

January 2023 Activity Report

Overview

Last month we formally kicked off the new year with Governor DeSantis Inauguration and Legislative Committee weeks. Lawmakers held three committee weeks in January and will hold three more in February. For a grand total of 7 committee weeks.

Gov. Ron DeSantis was sworn in for a second term on January 3rd. DeSantis, delivered a short inaugural address in which he described Florida as the "promised land of sanity" in comparison to other places around the country, setting the state as different from others, and from the nation as a whole. DeSantis was vague on particular policy issues, largely relying on buzzwords, such as in a promise to oppose "wokeness." One specific proposal the governor did tout was lower taxes.

Special Session 2023 Part 2

Last week President Passidomo and Speaker Renner called a Special Session for this week. The Legislature will meet starting Today in a special session to provide additional emergency hurricane response funding, put an immigrant relocation program in law and speed up action on a bill to help student athletes make money off their name, image and likeness. Lawmakers also plan to consider legislation to allow Statewide Prosecutors to prosecute certain election law violations, and they'll take up local bills, including one that would allow the state to take over the functions of a local government for Walt Disney World. House Speaker Paul Renner sent a memo to lawmakers on Friday saying the Appropriations Committee will get a bill that would put more money into an emergency account to help deal with the aftermath of Hurricanes Ian and Nicole, which hit the state late last year. Another measure the House's main budget committee will consider, along with the Judiciary Committee, would create the Unauthorized Alien Transport Program in the Division of Emergency Management. That would codify an executive branch initiative to transport to other states unauthorized migrants who have been processed by the federal government and are awaiting asylum decisions. The measure is needed, Renner said, to "help mitigate the ongoing impacts of unauthorized aliens coming to the state of Florida." Lawmakers were already set to consider in the regular session a bill (HB 99) by Republican Rep. Chip LaMarca that would allow universities to help student athletes ink "Name, Image and Likeness," deals to help state schools compete better with those in other states. In the interest of speeding up the process, the substance of that bill will now be considered during the special session this coming week, Renner said.

Governor's Budget

Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday proposed a \$114.8 billion budget for the coming fiscal year, using the state's still flush coffers to offer higher pay for teachers, corrections officers and police, and a string of new tax breaks, while still leaving room to bolster reserves. The governor's proposed spending plan also served as a nod to some of his more controversial initiatives, with a major proposed expansion of the independent state guard and ongoing funding for sending migrants awaiting asylum decisions to more Democratic leaning cities and states. And it gave the governor a chance to make more political points, including a call for a tax break on gas stoves as clean energy advocates elsewhere raise concerns about the appliances. The proposal is for the budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1. Lawmakers will

ultimately craft the spending plan, using DeSantis' recommendations – or not. The governor has line item veto power over whatever spending the Legislature eventually authorizes.

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Articles

New Year Brings New Laws: Requirements for new virus screenings for newborns, new rules related to electronic tax filing and a law allowing legal notices to be only published on government websites were among the laws that went into effect with the start of the new year. Five bills went into effect this week on Jan. 1, including HB 7049, a bill ending the requirement for publishing legal notices in print or on a newspaper website. The bill, passed last spring, gives a governmental agency the option to publish its legal notices on a publicly accessible county website instead of in a printed newspaper or on a newspaper's website if doing so would cost less than publishing legal notices in a newspaper. Also going into effect with the start of the year was a measure (SB 292) requiring hospitals and other facilities to test for congenital cytomegalovirus in newborns, and a bill (SB 2514) lowering the threshold for requiring taxpayers to file returns electronically. Portions of a wide-ranging effort to force cost reductions for property insurance companies that was passed in a special session by lawmakers (SB 2A) also went into effect with the new year. Two new laws (HB 7001, HB 7003) that took effect on Dec. 31 implemented a constitutional amendment ratified in 2018. The measures expand the time frame of a ban that prohibits certain public officials and judges from lobbying state agencies and the Legislature after leaving office from two to six years. Those bills are being challenged in court. In addition to the bills that went into effect either on Jan. 1, Jan. 2, or on Dec. 31, portions of several measures that had mostly already gone into effect also became law. Among those was a new toll credit program (SB 6A), passed during the special session held in December, that will give drivers who go through at least 35 toll collection points per month a 50% credit throughout the year. The bill took effect Dec. 15, but major parts of the program started Jan. 1.

Fla Growth Paces US in Return to Increasing Population: The United States added 1.2 million residents between July 2021 and July 2022, an increase of 0.4%, with Florida among the states leading in that growth. Much of the increase came from international immigration rebounding during the period after a drop-off during the pandemic. Texas and Florida added more than 400,000 residents each during the period; New York, California and Illinois all lost more than 100,000 residents.

Amendment Would Allow Recalls of County Officials: A proposed constitutional amendment this week in the House would ask voters to let lawmakers set out a process for the recall of county officers and commissioners. The amendment (HJR 131) would, if approved by lawmakers and then by 60% or more of voters, allow for the Legislature to "provide by general law for the recall of county officers and commissioners." The measure has been filed in recent sessions, including in 2022, but hasn't passed in the Legislature. Several charter counties in Florida have the ability to put recalls of county officials on the ballot through a petition process. The measure filed this week in the House would allow for the

Legislature to craft a law that would provide for removal of officers or commissioners by some method of its choosing in all counties.

Passidomo Pushes Affordable Housing Incentives: Republican Senate President Kathleen Passidomo will push a bill aimed at boosting affordable housing amid home and rent prices that have shot up in recent years and been exacerbated by recent hurricanes that have left some residents homeless and reduced the number of available properties. The housing crisis "has now reached epic proportions," in Florida, said Passidomo. The measure (SB 102) would provide tax incentives for developers to keep rates at lower than what the market would normally bring for their projects. Among the provisions in the \$811 million affordable housing bill is one that would allow new large developments that offer rents at least 10% below the local market rate to be exempt from property tax for each unit with the lower rent. The bill would also allow local governments to offer property tax exemptions for affordable housing. But the bill would also prohibit local governments from putting rent control measures in place, something some communities have considered in recent years as local rent prices have gone up. The measure will be sponsored in the Senate by Sen. Alexis Calatayud, R-Miami.

Hurricane Recovery: People in the Fort Myers area continue to recover from Hurricane Ian – but many aren't back in homes that were damaged or haven't found new permanent places to live if their homes were destroyed. A number of Lee County residents live in temporary housing, some camping where their homes used to stand. The late September storm destroyed about 5,000 homes and severely damaged another 30,000 in Southwest Florida

GOP to Make Another Try at Business Impact Bill: A bill aiming to protect businesses from local ordinances has been refiled. Panama City Republican Sen. Jay Trumbull on Tuesday filed SB 170, which would require local governments to undertake a "business impact estimate" spelling out how a new regulation or ordinance would impact local businesses. The measure makes it easier for businesses to sue local governments and block the enforcement of ordinances if a court deems the local ordinance to be "arbitrary or unreasonable." Prevailing plaintiffs would also be awarded attorney fees and cost of damages but the amount would not be able to exceed \$50,000. No House version is currently filed. A similar effort passed in the Senate last year but failed to get through the House

Gov Touts 'Moving Florida Forward' Infrastructure Plan, Expedites Transportation Projects: Gov. Ron DeSantis is proposing an infrastructure plan worth \$7 billion that would expedite the completion of 20 highway projects across the state, with a focus on Central and South Florida. The four-year, \$7 billion proposal announced Monday, called Moving Florida Forward, calls for expanding interchanges, widening highways and hardening infrastructure, aimed at reducing traffic congestion, supporting future growth and strengthening the transportation system against severe weather. The governor said without the infrastructure investment, some of the roads in the plan wouldn't be completed for another 20 years. Examples of the projects include \$1.45 billion to reconstruct parts of Interstate 4 in Central Florida, \$162 million to widen Interstate 10 near Pensacola and \$150 million to upgrade the Interstate 95 Golden Glades interchange in South Florida. Department of Transportation Secretary Jared Perdue said the initiative is the largest investment he has seen in road construction over the 20 years he's worked for the state. "This proposal will break through bureaucracy that often slows down infrastructure projects and allow FDOT to target projects that will ease congestion across the state," said the governor.

"Expediting these projects will bring them to completion more than a decade ahead of schedule." The roadway improvements would need to be approved by lawmakers but the spending plan is expected to be part of a budget that DeSantis will propose for the 2023-24 fiscal year, which he has until Sunday to release. The State Transportation Work Program within the Department of Transportation received \$12.6 billion in the current state budget.

Bills of Interest Filed

HB 0085 - Causes of Action Based on Improvements to Real Property (Snyder)

Causes of Action Based on Improvements to Real Property: Revises time in which action founded on the design, planning, or construction of an improvement to real property must be commenced; revises date on which statute of limitations period begins; provides for the calculation of the statute of limitations period for multi-dwelling buildings; defines "material violation." Effective Date: upon becoming a law

The following events took place in December 2022.

Date	Name	Purpose	Follow Up
1/3	Sen. Grall	Discuss Liens and Bonds Bill	
1/10	Rep. Overdorf	Liens and bonds Bill	
1/17-1/18	FSA Tallahassee Trip	Discuss legislative priorities	
1/31	Edward and Michael discussion on Construction defects	Bill moving through House	

Future Meetings

Date	Name	Purpose
2/9	FSA Casa Monica Resort	Sec. Griffin Speaking to group
5/18	FSA Annual Meeting Swann Resort Orlando	

- Following up with Rep. Overdorf on adding in clarification on 45 days to be for emergencies only.
- Provided info on Deland bonding information to Exec Committee
- Will be setting meetings with candidates for HD 24 Special Election