- to direct the Department of Commerce create a pilot program where customers would be placed in a callback queue to receive a call at a later time, rather than having to wait on hold, and without dropping from their place in line (SB 1192),
 - --- authorizes the Florida Department of Transportation to fund projects at public vertiports (SB 1362),
 - --- and to create a new charge for indecent exposure of sexual organs while observing a child (SB 1742).
- PRESIDENT'S PORTRAIT - The unveiling of the portrait of President Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, is set for around 1 p.m.
- SPECIAL ORDER CALENDAR - Tuesday, 15 minutes after the completion of the floor session. - The Special Order Calendar Group will set the special order calendar for the following day. 401 Senate Office Building, the Capitol.

House

- HOUSE FLOOR SESSION - Tuesday, 11 a.m. - The House is on the floor. The House Chamber, the Capitol.
- FAREWELL ADDRESS - Farewell remarks are expected in the morning from Rep. Anna Eskamani, D-Orlando, and Rep. Toby Overdorf, R-Palm City, and in the afternoon from Rep. Chip LaMarca, R-Lighthouse Point, Rep. Alex Andrade, R-Pensacola, and Rep. Chuck Brannan, R-Macclenny.
- SPECIAL ORDER CALENDAR - Tuesday, 15 minutes upon adjournment of Session - Rules & Ethics Committee. Sumner Hall, 404 House Office Building, the Capitol.

OTHER SCHEDULED EVENTS:

- SUWANNEE RIVER DISTRICT - Tuesday, 9 a.m. - The Suwannee River Water Management District Governing Board is holding a meeting. District Headquarters, 9225 CR 49, Live Oak.
- LAKE SUMTER STATE COLLEGE BOARD - Tuesday, 9:30 a.m. - The Lake Sumter State College Board of Trustees Executive Committee is meeting ahead of the Public-Private Partnership Committee in advance of the board's March 25 meeting. 700 Almond St., Clermont.
- ST. JOHNS RIVER DISTRICT - Tuesday, 10 a.m. - The St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board is holding a meeting. District Headquarters, 4049 Reid Street, Hwy 100 West, Palatka.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

--- Legislative --

Senate

- SENATE FLOOR SESSION - Wednesday, 10 a.m. - The Senate is on the floor. Part of the day will include "local" bills, which address specific local government or special district issues. The Senate Chamber, the Capitol.
- SPECIAL ORDER CALENDAR - Wednesday, 15 minutes after the completion of the floor session. - The Special Order Calendar Group will set the special order calendar for the following day. 401 Senate Office Building, the Capitol.

House

- HOUSE FLOOR SESSION - Wednesday, 11 a.m. - The House is on the floor. The House Chamber, the Capitol.
- FAREWELL ADDRESS Farewell remarks are expected in the morning from Minority Leader Fentrice Driskell, D-Tampa, and Majority Leader Tyler Sirois, R-Merritt Island, and in the afternoon from Rep. Josie Tomkow, R-Polk City, and Rep. Lawrence McClure, R-Dover.

THURSDAY, MARCH 12

--- Legislative --

Senate

- SENATE FLOOR SESSION - Thursday, 10 a.m. - The Senate is on the floor. The Senate Chamber, the Capitol.
- SPECIAL ORDER CALENDAR - Thursday, 15 minutes after the completion of the floor session. - The Special Order Calendar Group will set the special order calendar for the following day. 401 Senate Office Building, the Capitol.

House

HOUSE FLOOR SESSION - Thursday, 10:30 a.m. - The House is on the floor. The House Chamber, the Capitol.

OTHER SCHEDULED EVENTS:

- SUPREME COURT RELEASES OPINIONS - Thursday, 11 a.m. - The Florida Supreme Court is scheduled to release opinions.

FRIDAY, March 13

--- Legislative --

Senate

- SENATE FLOOR SESSION - Friday, 10 a.m. - The Senate is on the floor. The Senate Chamber, the Capitol.

House

- HOUSE FLOOR SESSION - Friday, 10:30 a.m. - The House is on the floor. The House Chamber, the Capitol.

Here are key dates for 26-27

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!

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

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

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

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

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.ssdc.org and click on the red Briefing button

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