Palm Beach County State Legislative Update

Committee Meetings — Week of December 1



Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Proposal to Protect Puppies in Florida

On November 25, 2025, Governor DeSantis announced a proposal to protect puppies in Florida. In partnership with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the state will develop standard practices to ensure ethical dog breeding. Through this proposal, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation will be directed to license dog breeders and hold accountable puppy mills that abuse dogs, whether by overbreeding them, leaving them out in extreme weather, cramming them into small cages, or limiting their access to water.

"In Florida, we will always fight to protect man's best friend," said DeSantis. "The proposal we announced today will end unethical puppy mills, hold accountable abusive breeders, and help shelter dogs find loving homes."

Additional proposal actions includes:

- Establishing a hotline for individuals to call and report abuse by breeders to better crack down on these bad actors.
- Requiring pet stores to offer their space to local shelters for adoption before they use that space to sell dogs from puppy mills. As shelters across the state face overcrowding, offering animals for adoption at pet stores will help save them from being euthanized.
- Developing additional legislation that provides for increased penalties for individuals who abuse or torture animals in front of a minor.

Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Proposal for Citizen Bill of Rights for Artificial Intelligence

On December 4, 2025, Governor Ron DeSantis announced a new legislative proposal to establish a Florida Artificial Intelligence Bill of Rights and strengthen regulations on hyperscale AI data centers. The initiative aims to protect consumer privacy, ensure data security, safeguard children, and prevent Floridians from bearing the financial or environmental burdens associated with large-scale AI infrastructure.

The Artificial Intelligence Bill of Rights creates a framework of consumer protections and reinforces laws already in place. It would reenact Florida's prohibitions on deepfakes and explicit AI-generated material, including depictions of minors, and bar state and local agencies from using China-based AI systems such as DeepSeek. The proposal also prohibits AI from using an individual's name, image, or likeness without permission, requires businesses to notify users when interacting with an AI system, and bans AI from providing licensed therapy or impersonating mental-health professionals. Additional measures include parental controls for minors' interactions with AI platforms, strict data-privacy requirements preventing the sale or sharing of personal information, and limits on insurers' use of AI in claims decisions.

The Data Centers proposal focuses on preventing Floridians from subsidizing hyperscale AI data centers and giving local governments more authority over their siting.

It prohibits utilities from raising rates to fund data-center development and bans taxpayer subsidies for Big Tech. Local governments would retain the power to block data centers within their jurisdiction, and new protections would ensure that water resources are not depleted or harmed by high-capacity facilities. To protect natural areas, the plan restricts data centers owned by foreign principals, prevents construction on agricultural or greenbelt-classified lands, and requires environmental safeguards such as setbacks, vegetative buffers, and noise-abatement reviews by FDOT.

Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia FAFO Audit Press Conference in West Palm Beach



On December 4, 2025, CFO Ingoglia announced that Palm Beach County overspent over $344 Million in FY 2025 as waste, fraud, and abuse of taxpayer funds. CFO Ingoglia also discussed that Palm Beach County's budget has increased 59%, over $878 million, over the last 5 years, while Palm Beach County's population has increased over 88,000 over the last five years. He noted that Palm Beach County has a new County Administrator Joe Abruzzo and has had conversations with County administration that are committed to looking at this and making fiscal adjustments and transparency and efficiency measures accordingly. CFO Ingoglia noted that he is always on the side of taxpayers.

Florida Senate President Ben Albritton on Congressional Redistricting



On December 3, 2025, President Albritton clarified that although there is national discussion about redistricting, the Florida Senate is not currently engaged in any mid-decade redistricting work. The Governor has signaled interest in considering the issue next spring, and Senate leadership will continue monitoring relevant legal developments that may affect Florida. Senators will be updated if circumstances change.

President Albritton emphasized the substantial legal scrutiny that can accompany redistricting. In past cycles, Florida's redistricting process triggered extensive litigation, and the Florida Supreme Court has previously narrowed legislative privilege in this area. As a result, sitting legislators may be required to turn over records or testify under oath about discussions with fellow lawmakers, staff, or outside groups attempting to influence the design of political maps. This history underscores the need for caution and adherence to constitutional constraints. Florida's Constitution imposes strict limits on what information legislators may consider when drawing congressional districts, prioritizing neutral, non-partisan criteria. Although no redistricting work is underway, President Albritton advised Senators to distance themselves from partisan-funded organizations or advocacy groups that could improperly attempt to influence a potential future map-drawing process. Maintaining independence from partisan pressure is essential to ensure compliance with constitutional standards.

Finally, President Albritton highlighted the importance of proper record retention. Even in the absence of active redistricting work, Senators may receive communications from outside parties about potential future efforts. Any correspondence, emails, texts, or electronic communications related to the enactment of new districts—whether on official or personal devices—may be legally significant and must be preserved in accordance with the Florida Constitution, state law, and Senate rules. President Albritton reminded Senators to treat these records as potentially permanent or archival.

Florida Legislature Hosts Committee Meetings

This past committee week, the Florida Legislature convened for a series of committee meetings, focusing on presentations from cabinet members, state agency leaders, staff, and professional associations. As several pieces of legislation were considered, lawmakers gathered valuable insights on a variety of pressing issues. Below is a summary of the key topics discussed.

House State Affairs Committee

On December 2, 2025, a package of proposed constitutional amendments that would slash property taxes for Florida homeowners cleared another hurdle, even as local governments warn the measures could severely undercut funding for essential services.

The House State Affairs Committee approved four proposals along party lines, including a sweeping plan to eliminate all non-school homestead property taxes (HJR 201). Analysts estimate that change alone would strip $14.1 billion from local communities' government budgets in its first year. The measures are part of a broader slate that Republican House Speaker Daniel Perez unveiled in October for the 2026 ballot.

Gov. Ron DeSantis has also pushed for property tax relief but criticized the House's multi-proposal strategy as likely to “create confusion” among voters, calling instead for a single amendment. But House Republicans say the governor hasn't offered his own plan. “It's been 300 days since the governor actually said that he wanted to deal with property taxes,” Palm City Republican Rep. Toby Overdorf, who chairs the House Select Committee on Property Taxes created by Perez in the spring, said this week. “We're still waiting on his proposal.”

In addition to eliminating non-school homestead taxes outright, the joint resolutions moving on to their third and final committee assignment include a bill (HJR 205) exempting homeowners 65 and older from non-school homestead taxes, legislation (HJR 209) creating a new $100,000 homestead exemption for insured properties, and a measure (HJR 211) allowing homeowners to transfer the full value of their “Save Our Homes” benefits when moving. All four proposals head next to the House Ways & Means Committee and, if passed by the Legislature, would need 60% approval from voters in the November general election for ratification.

Opponents, including Democrats and local governments, warn the cuts could squeeze funding for schools, infrastructure, emergency services, parks, and water management. Critics also argue the changes would shift tax burdens onto rental properties and businesses. A recent Realtor.com analysis projected that wiping out non-school homestead taxes could inflate home values by 7% to 9% — a boost for current owners but a potential setback for first-time buyers.

Several other property tax-related proposals were not taken up Tuesday, including a bill (HJR 203) that would phase out non-school homestead taxes over a decade by boosting the homestead exemption by $100,000 each year; legislation (HJR 207) that would create a new 25% homestead exemption for non-school property taxes; and a measure (HJR 213) that would limit assessed-value growth to 3% over three years for homestead properties and 15% over three years for non-homestead properties.

An additional regular bill (HB 215) that was also not considered by the House panel would require two-thirds — or supermajority — votes for local tax-rate increases and allow newly married couples to merge their “Save Our Homes” benefits. That proposal would not need voter approval.

These measures could still resurface later, as one more interim committee week is set for later this month, and the 2026 regular session is scheduled to commence on Jan. 13. The Senate has not produced a companion plan.

Senate Environmental & Natural Resources Committee

The Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee on December 2, 2025 unanimously approved a refiled “green gray infrastructure” or nature-based solutions bill to improve coastal resilience. The measure (SB 302) would require the Department of Environmental Protection to adopt rules for improving coastal resilience and work on a feasibility study on green and gray infrastructure.

Sponsored by Miami Republican Sen. Ileana Garcia, the proposal aims to establish a framework for projects like mangrove restoration, dune reinforcement, living seawalls, green infrastructure, and hybrid systems.

Local governments would be encouraged to identify vulnerable coastal areas and implement projects using the Resilient Florida Grant Program, including $250,000 for a feasibility study, and to seek Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant money for workforce training on relevant projects.

The measure would also streamline permitting for green and hybrid infrastructure, especially after storms. Garcia filed a similar measure (SB 50) in the 2025 session which passed the Senate but not the House. The 2025 bill established a study project at the University of South Florida's College of Marine Science, but SB 302 does not.

No House companion to this year's bill has been filed yet, but SB 302 is slated next for the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture, Environment, and General Government.

House Budget Committee

Despite pushback from cities, counties, and school districts, a House panel on December 3, 2025, advanced a proposal to increase the amount government agencies must pay when people are injured due to negligence — a move supporters call overdue and opponents warn could strain local budgets. The House Budget Committee voted 22–2 to approve HB 145, which would overhaul the state's sovereign immunity laws put in place by the Legislature in the 1970s to shield public agencies from large lawsuit payouts.

Current limits, last amended in 2010, cap liability at $200,000 per person and $300,000 per incident unless lawmakers approve a special "claim" bill to exceed such limits. The measure, sponsored by Sarasota Republican Rep. Fiona McFarland, would increase the caps to $500,000 per person and $1 million per incident for cases beginning Oct. 1, 2026, and then to $600,000 per person and $1.2 million per incident starting Oct. 1, 2031. It would also allow local governments to settle certain claims beyond statutory limits without legislative approval, thereby eliminating the need for a claim bill in some instances.

McFarland said giving injured Floridians greater recourse is overdue. But critics, including the Florida Association of Counties, the Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida, the Florida League of Cities, and the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium, among others, warned that the changes would drive up insurance costs and trigger more litigation — especially as property tax cuts may potentially go before voters in 2026. GOP Reps. Patt Maney and Toby Overdorf cast the two opposing votes, and the legislation now heads to its third and final committee stop: the House Judiciary Committee.

While McFarland has pushed to raise the state's sovereign immunity caps for several years, a Senate companion to her newest proposal has not yet been filed ahead of the 2026 legislative session, which begins Jan. 13.

House Judiciary Committee

A measure (HB 133) that would lower the minimum age to buy rifles and other long guns from 21 to 18 is ready for a vote by the full Florida House following final committee approval in the chamber on December 2, 2025. The bill would reverse a bipartisan 2018 law that increased the age for gun purchases after the 2018 Parkland school shooting in Broward County. The bill, by Republican Rep. Tyler Sirois, was approved on a 13–7 vote in the House Judiciary Committee. Passage by the full chamber is likely, but whether the bill can get a hearing in the Senate is a major question. Similar bills to restore the lower age limit have passed previously in the House, but have failed to get a Senate hearing for several years running.

On Tuesday, Democratic Rep. Dan Daley noted that while several young people testified against the bill in committee, no 18-to-21-year-olds had come to lawmakers pleading to once again be able to buy rifles from gun dealers. Opponents also noted that the age restriction doesn't prevent parents or others from buying guns for people under 21. Dade City Republican Rep. Kevin Steele echoed a long-running argument among gun rights advocates, suggesting that passing more restrictive laws won't address mental health issues that he said are the primary driver of criminal gun violence.

The bill would lower the age to 18 for buying rifles and long guns from federally licensed gun dealers. While people under 21 would still be barred from buying handguns from licensed dealers under federal law, if Sirois' bill passes they would be able to purchase handguns from private sellers.

The measure is fast-tracked on the House side, now ready for a vote on the floor as early as the first week of the regular session, which starts Jan. 13. The Senate has not indicated whether it will take up the proposal.

House Health Care Budget Committee

Lawmakers were informed on December 3, 2025, in the House Health Care Budget Subcommittee that Florida will need to come up with an additional $50.6 million to help administer the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) following federal funding changes passed by Congress and backed by the Trump administration. The increase stems from the federal "One Big Beautiful Bill," which cuts SNAP spending by $156 billion over 10 years and lowers the federal contribution toward administrative expenses from 50% to 25% starting Oct. 1, 2026. States must now cover 75% of those costs, a shift that leaves Florida responsible for tens of millions in new expenses.

Chad Barrett, assistant secretary for administration at the Florida Department of Children and Families, outlined the stakes before the House Health Care Budget Subcommittee. "Please keep in mind Florida has the lowest administrative rate in the country, which is $13 per case per month, which puts Florida in the top percentile compared to all other states," he said. As of October, more than 2.7 million Floridians across 1.5 million households relied on SNAP benefits, Barrett noted.

DCF has included the $50.6 million request in its proposed 2026–27 budget plan, with most of the funding — $34.7 million — allocated for salaries and benefits for staff who process applications, operate call centers, oversee investigations, and manage benefits recovery. Another $9 million would be directed toward contracted services like fraud detection. While Barrett emphasized that cutting the request would jeopardize operations, lawmakers pressed him about another provision included in the federal bill: states with high SNAP error rates will have to help cover the cost of food benefits themselves.

States under a 6% error rate are exempt; however, Florida's rate last year was more than 15%, primarily due to overpayments — a level that could force the state to contribute an estimated $1 billion in 2027. Tampa Republican Rep. Karen Gonzalez Pittman questioned whether Florida's historically low administrative spending contributed to its high error rate. "So, you are saying we have lean administrative costs; we're lean. But yet we are going to have to pay billions because of the error rate. So, would it be better to have better administration than to pay out penalties?" she asked.

Palm Beach County Day 2026

Save the date for Palm Beach County Day 2025! Join us in Tallahassee on Tuesday, January 13, and Wednesday, January 14, to advocate for our community. Visit our website at www.pbcgov.com/pbcdays!

