

**PEACE RIVER MANASOTA REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY AUTHORITY**  
**BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**  
*June 5, 2026*

**REGULAR AGENDA**  
**ITEM 3**

**2026 Legislative Session Review**

---

**Presenter -** Laura Donaldson - Florida Environmental, Fire & Government Law, P.A.

**Recommended Action -** **Status Report.** This item is presented for the Board's information and no action is required.

The 2026 Florida legislative regular session began on January 13<sup>th</sup> and has been extended until May 29<sup>th</sup> to complete work on the state budget as required by law. Laura Donaldson with Florida Environmental, Fire & Government Law, P.A. will recap the Session and discuss legislative action affecting the Authority's adopted legislative priorities.

**Budget Action** – No action is needed.

**Attachments:**

Presentation Materials

# 2026 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Laura Jacobs Donaldson, B.C.S.

[www.floridaefglaw.com](http://www.floridaefglaw.com)

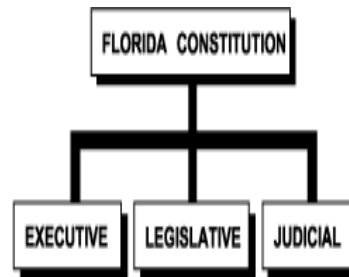
813-495-0575

Tampa and Tallahassee



1

## Dysfunctional Conflict



2

# 2026 Florida Legislature

## Regular Session

- 60 days but no Budget
- 1,896 bills filed
- Passed by both Chambers: 237 bills
- Approved by Governor: 86 bills
- Pending on Governor's Desk: 17 bills
- Awaiting Presentation: 133 bills

(as of May 17, 2025)

## Special Session

- 2026D Special Session: Congressional Redistricting, AI Bill of Rights, and Medical Freedom (Vaccines) – only redistricting passed
- 2026E Session: Budget, Conforming Bills, and Implementing Bills
- Special Session on Property Tax Reform: ????
- Special Sessions on Other Topics: Likely

## Majorities

House: 85-34 (R-D)  
Senate: 27-12-1 (R-D-I)

(as of May 17, 2026)



3

# Major Issues

Rural Renaissance  
Property Tax Reform  
Budget  
Growth Management  
Data Centers  
AI Bill of Rights  
Health Care Affordability  
Use of Emergency Funds  
Utility Services  
Universal E-Verify  
Vaccine Mandates  
Medical Malpractice  
IT Overhaul



4

# Budget

## *Proposed Budgets*

- Governor DeSantis: \$117.4 billion
- Senate: \$115 billion
- House: \$113.6 billion

## *Special Session*

### *Proposed Budget/Allocations*

- Total Budget: TBD\*
- General Revenue Fund Allocations: \$51.98 billion
  - \$1.38 billion for ag/environment
- Conference committee has agreed to delay PFAS rulemaking for statewide cleanup rules for PFAS in drinking water, groundwater, and soil requirement for another year
- Water Projects: TBD

(as of May 17, 2026)



5

# Appropriation Request: Surface Water Expansion Project

*Senate Form Number 1214 by Boyd/House Form Number 3139 by Buchanan*

\$7,000,000 (5% of project cost)

Senate Budget: Not included

House Budget: \$3,500,000

1774 GRANTS AND AIDS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND  
NONSTATE ENTITIES - FIXED CAPITAL OUTLAY  
GRANTS AND AID - WASTEWATER GRANT PROGRAM  
FROM WATER PROTECTION AND  
SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM TRUST FUND



6

## Appropriation Request: Regional Transmission System Expansion

*Senate Form Number 1215 by Boyd/House Form Number 1576 by Conerly*

Peace River Manasota Regional Water Supply Authority Regional Transmission System

\$3,000,000 (18% of project cost)

Senate Budget: Not included

House Budget: \$1,500,000

1774 GRANTS AND AIDS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND  
NONSTATE ENTITIES - FIXED CAPITAL OUTLAY  
GRANTS AND AID - WASTEWATER GRANT PROGRAM  
FROM WATER PROTECTION AND  
SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM TRUST FUND



7

## Passed Legislation



8

## Department of Environmental Protection

### CS/CS/CS/HB 1417 – LaMarca (Chapter 2026-2, Laws of Florida)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- repeals the Environmental Regulation Commission (ERC) and removes reference to the ERC throughout statute.
- requires applicants for ERPs to incorporate site specific and appropriate additional protections in the development and implementation of an erosion and sediment control plan for the construction of a solar facility.
- creates provisions allowing public-private partnerships for coastal resiliency projects and authorizes DEP to encourage P3 investment in coastal resiliency projects.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



9

## Stormwater Treatment

### CS/CS/SB 848 - Truenow (Chapter No. 2026-60, Laws of Florida)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- revises Florida law governing stormwater treatment and water quality enhancement programs.
- updates how compensating stormwater treatment and water quality enhancement credits are generated, used, and regulated in the state.
- authorizes the use of water quality enhancement area credits by permit applicants or governmental entities to meet ERP stormwater treatment performance standards or achieve required net water quality improvements.
- authorizes DEP to adopt rules implementing these provisions and allows provisional permits for water quality enhancement areas while rules are being developed.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



10

## Conservation Lands

### CS/HB 441 – Kendall (Chapter No. 2026-44, Laws of Florida)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- increases notice and transparency requirements when the state or a water management district considers selling or exchanging conservation land.
- requires the WMD governing board to publish certain information on its website related to the proposed sell and exchange at least 30 days before meeting. This information must include:
  - The district-owned parcels of land for sale or proposed for exchange.
  - The privately-owned parcels proposed for exchange.
  - The portions of those parcels that will be preserved in a permanent conservation easement.
  - A statement from the WMD explaining why those lands are no longer needed for conservation purposes.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



11

## Data Centers

### CS/CS/SB 484 – Avila (Chapter No. 2026-65, Laws of Florida)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- expresses legislative intent that the development and operation of large-scale data centers be managed under a permitting framework that ensures water resources are used in the public interest, are not harmful to water resources, and are consistent with local zoning and comprehensive plans.
- prohibits WMD/DEP from issuing a WUP to a large-scale data center applicant if the proposed use of water is harmful to the water resources of the area or is prohibited by applicable local zoning regulations or comprehensive plans – it must meet the 3 pronged test.
- requires the use of reclaimed water in lieu of surface water or groundwater by a large-scale data center when specified conditions are met.
- requires additional application documentation for data centers requesting over 100,000 gallons per day:
  - requires a hearing on the permit application for these large-scale data centers.
  - requires that proposed WUP modifications must be treated as a new application.
- requires the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability to contract for a study of policy considerations related to the construction and operation of large-scale data centers.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



12

## OGSR/Cybersecurity

### SB 7024 – Governmental Oversight and Accountability (Not Sent to Governor Yet)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- expands the current cybersecurity public record and public meeting exemption applicable to all state and local governmental agencies to incorporate cybersecurity-related exemptions that currently apply to specific agencies.
- maintains the existing exemptions for information relating to critical infrastructure and for cybersecurity incident information reported pursuant to law.
- revises the existing general cybersecurity public record and public meeting exemption to include, but not limited to:
  - network schematics, encryption information, or information identifying detection, investigation, or response practices related to cybersecurity incidents, including breaches, if disclosure could facilitate unauthorized access to or unauthorized modification, disclosure, or destruction of data, information, or existing or proposed information technology (IT) or operational technology (OT).
  - information relating to processes or practices designed to protect data.
  - portions of risk assessments, evaluations, audits, and other reports of an agency's cybersecurity program if disclosure could facilitate unauthorized access to or unauthorized modification.
  - login credentials.
  - insurance and self-insurance coverage limits and deductibles, and other risk mitigation coverages.

Effective Date: Upon becoming a law.



13

## Local Government Cyber Security

### CS/CS/HB 1085 – Miller (Not Sent to the Governor Yet)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- creates the Local Government Cybersecurity Protection Program (the Program) to be administered by the Florida Digital Service (FLDS) whose purpose is to assist eligible local governments with mitigating and defending against cybersecurity threats, which include, but are not limited to, ransomware incidents.
- authorizes the award of information technology (IT) commodities and services directly to local governments for use in developing and enhancing an awarded local government's cybersecurity risk management program consistent with the Local Government Cybersecurity Act.
- allows local governments to purchase IT commodities and services from the contracts managed by FLDS under the Program even if the local government does not apply for or receive a grant award.
- requires FLDS to enter into data-sharing agreements with local governments to facilitate the collection, analysis, and exchange of security-related information to support the detection, prevention, and response to cybersecurity incidents consistent with the State Cybersecurity Act.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



14

## Claims Against the Government

### HB 145 – McFarland (Not Sent to the Governor Yet)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- increases the cap on the recovery of awards against a governmental entity to \$350,000 per person from \$200,000.
- increases the cap for multiple awards arising from the same incident to \$500,000 from \$300,000.
- clarifies that attorneys' fees are 25% of any funds recovered as a result of judgment or settlement.
- decreases statute of limitations for negligence claims against a local government to 2 years and requires presuit notices to be filed no later than 18 months.

Effective Date: October 1, 2026



15

## Faster State Payments for Rural Special District Projects

### CS/HB 273 – Johnson (Not Sent to the Governor Yet)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- requires agency agreements that provide state or federal financial assistance to special districts located, in whole or in part, in a rural community or rural area of opportunity, or that provide water and wastewater services within a rural area of opportunity, to include a provision allowing the agency to directly pay the special district's invoices, rather than reimbursement.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



16

## Foreign Influence

### CS/CS/CS/HB 905 – Persons-Mulicka (Chapter No. 2026-66, Laws of Florida)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- establishes ethics restrictions for public officials and employees, prohibiting them from soliciting or accepting gifts or anything of value from foreign countries of concern or designated foreign terrorist organizations.
- creates restrictions on government contracts, information technology procurement, and access to personal data involving entities linked to foreign sources of concern.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



17

## Prohibited Governmental Policies Regulating Greenhouse Gas Emissions

### CS/HB 1217 – Snyder (Chapter No. 2026-45, Laws of Florida)

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- prohibits a governmental entity from implementing, administering, or enforcing any program or joining any organization that has a policy of:
  - establishing a statewide, regional, or geographic limit or cap on the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that results from the use, production, or consumption of any product or from any activity.
  - requiring or incentivizing a governmental entity or any person in this state to participate in an emissions trading program.
- prohibits a governmental entity from using, paying, or distributing public funds in any manner that supports, implements, or advances a net zero policy by doing any of the following:
  - providing procurement or purchasing preferences for a product or vendor on the basis that the procurement or purchase of such product or from such vendor will advance or support a net zero policy.
  - providing procurement or purchasing preferences for any goods, including, but not limited to, vehicles, equipment, appliances, or other products, based solely on the types or sources of fuel used by, or used in the production of, such goods.
  - using public funds to pay dues, membership fees, subscription fees, or charitable contributions to any nongovernmental agency or other private organization, including any trade association or organization, that:
    - adopts a net zero policy;
    - requires adoption of, or any commitment to support, a net zero policy as a condition of membership or of receiving any benefit of membership; or
    - uses such funds to advocate for a net zero policy.

Effective Date: July 1, 2026



18

## SWFWMD Confirmations

Brian J. Aungst, Jr.	Reappointment	Clearwater	3/2/2026-3/1/2030
Paul Jack Bispham	Reappointment	Myakka City	8/22/2025-3/1/2029
John E. Hall	Reappointment	Auburndale	8/22/2025-3/1/2029
James "Jim" Turner	Appointment	Sarasota	8/22/2025-3/1/2027
Nancy Hemmingway Watkins	Reappointment	Tampa	8/22/2025-3/1/2029



19

## Failed Legislation



20

# Property Tax Reform

- **No property tax constitutional amendment was placed on the November 2026 ballot.**
- Priority of House - 7 House Joint Resolutions.
- Only House Joint Resolution 203 passed the House.
  - Died in the Senate Appropriations Committee without ever having a Senate hearing.
- Senate committees held “learning sessions.”
- Estimate of \$100s millions negative impact to WMDs



21

# Property Tax Reform (cont.)

- HJR 201 Elimination of Non-school Property Tax for Homesteads
  - creates a full exemption for homestead properties for taxes levied by counties, cities, or special districts, but would not affect property taxes levied by school districts.
  - prohibits local governments from reducing funding for law enforcement services below a specified base year.
- HJR 203 Elimination of Non-school Property for Homesteads
  - creates a full exemption for homestead properties for taxes levied by counties, cities, or special districts, but would not affect property taxes levied by school districts over 10 years.
  - prohibits local governments from reducing funding for public safety services below a specified base year.
- HJR 205 Elimination of Non-School Property Tax for Homesteads for Persons Age 65 or Older
  - creates a full exemption for homestead properties owned by persons 65 or older for taxes levied by counties, cities, or special districts, but would not affect property taxes levied by school districts.
  - prohibits local governments from reducing funding for public safety services below a specified base year.
- HJR 207 Assessed Home Value Homestead Exemption of Non-school Property Tax
  - creates an exemption for a one-fourth of a homestead property’s value after current homestead exemptions, for taxes levied by counties, cities, or special districts.
  - prohibits local governments from reducing funding for law enforcement services below a specified base year.



22

## Property Tax Reform (cont.)

- HJR 209 Property Insurance Relief Homestead Exemption Non-school Property Tax
  - creates an alternative second homestead exemption that is \$200,000 more than the existing \$25,000 second homestead exemption that applies to the assessed value between \$50,000 and \$75,000 for homestead properties that have comprehensive homeowners insurance, for all ad valorem taxes other than school taxes.
  - prohibits local governments from reducing funding for law enforcement services below a specified base year.
- HJR 211 Accrued Save-Our-Homes Property Tax Benefit for Non-school Property Tax
  - allows the full amount (instead of the current limit of \$500,000) of any accrued Save Our Homes benefit (difference between the assessed value and the just or fair market value of a homestead) to transfer to a new home.
  - removes the requirement that a homeowner's benefit amount be reduced if the owner is downsizing to a smaller home.
  - prohibits local governments from reducing funding for law enforcement services below a specified base year.
- HJR 213 Modification of Limitations on Property Assessment Increases
  - provide that changes in assessments for individual properties will only occur once every 3 years for ad valorem taxes levied by counties, cities, and special districts. Increases in assessments for homestead properties will be limited to 3% or the change in inflation over the 3-year period, whichever is lower.
  - provides that increases in assessments of non-homestead property will be limited to 15% every third year.
  - prohibits increases are prohibited if the just value of the property is higher than the just value of the property the last time the assessment changed.
  - prohibits local governments from reducing funding for public safety services below a specified base year.



23

## Water Management Districts SB 1120 / HB 701

In addition to other revisions, the bill:

- amends laws concerning WMD funding, budgeting, and business practices.
- provides that WMD may not use state funds as a local match for any state grant program unless specifically appropriated for that purpose.
- authorizes a WMD to levy ad valorem taxes by referendum to finance the construction of capital improvement projects related to water supply, water quality, flood protection and floodplain management, and natural systems.
- limits WMD to 25 percent of available funding for projects included in the Statewide Flooding and Sea Level Rise Resilience program, annually.
- requires a section for each WMD's capital improvement plan for the current fiscal year and the next fiscal year, which will be incorporated in the district's five-year capital improvement plan.
- authorizes the Legislative Budget Commission to reject certain WMD budget proposals.
- specifies that a quorum is necessary for a water management district governing board to conduct official business and quorum is a majority of the members of the board, including vacancies.
- requires WMD for contractual services for the design, engineering, or construction of capital improvement projects costing \$20 million or more, to give preference to the lowest responsible and responsive bid, proposal, or reply that includes proof of district-defined acceptable minimum work experience, project-specific payment and performance bonds, and minimum warranty of two years beginning at substantial completion, or that includes proof of a comparable financial assurance mechanism, as defined by district rule.



24

## Special Districts HB 123

In addition to other provisions, the bill:

- limits the legal liability of independent special districts that make district lands and water areas available to the public for outdoor recreation.
- allows special districts to utilize purchasing agreements entered into by the state.
- authorizes independent special districts to conduct state and federal criminal history checks of district's employees, vendors, and certain users of the district's facilities.



25

## Commercial Construction Projects CS/SB 526 / CS/CS/HB 405

In addition to other provisions, the bill:

- makes provisions in construction contracts for a public works project void and unenforceable, unless otherwise required by federal or state law, which purport to eliminate or limit the rights of a contractor to:
  - recover costs, damages, or equitable adjustments, or to obtain a time extension, for delays in performance of the contract caused by the awarding body or an extension thereof.
  - obtain a time extension for a concurrent delay if the governmental entity, its agent, employee, or other person acting on its behalf contributed to the delay.
- severs the void and unenforceable provisions public construction contracts, and the remaining provisions remain effective.
- provides that the following do not render a contract void or unenforceable:
  - requiring notice of delay (and the acts or omissions that give rise to the delay) by the party claiming a delay.
  - allowing a governmental entity to recover liquidated damages for delays caused by contractors, or their subcontractors, agents, or employees.
  - providing for arbitration or other dispute settlement procedures to settle contract disputes.
- The newly created section applies to public construction contracts entered into on or after July 1, 2026.



26

## Governmental Agency Publication of Advertisements and Public Notices SB 380 / CS/CS/HB 1009

In addition to other provisions, the bill:

- modifies the definition of “publicly accessible website,” as it pertains to legal notices to mean such an entity’s official website, a private website designated by such an entity, a county’s official website, or a private website designated by the county in which such an entity is located.
- expands the options which a local government entity has for publishing its own legal notices if the cost is lower than the cost of newspaper publication.
- establishes timeframes for how long a public notice must appear on a publicly accessible website (at least two weeks).
- requires that public bid advertisements made by a governmental agency on a publicly accessible website be provided and accessible to the general public without charge.



27

## Public Records SB 770 / CS/HB 437

In addition to other provisions, the bill:

- revises agency obligations for responding to public record requests by providing that a failure to promptly acknowledge a request and respond in good faith constitutes a violation of the Public Records Act.
- requires a public records custodian, no later than 3 business days after receiving a public records request, to either provide the records, provide a good-faith estimate of the time required to produce the records and any costs that will be assessed, or deny the request, in whole or in part, with a written citation to the applicable statutory exemption.
  - Failure to do so prohibits the agency from imposing fees or costs.
- provides that an agency’s compliance with these requirements does not create a presumption in litigation that a public record request was lawfully delayed.
- requires custodians, upon request, to state in writing, the reasons for taking more than 15 days to produce the requested records or the reasons for determining that records are exempt or confidential, including the statutory citations relied upon.
- limits the defenses available to agencies in judicial proceedings by prohibiting agencies from asserting exemptions or justifications for delay that were not previously stated in written responses to the requester
  - a backlog of public record requests does not constitute a justification for delay.
- requires enhanced financial penalties for failure to comply.
- eliminates the requirement that 5-day written notice must be provided before filing a lawsuit in order to recover attorney fees.



28

Questions?

