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10 Things DeSantis Wants in 2022 Session

By Jim Turner
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Gov. Ron DeSantis has outlined a series of priorities for the 2022 legislative session.

File photo

TALLAHASSEE --- Gov. Ron DeSantis recently released a \$99.7 billion budget blueprint for the 2022 legislative session and has touted a series of other proposals. Here are 10 of DeSantis' priorities — big and small — for the session, which will start Jan. 11:

--- CRYPTOCURRENCY: DeSantis has requested \$700,000 for cryptocurrency projects at the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, the Agency for Health Care Administration and the Department of Financial Services. For example, a pilot program would allow people to pay for motor-vehicle title certificates through Blockchain technology at the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

--- ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT: DeSantis is seeking \$5.7 million for a 52-person Office of Election Crimes and Security within the Department of State to investigate and prosecute election-related crimes.

--- FLORIDA STATE GUARD: DeSantis has requested \$5.4 million to re-establish a 200-member Florida State Guard, which was a defense force set up during World War II to replace Florida National Guard members who were deployed abroad. It would be used to assist the National Guard during emergencies.

--- FREEDOM TOWER: DeSantis has requested \$25 million to restore Miami's Freedom Tower, which was used in the past to process Cuban refugees. Legislative proposals have already been filed for the work on the nearly 100-year-old building.

--- GAS TAX CUT: DeSantis wants to suspend the state's 25-cent-a-gallon tax on gasoline for five months, starting July 1. The state would use \$1 billion in federal stimulus money to make up for the lost money, as gas taxes go toward transportation projects.

--- HIRING AND KEEPING COPS: DeSantis wants increase pay for officers at the Florida Highway Patrol, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, provide a second round of \$1,000 bonuses for first responders and provide \$5,000 bonuses to help recruit law-enforcement officers to Florida.

--- IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN: DeSantis has requested \$8 million to transport undocumented immigrants out of state, while calling on legislators to expand a 2019 law targeting so-called "sanctuary cities" and a 2020 law that requires all government employers and some contractors to use a federal electronic system known as E-Verify to check the immigration status of new workers.

— SNAKE HUNT: DeSantis wants \$3 million as part of the state's efforts to remove invasive Burmese pythons, which threaten wildlife and ecosystems in the Everglades.

--- TEACHER BONUSES: DeSantis wants to use \$238 million in federal stimulus money to give a second round of \$1,000 bonuses to teachers and principals in an effort to retain educators amid an ongoing teacher shortage.

--- TESTING OVERHAUL: DeSantis wants to spend \$15.5 million to carry out a plan that would replace the statewide standardized tests known as the Florida Standards Assessments with a progress-monitoring system.