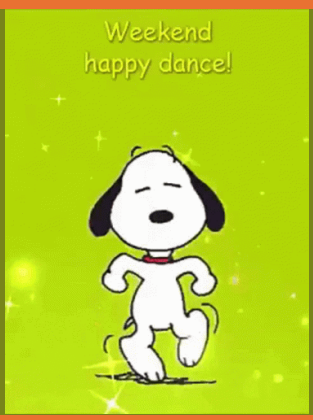


The Briefing for Friday, September18, 2026

The Last Briefing was Monday, September 14, 2026

What's the weather outlook?

10-Day Weather Forecast for Tallahassee, FL – The Weather Channel

College Football Scores and Schedules

https://www.espn.com/college-football/schedule

The best pre-game activities will be in Oxford, Mississippi -with the return of LSU Coach Lane Kiffin!

Florida Teams at play – my picks!

Tonight

Miami at Wake Forest

Tomorrow

FSU at Alabama

FIU at FAU

Delaware State at USF

Georgia State at UCF

Tenn. State at FAMU

Florida at Auburn

Recent Poll show Statewide Races are tight!

The poll was conducted by St. Pete Polls - here's the data. The poll surveyed 913 likely General Election voters, weighted to Florida's active voter rolls: 42% Republican, 31% Democratic and 27% no-party or minor-party voters,

- **Amendment 3 –** the proposed property tax amendment is sitting at just 44.9% support with less than seven weeks left on the clock. To crack the required 60%, undecideds would need to break hard for the property tax amendment.
- **The Governor's Race** - Republican Donalds leads Democrat Jolly 44% to 43% for Governor. Nine percent remain undecided, and 4% chose someone else.
- **The race for U.S. Seante** - Republican U.S. Sen. Moody and Democratic Rep. Nixon are tied at 45%.

- **The Attorney General's race** - Republican James Uthmeier leads Democrat José Javier Rodríguez 43% to 42%. 15% remain undecided.

Florida State Board of Education Approves DOE budget request for 2027-28

Link to DOE/SBE Budget proposals for 27-28

This past Wednesday, the State Board of Education approved the DOE budget request for consideration by the 2027 Legislature. The link is comprehensive over 400 pages – however, you can word search to find a program or a specific item.

Next Steps in the Process - This proposal will be submitted to the Governor's Office. Under Florida state law (specifically Section 216.162, Florida Statutes), the Governor is required to submit a recommended state budget to the Legislature **at least 30 days prior to the start of the regular legislative session**. The 2027 Legislature will convene on March 2 – so the Governor's recommendation will come in on or before January 31st. Governor DeSantis may put forward a template, however, the next Governor will have their own proposal.

Here is an overview of key elements

Regarding the FEFP – it appears that the budget is relatively status quo. Also, the critical elements for small districts are included. Here are some highlights:

Overall funding increase – 2.88%

- **Increase per UFTE** – $269.19 - Amount per student - $9,604.33
- **Enrollment –**
  - the budget projects a drop of 18,505 student in District Unweighted FTE
  - Enrollment for Scholarship students – increase of 22,413.75
- **Taxation -** The RLE and DLE are projected at the current level.
- **Base Student Allocation** – increased by $90.86 a 1.86% increase.
- **Compression of the Discretionary** .748 is equalized to the Statewide average - $516,639,647.
- **Safe Schools** – Current funding
- **Federally Connected Supplement** – included with a .48% increase above current funding.
- **Small District Factor and Comparable wage factor** are included at current level.
- **Declining Enrollment** – funded at $50,476,447. This is a new item.
- **Regional Education Consortia** – funded at $6.8 million – maintaining what was obtained this year.
- **Special Facilities** - An amount of $259,916,238 is requested through a combination of PECO and General Revenue to provide funding for construction of Special Facility projects. *Note: The proposal does not include funding for Holmes, Bradford, or Columbia. It appears that the request is attempting to clear out the projects that have received funding in the prior year.* The following allocations represent a portion of the total funding for a three-year plan. Allocations will be made to public school districts as follows:
  - $51,600,209 - Hardee County - Hardee Senior High School - Replacement School (year two of project)
  - $43,841,171 - Lafayette County - Lafayette PK-12 Combination School (year two of project)
  - $34,020,144 - Baker County - Baker Middle School (year three of project)
  - $36,307,690 - DeSoto County - DeSoto High School (year three of project)

- $28,609,661 - Union County - PK-5 Lake Butler Elementary School (year three of project)
- $33,130,317 - Hendry County - LaBelle High School (year four of project)
- $32,407,046 - Wakulla County - Wakulla High School (year four of project)

State Board of Education Amends School Safety Rule to include A.I. Guardrails

Link to SBE Rule Governing A.I. in K-12

The Florida Board of Education has adopted rules for the use of artificial intelligence in K-12 public schools requiring school districts to amend their regulations on internet safety to include AI.

- School districts and Charter Schools will be required to notify parents if their student will be using an AI product. Parental consent will be required for AI use and the district will have to offer an alternative, non-AI instructional tool similar in instructional quality if a parent does not allow their child to use AI.
- School districts must finalize the policies by July 1, 2027 for the 2027-2028 school year. The policy must prohibit students from using AI to work on graded assignments or assessments unless explicitly permitted to do so by the instructor.
- Any AI used in grades PreK-5 will have to undergo an additional review for approval, and no AI instructional tools can be used to meet a student's social or emotional needs; to simulate an emotional relationship with a student or use relationship-building or anthropomorphic design features to encourage a student to interact with the AI product.
- Teachers and administrators will also be required to undergo training regarding AI risks, limitations, safety and compliance, and students will also not be able to use AI unsupervised. School personnel must also be able to immediately suspend or disable the AI product without vendor assistance.
- Districts must prioritize vendors that keep student data within the United States, and vendors cannot sell, monetize, profile or commercially exploit data to train commercial AI models.

Put this on your radar – Mealy Bugs are becoming huge issue for the AG industry
Governor DeSantis Issues Exec. Order including Mealy Bugs in Emergency Order

Governor DeSantis Executive Order – 26-163 Mealy bugs

Mealy bugs are spreading throughout Ag lands in Florida - particularly impacting pastures, grasses, and Sugar Cane. An invasive pasture mealybug infestations are impacting agricultural and pasture lands in Florida, threatening cattle feed and sugarcane. [1, 2]

Key Details of the Infestation

- **The Pest:** The pasture mealybug (*Heliococcus summervillei*) is a tiny insect covered in a white, fluffy, waxy coating. It injects a toxin while feeding on plant sap, which rapidly kills the grass. [1, 2, 3, 4]
- **Spread and Location:** First detected in South Florida in late May 2026, the pest has rapidly expanded to at least 16 counties (primarily south of I-4, including Polk, Highlands, and Palm Beach). It hitches rides on farm equipment, clothing, and travels via the wind. [1, 2, 3, 4]

- **Residential Risk:** State experts note the bug has **not** yet been found in residential home lawns or turfgrass in Florida, though Texas populations have attacked St. Augustine grass. [1, 2, 3, 4]

Symptoms of Infestation

- Rapid yellowing of leaves that progresses to red or purple discoloration.
- Grass that appears severely drought-stressed even after heavy rainfall.
- Overall stunting, poor root development, and eventual plant death. [1, 2]

Hunting, Fishing, and Camping / Second Amendment Sales Tax Holiday

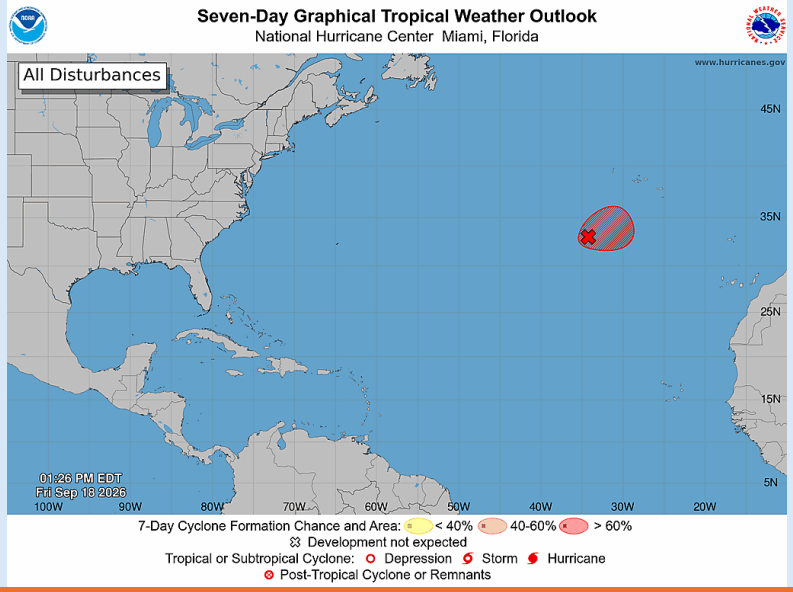
September 1, 2026 – December 31, 2026 [1]

- **Details:** This four-month multi-month tax break covers outdoor gear, camping equipment, firearms, and ammunition. [1]
- **Exempt Items & Limits:**
  - Firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment have **no price caps**.
  - Camping supplies (tents up to $200, sleeping bags up to $50, portable camping stoves, lanterns under $30) and fishing supplies (rods/reels up to $75, tackle boxes up to $30) carry specific price limits. [1]

A full list of items eligible for the 2026 Hunting, Fishing and Camping Sales Tax Holiday is available at **FloridaRevenue.com/HuntFishCamp**.

Tropical Weather Outlook

https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/



On The Docket

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

- AUGUST UNEMPLOYMENT - Friday, 10 a.m. - The Florida Department of Commerce will release the August unemployment report. - The Department website.
- FINANCE REPORTS - Friday - State candidates and political committees face a deadline for filing reports showing finance activity between Sept. 5 and Sept. 11. - Department of State, Division of Elections, Bureau of Election Records, R.A. Gray Building, Room 316, 500 South Bronough Street, Tallahassee.

- ST. JOHNS RIVER BUDGET - Friday, 5:05 p.m. - The St. Johns River Water Management District Governing Board is to review the budget and tax rate for fiscal year 2026-2027. - 4049 Reid Street, Hwy 100 West, Palatka.

Headlines Around The State

Friday - SEP. 18, 2026

Times-Union: Florida sheriffs launch ad blitz against Amendment 3

Capitolist: Florida first responders warn Amendment 3 could slow 911 response

DBNJ: U.S. Rep Cory Mills' munitions plant explodes in Taylor County

Herald: Florida House candidate attended white nationalist Charlottesville rally

Thursday - SEP. 17, 2026

News4JAX: 'Florida will not outsource childhood to a chatbot': State adopts new rules for AI in the classroom

Politico: Florida puts controls on AI in schools amid broader fears of burgeoning industry

FlaPol: Florida led U.S. in drownings from 2020 to 2024, study says

WLRN: Debate about data centers emerges in Donalds-Jolly gubernatorial race

Ledger: Two Polk Republicans say they support Democrat David Jolly

Times: GOP Florida House candidate attended white nationalist Charlottesville rally

Times-Union: Florida has $3 billion in unclaimed cash. Here's how to find yours

News4JAX: UNF trustees select Michael P. Shannon as next university president

Herald: Property tax cut could cost Miami's public hospital $64M. What it means for care

Sun-Sentinel: Palm Beach County School District cuts more than 200 jobs after enrollment drop

Wednesday - SEP. 16, 2026

Sun-Sentinel: Florida sheriffs, firefighters slam property tax amendment as a 'train wreck'

FlaPol: Emergency! First responders say Amendment 3 defunds the police

WLRN: Amendment 3 could reduce funding for Florida children's services, report warns

WUSF: State education officials looking to set ground rules for AI in higher education raise questions about the future

FlaPol: Ron DeSantis urges next Governor to preserve his law enforcement recruitment bonuses

TCPalm: Will data centers eye Florida County now that zoning has changed?

FlaPol: Orange County supports pressing pause on data centers to develop new rules

News4JAX: St. Johns County Sheriff defends Flock cameras, cites crimes solved as commissioners vote to approve $1.9B 2027 budget

Democrat: Leon commission scraps school zone speeding, Flock cameras

Tuesday - SEP. 15, 2026

Politico: DeSantis calls opposition to AI protections a 'losing position' for Republicans

FlaPol: Austin Rogers wants to represent CD 2, but is his family still living in Washington, D.C.?

FlaPol: Ashley Moody renews efforts to pressure federal regulators to expand red snapper recreational fishing permits

DBNJ: Florida ranks in top 10 for most expensive groceries in new report

Yahoo News: Can Byron Donalds claw back rural votes he lost in the primary?

FlaPol: Constitutional clash: Ron DeSantis, Florida GOP at odds over proposed boost to 'rainy-day fund'

WUSF: Florida's Amendment 3 could slash property taxes — and reshape local services

The Capitolist: Florida projects $1 billion budget deficit by 2030

TCPalm: DeSantis: Second Amendment Sales Tax Holiday continues in Florida

FlaPol: Gov. DeSantis promotes sales tax holiday for hunters and anglers

WUSF: More than 600 books were removed or discontinued from Florida schools last year

WLRN: Hunters, activists prepare as lottery opens for controversial Florida black bear hunt

Here are key dates for 26-27

2026 Events

Nov 3 –	General Election
Nov. 17-19-	Rural Summit – Ocala – Sponsored by FREDA
Nov. 30 – Dec. 3	Legislative Committee Meetings
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– SSDCC Legislative Meeting in Tampa

2027 Events

January 4 – 7	Legislative Committee Meetings
January 11 – 14	Legislative Committee Meetings
February 1 – 4	Legislative Committee Meetings
February 8 – 11	Legislative Committee Meetings
February 15 – 18	Legislative Committee Meetings
March 2 -	Legislature convenes
March 16 -	Small County Coalition/Small School District Joint Legislative Reception
March 17 -	Small School District Council Consortium Legislative Briefing
March 17 -	Florida Association Counties – Legislative Day
March 17-18-	Rural Days 2027 – Tentative
April 30 -	Legislative Session 60 Days – Sine Die!
June 9 – 11	FSBA/FADSS Annual Summer Conference, Kissimmee, FL
June 10 -	Small School District Council Consortium – Annual Meeting
June 22-25	FAC Annual Summer Meeting - Hilton Orlando
June 22 -	Small County Coalition Annual Meeting Breakfast – Orlando
Nov. 30 – Dec. 3	FSBA/FADSS 82nd Annual Joint Conference, Kissimmee, FL

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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