



## 2026 Legislative Session Weekly Update- Week 1-3

### Week 1

The Legislature returns today for the official start of the 2026 legislative session, the final one during Gov. Ron DeSantis' term as governor. Much of the session is expected to be dominated by a debate over tax policy, most specifically whether to and if so how to cut property taxes. Lawmakers are also expected to take their first in-depth look at new artificial intelligence technology regulations and could take up legislation limiting the construction of the data centers that power that tech. In the background are changes in the nation's economy that could require lawmakers to be more disciplined in writing the state budget and a strong desire in an election year not to repeat the delay on finishing the budget that kept lawmakers in the capital longer than scheduled last year, particularly since DeSantis has already said they'll return in April for a special session on redrawing congressional districts.

Senate President Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, and House Speaker Daniel Perez, R-Miami, opened the 2026 regular session on Tuesday speaking about the importance of affordability for Floridians, but gave few details on how the Republican-dominated Legislature might ease cost-of-living concerns. The two GOP leaders face the prospect of a shrinking budget, and pressure from Gov. Ron DeSantis to cut property taxes, but hope to have a smoother 60-day session than last year's, which was extended 45 days because of a stalemate over the state spending plan and tax package, and quarrels over homeowners' insurance, the elimination of homestead property taxes, and immigration policy. Perez's speech on Tuesday reflected on last session's "several surprising twists and turns," but noted that members "have been called to spend the next nine weeks conducting the business of the people" and emphasized the need to move forward. "Difficult doesn't mean impossible and hard isn't an excuse for cowardice," Perez said. "Affordability and insurance. Taxes and the economy. Prescription drug prices and the rising cost of public benefits. We must ensure Florida stays at the center of our planet's race for the stars, and that our infrastructure keeps pace with our growth," Perez said. "Every child in Florida, from the unborn to our college graduates, deserves a fair shot at finding their own American Dream." Across the



rotunda, Albritton made clear that he will again push for the passage of a rural economic development initiative (SB 250) after it fell apart in the House last year. “As I begin my last Session as Senate President, I’m renewing my personal focus on a rural renaissance in the state of Florida,” said Albritton. He also noted that he may prefer tackling major property tax relief after the regular session, which could collide with House priorities. An additional point of contention with timing relates to President Donald Trump’s push for mid-decade congressional redistricting. Gov. Ron DeSantis has called a special session on redistricting for April, after the regular session for drawing new boundaries. A timeline for aligning the various issues remains unclear, even to Perez. “Honestly, I don’t know what is going to happen,” he said. “That’s okay, because the journey is the best part.”

## Week 2

Week 2 of the Florida Legislative Session was highlighted by a strong local presence in Tallahassee, with commissioners attending a series of meetings and conferences to advocate for Martin County and the Treasure Coast. The Stuart/Martin Chamber hosted Treasure Coast Days, bringing together regional leaders and legislators to spotlight the Treasure Coast and provide updates on key legislation expected to move forward this session. Discussions focused on major policy priorities, including property taxes, insurance affordability, and education, all of which remain top concerns for local governments and residents.





Commissioners also participated in the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) Conference, where department heads from across the state shared updates on their agencies and outlined ongoing efforts to support counties and strengthen statewide coordination. The week provided a valuable opportunity to collaborate, exchange information, and advocate collectively for Martin County, the Treasure Coast, and the State of Florida.

### **Week 3**

Week 3 of the Florida legislative session began with improved budget projections, as state economists increased general revenue estimates by \$572.5 million across the 2025-26 and 2026-27 fiscal years, despite warning that economic uncertainty remains elevated. The revised forecast gives lawmakers added flexibility as they craft the state budget. Transportation and affordability issues also remained in focus, with Florida gas prices spiking and then easing amid continued volatility, highlighting ongoing cost pressures for residents.

Several policy proposals advanced addressing housing, public safety, and health. Bipartisan legislation aimed at expanding housing access for homeless veterans moved forward, including SB 1602, which would create the Homes for Veterans Property Management Incentive Pilot Program, and SB 1604, which would establish related trust funds, with House companions HB 1481 and HB 1483. The Senate Transportation Committee approved SB 86, responding to a fatal Turnpike crash by requiring the arrest of unauthorized immigrant truck drivers and seizure of commercial vehicles. Lawmakers also advanced SB 980, the Florida Age Gate Act, restricting marketing and display of non-FDA authorized vaping products to protect minors. Pool safety legislation was combined and approved through a committee substitute of SB 658 and SB 608 to strengthen drowning prevention requirements in rental and vacation properties.

Property tax relief remained a central issue, as the House advanced multiple proposed constitutional amendments, including HJR 213 to slow growth in taxable property values under the Save Our Homes cap, along with HJR 203 and HJR 209 addressing broader exemptions. A narrower tax proposal, SB 434 with House companion HB 617, moved to prevent property appraisers from increasing a home's taxable value due solely to storm





hardening improvements. Transportation safety legislation also advanced, with SB 382 and HB 243 establishing electric bicycle safety standards, task forces, and data collection requirements. Meanwhile, the House approved HB 1421, requiring managers of conservation lands to consider cattle grazing in land management plans, a proposal that prompted debate over environmental impacts and land use priorities.

