



2026 Legislative Session Weekly Update- Week 9

Week 9

Week 9 marked the conclusion of the 2026 Florida Legislative Session, though the state budget remains unresolved. While the regular 60-day session adjourned on March 13, negotiations between the House and Senate over the Fiscal Year 2026–27 budget stalled, leaving a roughly \$1.5 billion gap between the chambers' proposals. Because the Legislature did not reach agreement on top line spending allocations, formal budget conference negotiations did not occur. Lawmakers are expected to return for a special session in mid April to finalize the budget and related implementing bills before the June 30 deadline. In addition, the Legislature will reconvene April 20 through April 24 for a separate special session on congressional redistricting. Property tax reform proposals also remain unresolved and may be addressed during the extended budget process.

Despite the budget impasse, lawmakers passed several significant bills affecting counties and local governments. **CS/CS/HB 655** related to attorney client meetings under the Bert J. Harris Private Property Rights Protection Act passed both chambers and was ordered enrolled. The bill allows counties and other government agencies to privately meet with legal counsel during the 90-day notice period after a Bert Harris claim is filed to discuss litigation strategy and potential settlement, while still requiring public notice, transcription, and eventual disclosure of the meeting record.

Lawmakers also approved **SB 484** addressing large scale data centers and other high electricity demand facilities. The bill prohibits nondisclosure agreements related to data center development discussions, preserves local government land use authority over siting decisions, and requires the Public Service Commission to adopt tariffs ensuring that large electricity users pay the full infrastructure and service costs associated with their operations.

Another major measure passed during the session was **HB 145**, which revises Florida's sovereign immunity law. The legislation increases liability caps for tort claims against the state and its political subdivisions from \$200,000 per person and \$300,000 per incident to \$350,000 per person and \$500,000 per incident. The bill also modifies claims procedures and litigation timelines and will take effect October 1, 2026, prompting counties to evaluate risk management practices, insurance coverage, and reserve policies.

Lawmakers also adopted **SB 504**, establishing statewide standards for local governments that choose to implement body camera programs for code inspectors. The bill creates a new section of Florida Statutes requiring written policies, training, and public records compliant data retention for body camera footage but does not mandate that local governments adopt such programs. The measure takes effect July 1, 2026.

Several high profile proposals that could have significantly impacted counties ultimately failed to pass before the end of session. **SB 354** and **HB 299**, which would have created



a new “Blue Ribbon Projects” framework for extremely large developments exceeding 15,000 acres, did not advance. The proposal would have allowed large scale projects to proceed under a state framework that could override certain local land use regulations while preserving a portion of the land for conservation and agriculture.

Legislation to eliminate county local business taxes also failed. **SB 122** and **HB 103** would have repealed the statutory framework allowing counties to levy local business tax receipts, potentially eliminating more than \$50 million in annual local revenue statewide.

Other unsuccessful proposals included **HB 27**, which sought to place a constitutional amendment on the 2026 ballot imposing a 12-year term limit on county commissioners and school board members, **SB 588** and **HB 105**, which would have created a new legal process allowing businesses to challenge local government enforcement actions, and **HB 605**, which proposed prohibiting local governments from providing most forms of public funding to nonprofit organizations.

Overall, the 2026 Legislative Session concluded with several significant policy changes affecting counties, particularly in areas such as sovereign immunity, property rights litigation, and energy infrastructure regulation. However, the state budget and other major policy issues remain unresolved and will be addressed during upcoming special sessions.

