

## Meet Todd Belknap



Born into a family chock full of service in the United States Armed Forces, Todd Belknap is a native of suburban Detroit. After high school, Todd enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served honorably for eight years (1982-1990). Obtaining the rank of Sergeant, Belknap served in the Infantry for 5 years before serving as a Recruiter for 3 years. From 1988-90, he scoured universities and campuses in Connecticut and western Massachusetts, seeking Officer Candidates to serve as Marine Corps pilots and ground officers upon graduation. He also worked the Law Schools, searching for future JAG officers.

Upon receipt of his second honorable discharge, Belknap was hired by the Manchester, Connecticut Police Department, with whom he served for ten

years until being medically retired. His duties included, but were not limited to, Patrol Officer; Commander, Department Honor & Color Guard; Field Training Officer; Co-Chair, Quality Management Council; and Co-Chair, Employee Assistance Program.

In the past 26 years, Belknap has been affiliated with an exhaustive catalog of non-profit organizations throughout the United States which includes churches, public schools, civic and military organizations. His main desire is to ensure an organization's marketing/advertising targeting is properly deployed so that awareness of their mission is maximized and subsequently supported through donations and additional avenues of support, monetary and otherwise.

In addition to his duties as Veterans Helping Veterans USA Executive Director., Belknap also serves as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of the Marion County Veterans Council and the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Commander of American Legion Post #27. He is also a member of AMVETS Post #99 and Marine Corps League Detachment #061. All of these organizations are home based in Ocala.

Belknap's unparalleled commitment to serving Veterans and their families is well established within Marion County and beyond, and he is tireless in his efforts to improve the quality of life of every Veteran who walks through his door. Once he establishes contacts, he nurtures them and grows them to benefit all agencies involved. Belknap believes that the health and welfare of a community's Veteran population is a reflection upon the citizenry at large, and he continues seeking partners, donors and supporters who are like minded. Local dollars and resources help local Veterans

## I ask AI about the Democratic Socialist

TomL

Search results: ['AI have the Democrats Socialist been brain washed by Social Media to believe something different?'](#)

Social media algorithms are explicitly designed to maximize user engagement by amplifying sensationalism and polarizing, emotionally charged content. This environment affects users across the entire political spectrum, often creating echo chambers where consistent exposure to specific narratives can shift political perspectives and harden partisan identities.

Democratic Socialists, like any politically engaged demographic, are susceptible to these online information dynamics. The structural design of platforms like TikTok, X, and Facebook can accelerate populist ideas and normalize radical views. Because social media algorithms reward content that triggers strong identity-based reactions, users are regularly fed information that

confirms and amplifies their existing worldview, a phenomenon that can distort perceptions of mainstream consensus

However, characterizing this process simply as "brainwashing" oversimplifies how individuals interact with information. People are naturally drawn to content that aligns with their core values and grievances. When information matches a person's identity, they are less likely to pause and critically evaluate the source, whether the content was shared by real individuals, originated organically, or was pushed by algorithmic bot swarms.

Democrats you are being Brainwashed by bot swarm's to make you radical. WAKE UP! You are being brain washed by the Communist! Remember China the best way to win a war is without firing a shot! You are their tool.

You are smarter than that, stop them in their tracks!

## Kat Cammack Visits with Veterans



**OCALA, Fla.** — Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03) hosted a Veterans Town Hall Friday evening at the College of Central Florida, joined by special guest Congressman Morgan Luttrell (TX-08), a decorated Navy SEAL who chairs the House Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs.

The program opened with a presentation of the Colors by the Marion County Memorial Honor Guard, a reading of "Old Glory" by Master Chief Mack Ellis, and the Pledge of Allegiance led by Howard Mautner, a 102-year-old World War II veteran of the Army Air Corps. Pete Feliciano, Captain, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), delivered the invocation, and radio host Greg Cassidy served as emcee.

Members answered questions submitted by attendees on women veterans' health care, mental health and suicide prevention, and veteran homelessness. Every question not reached during the program will receive a personal follow-up from Rep. Cammack's office.

"My job as a representative is to hear from everybody," said Rep. Cammack. "We have an open door policy, you can come at any time and talk to me and the team, and we will always do our best to answer your questions. We think of this as a tour of duty for ourselves, and thank you for giving us that opportunity to serve."

"It is absolutely necessary for us to sit up here, no matter what's coming at us, and answer those questions, and do the best we can to do what we think is best for the country," said Rep. Luttrell. "Thank you for your service, and your spouses for their

service."

In a wide-ranging fireside conversation, the two members walked veterans through the transition from active duty to the VA and previewed the Taking Care of America's Veterans Act, a package of 60 veterans bills expected on the House floor in the coming weeks, gathering direct feedback from the room on its provisions, including the Major Richard Star Act and the Love Lives On Act.

"The Department of Defense does not talk to the VA, and the VA does not talk to the Department of Defense," said Rep. Luttrell of the effort to connect veterans' records systems. "Right now it's five hospitals out of 172 that can communicate with each other. Once the network is connected, the VA system for medical records is whole."

"Very rarely do Morgan and I get the opportunity to vote on something that is pure in purpose," said Rep. Cammack of the veterans package. "There is a tremendous amount of good in this bill, and there are also some things in there that are tough. That's why we wanted to come here tonight and have a very honest conversation about what's in this bill, and what's not."

Rep. Cammack also updated attendees on her office's work to protect funding for 186 homeless veterans across Marion, Alachua, and Columbia counties after a missed grant deadline by an outside vendor. "I've got 186 homeless veterans that need to make sure that we keep their funding, and I don't care how you do it, but you just need to do it," Cammack recounted telling VA Secretary Doug Collins directly, adding that multiple plans are now in place and no veteran will

*Continued page 6*

# CEP CHAMBER NEWS



## What Happens Between the Ribbon Cuttings

When people think about the Ocala Metro Chamber & Economic Partnership, they often picture ribbon cuttings, networking events, and community celebrations. While those moments are certainly an important part of what we do, they represent only a portion of our work.

Much of the CEP's impact happens behind the scenes.

On any given day, our team may be meeting with entrepreneurs who are launching their first business, working with existing employers looking to expand, connecting local companies with workforce resources, advocating for policies that strengthen our business climate, or collaborating with community partners to prepare Marion County for future growth.

We're also working to tell the Ocala Metro story. Whether it's showcasing our community to prospective businesses, developing new tools to better serve investors and members, or highlighting the success stories of local employers, we're continually looking for ways to position our region as a place where businesses can succeed.

Economic development is rarely the result of one meeting or one project. More often, it's the product of countless conversations, strategic partnerships, and long-term planning. A business considering relocation may spend months evaluating our workforce, infrastructure, available sites, and quality of life before making a decision.

Entrepreneurs often rely on mentorship, education, and networking long before opening their doors. Existing businesses benefit from advocacy and connections that help them navigate challenges and identify new opportunities. These efforts may not always make headlines, but they are essential to building a stronger local economy.

As our community continues to grow, so does the responsibility to ensure that growth is intentional, sustainable, and beneficial to businesses of every size. That means supporting our downtown, strengthening our neighborhoods, investing in workforce development, and creating an environment where innovation and entrepreneurship can flourish.

The ribbon cuttings are worth celebrating—they represent new

Continued page 3

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## TODD BELKNAP

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE  
VETERANS HELPING VETERANS USA



The month of August is steeped in American military history, with several significant dates observed across the nation. One is August 7—Purple Heart Day. Its origins date to 1782, when

General George Washington established the Badge of Military Merit, the forerunner of today's Purple Heart. The medal, as we

know it today, was revived in 1932 to honor those wounded or killed in combat.

One recipient was U.S. Army veteran Tommy Gwynn, credited with receiving 12 Purple Hearts during World War II and the Korean War. He stormed the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, helped hold the line during the Battle of the Bulge, landed at Inchon during the Korean War, and twice escaped enemy captivity.

Born on June 2, 1919, Mr. Gwynn enlisted in the Army in 1941 and was shipped to England in 1943. On June 6, 1944, he waded ashore at Normandy during the Allied invasion. Every year afterward, he celebrated June 6 as his "second birthday," telling the *Moore County News* that he observed the date because he had survived.

Mr. Gwynn passed away on April 5, 2026, at the age of 106. A life well lived! See you next month..

## Celebrating 25 Years of Horse Fever

This week on The Buzz, we're celebrating **25 years of Horse Fever** here in Marion County with the unveiling of a brand new painted horse. The horse is named "Freedom" and it was commissioned by Pyranha Animal Health to celebrate the lasting legacy of the values that make the horse capital of the world such a special place.

Plus, elementary students across Marion County will be learning all about what it's like to work in the equestrian industry with the release of the **Horse Capital Jobs Coloring Book** this upcoming school year.

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## Uplands Stewardship

OCALA, Fla. (WCJB) - A new special district with taxing power is being created in Marion County. Governor Ron DeSantis has signed House Bill 4079.

It creates the Uplands Stewardship District in Marion County, which will install, operate and maintain community infrastructure.

A meeting of landowners will be held to elect a chair. Each landowner is entitled to one vote for each acre owned.

**TRENDING:** [Thoroughbred foal rescued in animal cruelty case gets second chance in Marion County](#)

## CEP

*Continued from page 2*

investments, new jobs, and new opportunities. But they are also the culmination of months, and sometimes years, of work by business owners, community leaders, educators, investors, and partners who believe in the future of the Ocala Metro.

At the CEP, we're proud to be part of that process. Whether our work is visible or happening quietly behind the scenes, our mission remains the same: bringing people together to create opportunity and build a stronger future for Marion County.

The next time you see a ribbon cutting, a new business opening, or a major community announcement, remember that there's often an entire network of people working behind the scenes to help make those successes possible. We're honored to be one part of that story.

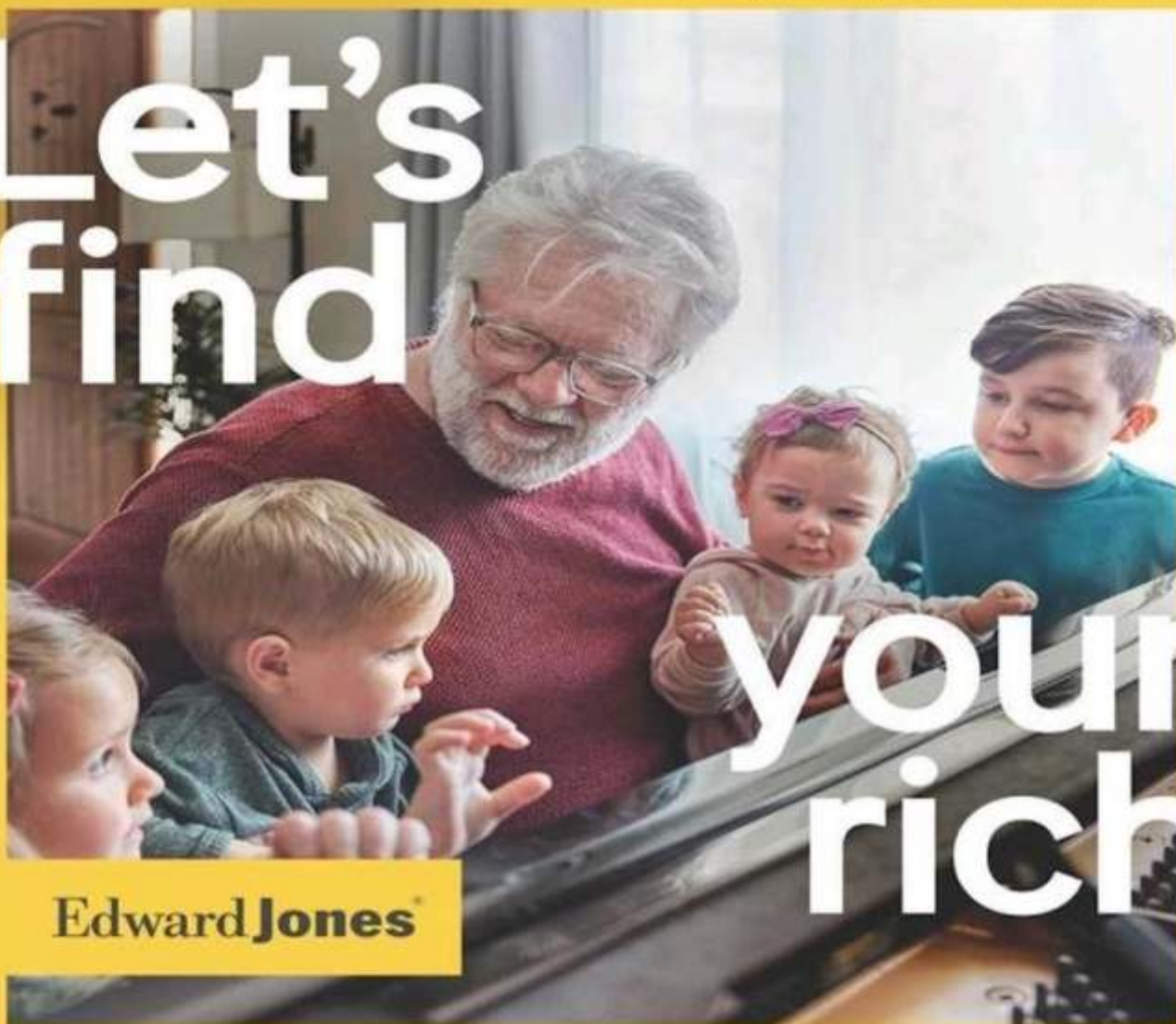
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Tom Loury *Tom Loury Long time member of CEP/Ocala Chamber of Commerce, Past President of the Ocala Business Leaders and current member, Co-Founder and past President of Select Business Associates, Past President of the Lady Lake Chamber and current member. If you want to make contact with the newspaper / Tom Loury email TLoury@att.net*

## PUBLISHER'S NOTES



My question this month is who gave the bank permission to charge me

more money on my mortgage note to raise the insurance rates? Who gave the Insurance companies permission to charge

more money on my mortgage? Suppose I just want to insure the amount of my note only!

As I see it my mortgage insurance started out with me having to insure to cover the Home loan when I borrowed to build my house? I gave no permission for the county to keep raising the value on my house, I did not give permission when the insurance company raised the price on the insurance base on replacement value INCASE SOMETHING HAPPENS? What if it don't? Suppose I don't want to replace the house? What if my house was destroyed by a

tornado? It would be up to me if I wanted to live in a camper as long as the bank note was paid? They just did it! I don't blame the local mortgage companies they don't want to buck the big corporate banker and large insurance company's. They just went along with what was going on. What the county is doing is raising the value of our houses based on the revenue they want to run the county, instead of cutting taxes they are raising taxes! They raise it to the amount of the revenue they think they need! The insurance companies have us over the barrel, they raise it minimum \$100 per month every year! The last three years it went up \$3600. The change of the homestead will help but the insurance will keep going up. Veterans and the elderly can't afford that.

What if someone wants to insure just the amount of the mortgage only? That is what it was based on in the beginning the amount of the note. There was no agreement about inflation! What if someone sues the County and the Insurance company's for

racketeering! It is a racket you know!

What happens if I have a mortgage when the tornado hits my house and I die? Who are they going to rebuild the house for? Who do these people have to answer to. Next subject.

Also let's talk about the city's / towns who are they to decide what business can build a plant outside the city limits. Some town / citys can't even support a police department because they spend money foolishly or they won't just leave the police alloan to fight crime and quiet asking for special favors! Drive by my house all night? Or let my son go free he did not mean to do it? Many request all in the name of the people running the city / town! Did you ever look up the difference between a city and a town? There are state regulation a town does not have to follow that a city does! hmmm

Bottom, line is if you don't insure your house for replacement value and it gets destroyed but you have covered the mortgage you just get a note to rebuild. Does that make sense, instead of paying all those years for what might happen? Pay for insurance to cover the note and start fresh with a new house and a new mortgage! You have saved all that insurance money and increases for how many years? It may never happen but if it does you are homeless for as long as it take to build a new house, buy a camper and live on the land while they build your new house!

## Ocala Fire Rescue

**Marion County, Fla.** — The Florida Department of Health in Marion County (DOH-Marion), in partnership with Ocala Fire Rescue (OFR), invites pregnant and postpartum mothers, caregivers, and their families to attend a free, non-certificate CPR overview on Wednesday, August 19, 2026.

The event will be held from 9–11 a.m. at:  
**DOH-Marion's Ocala Office, 1801 SE 32nd Ave., Ocala, FL 34471**

OFR will provide a free, non-certificate CPR overview. The CPR overview is offered to women who are pregnant, postpartum mothers, caregivers, and their families. Participants will learn how to respond to cardiopulmonary emergencies until first responders arrive, and how to assist a choking victim. OFR emphasizes the importance of early CPR initiation for infants and toddlers to help increase the chances of survival during emergencies.

Registration is recommended but not required. Please register at [forms.cloud.microsoft/g/mUuLVr4qL](https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/mUuLVr4qL). For more information, call 352-622-1161, 352-644-2674, or email [CHD42WIC@FLHealth.gov](mailto:CHD42WIC@FLHealth.gov).

**About the Florida Department of Health** The Department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

## Newspaper Deadlines

*Editorial & Ad Copy for September*

**Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown**

**Noon, August 25th**

**Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator**

**12am, August 30th**

## Seniors Voice of Ocala/Ocala Downtown Products of TomL Publishing, LLC

P.O. Box 1698, Dunnellon FL 34430

**Publisher: Tom Loury**

**Phone: 352-804-1223 | Fax: 352-489-7208**

**Email: tloury@att.net**

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## CHAIR CHAT

BY BRIGGITTE SMITH

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY

### To Everyone Concerned about Education

Dear Board Members

### Subject: School YE Student Test Results – Disappointing

This letter is a follow-up to our January 5th letter and subsequent meeting where we noted mid-year poor test results in several critical areas. In discussions we were assured that supplemental actions to improve student outcomes and competency were in progress and the year-end results would reflect improvement.

At recent meeting school board meetings, board members indicated the results would show a significant improvement, yet the year end test data drastically refutes this assertion.

We continue to have a problem in this county of **achieving NOT competitive student outcomes**, our students, parents and community deserves better. Harkens to a famous quote from Albert Einstein.

**“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”**

Attached you will find a table comparing 2025 year-end results to 2026 year-end results as published by Florida Department of Education (DOE) for Marion County School District. The data scores were evaluated via paired student t-test statistical methods to determine if there was actually a statistical improvement.

Other data in the summary table are DOE reported percentages of students below grade level (levels 1\* and 2\*\*), as well as the percentage of students dramatically lacking subject competency at level 1. This letter will focus on overall County performance and **specifically 3rd grade, as educators have indicated this grade is critical to achieve strong reading and math fundamentals** to “grow” and achieve academically in subsequent grades.

#### Key highlights:

Marion County dropped overall from the 2025 “B” ranking to a 2026 “C” ranking

Marion County School District ranks 58th out of 67 Florida school districts – an abysmal ranking

In math; across grades 3 to 8 – 48% of students scored below their respective grade level; therefore out of 18,347 students tested – 8,883 scored at level 1 or 2 (below grade level).

o Marion County 45% on or above grade level vs state average of 53%. – again lagging

In reading / language arts: across grades 3 to 10 – 49% of students scored below the respective grade level, therefore, out of 26,683 students tested almost 13,000 scored below grade level.

o Marion County 43% on or above grade vs state average of 52%. – again lagging

Third Grade Metrics of Schools Performance 2025 vs 2026

3rd Grade Reading / Language Arts

o no statistical improvement across all Marion schools for 2025 vs 2026

o 55% below grade level / 30% at level 1 (failing)

o Ranked of 61 out of 67 Fl school districts  
3rd Grade Math Marion County School reading ranking against all other counties

o statistical improvement across all Marion schools for 2025 vs 2026

o 45% below grade level / 23% at level 1 (failing)

o Ranked of 60 out of 67 Fl school districts

Overall: Language Arts - no improvement / 50% below grade and almost one-third failing.

**Math: statistical improvement (weak) / yet 45% below grade level with almost one-quarter failing**

The attached table provides additional data for your review and evaluation.

The overall assessment of the test schools indicates the student population is not achieving adequate results. This continued poor performance indicates another generation of students will exit Marion County schools without the required skills for advanced education and / or work in trades requiring basic math and reading competency. Yes, there are exceptional

students in our school system and we celebrate their achievements; however, on aggregate an overall state ranking of 58 out of 67 is not acceptable.

Our Ask:

We urge the school board to implement drastic action versus incremental changes and seek guidance and counsel from other states that have shown dramatic improvement (e.g. MS). Level 1 students need immediate support to be able to academically progress versus administrative promotions. This overall continued lagging performance could deter perspective residents from settling in the County given the School District's continued poor academic scores and ranking. Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Marion County Republican Executive Committee, please feel free to contact us if there are any questions.

Len M Racioppi Brigitte Smith

V. Chair MCREC Chair MCREC



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## Kat Cammack

*Continued from page 1*

lose housing.

Answering attendee questions on

community care in rural counties, Rep. Cammack pointed to gaps in the program's design. "The people who designed community care are assuming that every community has all the needs met in the

private sector, and that's just not the case," she said. "We have entire counties that don't have a single primary care physician in them, let alone specialists." She cited the historic \$50 billion investment in rural health care she helped secure in the Working Families Tax Cut, of which \$209 million is coming to Florida, the vast majority to North Central Florida, with announcements

of local health care infrastructure investments expected across the district in the coming months.

Veterans needing casework assistance with the VA can contact Rep. Cammack's Gainesville office at (352) 505-0838 or Ocala office at (352) 421-9052.

## Members of Congress Cannot Purchase Stock

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The House of Representatives today passed H.R. 7008, the Stop Insider Trading Act, by a vote of 232-198, prohibiting Members of Congress, their spouses, and dependent children from purchasing individual stocks issued by publicly traded companies. Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03), who presided over the House as Speaker Pro Tempore during final passage, voted in favor of the legislation and called the reform long overdue.

"Members of Congress should never be able to profit from the public's trust. Period," said Congresswoman Cammack. "For too long, Americans have been left wondering whether lawmakers are serving the country or their portfolios. That question should never have to be asked. Today's vote was long overdue." "The Stop Insider Trading Act prohibits Members of Congress, their spouses, and dependent children from purchasing individual securities issued by publicly traded companies while the Member serves in office.

As Speaker Pro Tempore, Rep. Cammack presided over the House chamber during final passage, holding the gavel as lawmakers approved the congressional ethics measure.

"I do not own a single share of individual corporate stock," Rep. Cammack

continued. "I was proud to vote for this reform, and especially proud to hold the gavel when the House finally passed it. The American people deserve to know their elected officials are serving them, not their investment accounts."

The legislation also includes election integrity provisions requiring voters to present photo identification when casting a ballot in a federal election. Absentee and mail-in voters would be required to include a copy of qualifying identification with their ballot. The language mirrors provisions of the SAVE America Act, which previously passed the House by a vote of 218-213.

Today's vote builds on Rep. Cammack's broader efforts to strengthen accountability and restore public trust in Congress. Earlier this week, she renewed her call for immediate consideration of H.Res. 500, her resolution requiring criminal background checks for House employees and public disclosure of foreign government payments, contracts, and citizenship.

"Restoring trust in Congress will take more than one vote," Rep. Cammack concluded. "We must continue raising ethical standards, strengthening congressional security, and proving to the American people that public service is exactly that: service."

The measure now advances to the Senate.

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July CEP after hours was held at the Pickleball Kingdom Ocala Florida at 2800 SW 24th Ave, Ocala. As you can see they are having fun. They are advertising league to join. Plenty of exercise. Phone 352-421-9550, Or go to [pickleballkingdom.com/ocala-fl](http://pickleballkingdom.com/ocala-fl)



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## FROM THE DESK OF CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



### Press conference at Ocala fire station spotlights legislation to strengthen mental health support for first responders

OCALA, Fla. — Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03) joined area fire and law enforcement leaders at Marion County Fire Rescue Station 28 today to champion the Answering the Call Act of 2026 (H.R. 8637), her legislation to strengthen mental health support for first responders through the national 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

“First responders see the worst of the worst, day in and day out, and it takes a toll. This bill creates a resource dedicated solely to them, with counselors trained to understand exactly what they are going through,” said Rep. Cammack. “They answer the call every single time, and it is high time we answer the call in return.”

The Answering the Call Act directs dedicated outreach and support to first responders through the 988 Lifeline. It funds specialized training for the counselors who answer those calls so they understand what first responders face, provides grants for states and departments to raise awareness of the resource, and keeps access completely anonymous so no one fears retaliation or judgment for reaching out. The bill covers firefighters, law enforcement, corrections officers, dispatchers, and EMS personnel.

Research has found that police officers and firefighters are more likely to die by suicide than in the line of duty, and the crisis has hit Marion County directly.

The choice of Station 28 was deliberate. It was the home station of firefighter and

paramedic Allen Singleton, a six-year veteran and member of the Marion County Fire Rescue and Sheriff's Office SWAT Medic team, who died by suicide in January 2023. Marion County Fire Chief James Banta said the department has lost four firefighters to suicide, a toll that underscores the urgency of the legislation.

“First responders answer the call every day. We respond to tragedy, trauma, and human suffering, often carrying the weight of those experiences long after the incident is over,” said Marion Chief James Banta. “Yet for far too long, seeking help has carried a stigma in our profession. If even one first responder reaches out before a crisis becomes a tragedy, it will have made a difference.”

Ocala Police Chief Mike Balken echoed the need for greater awareness of and access to mental health resources for first responders: “This legislation sends a clear message: seeking help is a sign of strength. At the end of the day, this is about taking care of the men and women who take care of our communities.”

Rep. Cammack, whose husband Matt is a 19-year veteran of Gainesville Fire Rescue, said the measure of success is simple. “Success would be if one life was saved,” she said. “That, to me, is the measure of success.”

The Answering the Call Act has earned support from the Florida Fire Chiefs' Association, the Florida Sheriffs' Association, and the National Police Association.

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline is available 24 hours a day by call or text.

## FAIRTax



What is the FAIRtax? I have written articles about different aspects of the FAIRtax plan and

also articles about the cumbersome, fraudulent and unethical income tax system that we have now. But let's step back and actually look at the FAIRtax as a viable replacement for our current tax system.

The FAIRtax was designed by world renowned economists and businessmen who were simply tired of having to make their financial and business decisions based on how it would effect their taxes and not on what was best for their businesses and employees. What they came up with is a tax based on consumption rather than on income. In other words, taxes based on your spending habits rather than on your productivity. The FAIRtax eliminates the personal income tax, corporate income tax, payroll tax, inheritance tax, repatriation tax, taxes on savings and dividends, and all other taxes based in income.

Under the FAIRtax , one simple rate is placed on all new goods and services to be collected at the retail level and administered by the states. The states then send the taxes collected to the treasury department bypassing the Internal Revenue Service which is no longer needed and will be abolished. No income tax reporting = no IRS.

Many will tell you that the FAIRtax will make everything we buy a lot more expensive and therefore will hurt the poorest among us. This is wrong on many levels:

1) Every product you purchase today under our current system has between 17 to 30 percent of the cost of that item embedded

in the price due directly or indirectly to the income tax. Without those embedded costs, prices will drop and even with adding the new retail tax, will remain roughly the same as they are today.

2) Once a new item is taxed by the FAIRtax, it is no longer subject to the tax again. In other words, if you wish to save money, you can purchase used items without having to pay the tax.

3) The FAIRtax believes that no one should pay taxes on what it costs to simply survive, thus the invention of the prebate. Every year the Department of Health and Human Resources publishes a poverty level chart based on family size. Using this chart, the FAIRtax calculates how much each household will spend on the FAIRtax up to the poverty line for the year, divide it by 12 and send a check for that amount at the beginning of each month. Think of it as your tax refund that instead of waiting until the end of the year and having to justify your refund on multiple forms, you get your refund on a monthly basis. This gives you extra money in your pocket to offset the cost of basic necessities.

4) The most egregious tax for the working poor is the payroll withholding tax. This goes away under the FAIRtax and allows you to buy goods and services with pre-taxed dollars. Again giving you more money in your pocket.

Social Security and Medicare are funded today by only those individuals who are earning a paycheck as well as matching funds from their employers. This equals roughly two workers supporting one retiree. Under the FAIRtax, a certain percentage of ALL tax revenue collected by everyone who buys any new good or service, will fund these programs. That will make both of these essential programs viable well into the future.

These are only some of the major points of the FAIRtax. For more information, please go the FAIRtax.org

## Networking is Awkward at Best

Some think it's about making a deal. IT's NOT! It's about making friends to do business with. I try to do business with people not businesses. The people you choose to represent you need to be real. Genuinely care about you and be a good listener, remember what they say and make note after you get back to your car. Remember their birthday, mention their wife / husband / children. Try to have a welcome package for new comers.

Prompt them to call if they need anything. They will become a real friend. They will also prefer to do business with a friend so really be their friend.

People prefer to do business with friends. They might ask for a discount be ready and say “I can ask?” OR “Do you want my boss to call you to discuss it?”

REFERRALS is where it is at. It opens a conversation with a stranger and makes them and you feel more comfortable. Be friendly, make friends, always be happy. Through away the negative attitude, you will feel better and do more business!

Note: the CEP Ocala Chamber with CEO Matt McCormick is very good at the art of networking. They make friend right away! I never hear a negative conversation, it is all positive and where they are doing next!

We do not know how many tomorrows we will have so make it happen TODAY!

TomL said that!

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## Love is just a leash away!!

The HSMC is here for you and the animals who depend on us. We wanted to share that we will continue to be here to help unwanted pets during this pandemic while following all Marion County and Florida state guidelines.

As this situation is constantly changing, we ask that you continue to visit our Shelter using the safety guidelines in place.

## How can you help?

**Pet Food Bank:** Help stock our Pet Food Bank with pet food and supplies for people who cannot afford them due to job loss or other reasons. You can also bring donations to our Shelter daily from 10-6. Masks required please! If you need help keeping your pet with you during this time, our Happy Paws food program is here for you.

**Volunteer:** A small number of volunteers have returned to help in various departments. We are accepting volunteer applications but do not yet know when we will schedule orientations for new volunteers. Please contact us for more information about volunteering. We are currently working on a digital orientation.

**Opt to adopt:** According to the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that companion animals such as cats and dogs can spread the virus that causes COVID-19.

**Donate:** We know there is a lot of uncertainty right now but homeless and unwanted animals still need us. Donate to help the Humane Society of Marion County so we continue our lifesaving work and make them feel safe and loved.



**Bilbie**

Bilbie is a 14 weeks old male brought to the HSMC with her brother Wombat! We believe they could be Xoloitzcuintli, or Xolo, which is Mexican hairless dog breed.

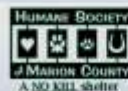


**Fuchsia** is a 15 week old paralyzed kitten full of love.



**Ninja** is paralyzed in his hind legs but enjoys runs with his wheels.

Your donations make it possible to provide medical care, food and shelter to animals in need. On behalf of all the animals, thank you for caring.



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Donations to the Humane Society are tax-deductible. Check with your accountant for more information. No goods or services have been provided to the donor as a result of this gift.

## FROM THE DESK OF ATTORNEY GENERAL UTHMEIER



### Attorney General James Uthmeier Returns Record \$710,000 to Crypto-Fraud Victim

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.**— Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that the Cyber Fraud Enforcement Unit delivered its largest single reimbursement to date—a check for \$710,000—to a Florida victim of a highly sophisticated cryptocurrency fraud scheme.

“Instead of setting records, we prefer to prevent fraud, but are proud to deliver justice and make this victim whole,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “Through our collaboration with the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office and the dedication of Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor John Paul, we have recovered these funds from transnational criminals and returned them to their rightful owner.”

“Recovering more than \$700,000 and returning it to the victim is an outstanding result and reflects the dedication of our detectives and the strong partnerships that make cases like this possible,” said Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters. “I want to thank Attorney General James Uthmeier and his team for their collaboration and commitment to holding fraudsters accountable.”

The victim fell prey to a remote work-from-home scam involving “product reviews.” Scammers convinced him he needed to match the value of review items by depositing cryptocurrency to earn commissions, with promises that all funds

would be returned plus profits. As the supposed “products” grew larger, so did the required investments.

Once the transnational criminal organization extracted every possible dollar, they ghosted the victim with the claim that the money was “stuck in the blockchain” unless he paid one final fee.

Working with the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office, investigators traced the funds to a large consolidation wallet containing commingled assets from multiple frauds. Through civil forfeiture proceedings, a default judgment was obtained after the scammers failed to contest the action.

This recovery was led by Chief Assistant Statewide Prosecutor John Paul and Det. R.H. Holmes of the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office.

Floridians should beware of work-from-home scams that prey on job seekers with fake remote opportunities. Red flags include asking for upfront fees for background checks or equipment costs, buying gift cards or crypto as part of the job, unsolicited job offers via text message, and text-only interviews. Always independently contact the company to verify an online job opportunity before proceeding.

### Attorney General James Uthmeier Launches Investigation into Potassium Bromate in Florida’s Food Supply Chain

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** — Attorney General James Uthmeier issued a civil subpoena to General Mills, Inc. and General Mills Operations, LLC, as part of an investigation under the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act into the supply chain of products containing

potassium bromate sold in Florida.

“This investigation is about protecting Florida families and providing transparency to our consumers,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “Floridians have a right to know what is in the food they buy and feed their children. We are investigating the supply chain for the presence of potassium bromate in products sold across our state, including any disclosures made to purchasers and research on its potential health effects.”

Potassium bromate, used as a flour improver and dough conditioner in certain bakery flours, is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as “possibly carcinogenic to humans.” The chemical compound has been banned as a food additive in the European Union since 1990, Canada since 1994, China since 2005, India since 2016, and in Brazil, Argentina, South Korea, Peru, and numerous other countries due to health concerns, including evidence of tumors in animal studies.

The subpoena seeks comprehensive information on the company’s bromated products reaching Florida consumers and schools.

The subpoena commands production of documents related to:

- All General Mills products containing potassium bromate sold to purchasers in Florida, including specific items such as Pillsbury Potentate High Gluten Flour, Pillsbury Best Bakers Patent Flour, Gold Medal All Aces Bakery Flour, and Gold Medal Superlative Bakers Flour (50 lb bulk sacks).
- Top purchasers in Florida of these products for the years 2023 through 2026.
- Disclosures provided to purchasers of

bromated products or downstream goods made from them.

- Research on the use of potassium bromate in General Mills products and its potential effects on human safety.
- Sales of these products to Florida schools (pre-kindergarten through 12th grade).

This action reinforces Attorney General Uthmeier’s commitment to enforcing Florida’s consumer protection laws, ensuring transparency in the food supply chain, and safeguarding public health from potential risks.

### Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Conviction of Yet Another Snapchat Predator

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.**—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced that a Collier County jury has convicted Chandler Christian Jones, 30, of Naples on dozens of felony counts, including multiple counts of possession of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM), soliciting a child or person believed to be a child for unlawful sexual conduct using computer services or devices, and transmission of child pornography by electronic device or equipment.

“Snap continues to fight us in court over their dangerous app while we keep arresting and prosecuting predators who use Snapchat to trade in vile material,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “I want to thank the proactive policing by FDLE and Deputy Statewide Prosecutor Julie Chaikin and Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Agnieszka Thomas who built this strong case and secured justice. It’s past time for Snap to fix its dangerous app, protect kids, and pay for these unconscionable harms!”

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## FROM THE DESK OF

## GOVERNOR DESANTIS



**On First Day of Business Development Leadership Mission to the United Kingdom, Governor Ron DeSantis Opens the Florida Pavilion at the 2026 Farnborough**

**International Airshow**

**FARNBOROUGH, UNITED KINGDOM**—Today, on the first day of Florida's Business Development Leadership Mission to the United Kingdom, Governor DeSantis officially opened the Florida Pavilion at the 2026 Farnborough International Airshow. The Governor also announced that Relativity Space—an aerospace manufacturing company—has committed to expanding its operations on the Space Coast, bringing substantial capital investments and creating thousands of high-skill, high-wage jobs for Floridians. The Governor also presided over the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between Space Florida and the UK Space Agency (UKSA) to advance international space collaboration. This new partnership builds on an already strong relationship between the United Kingdom and Florida.

"The Free State of Florida anchors the international space economy," said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. "Today's announcements at the Farnborough International Airshow reinforce our position as a leader in the international space race by creating pathways for innovation, investment, and opportunity."

"Relativity Space's decision to expand their pioneering manufacturing and launch operations to the Space Coast supports Florida's position as the premier destination for innovative companies," said **Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly**. "Florida has fostered a competitive, business-first climate and we are proud to support Florida's small and emerging aviation and

aerospace companies as they showcase the strength and ferocity of Florida's economy at the 2026 Farnborough International Airshow."

"It's strategic and intentional initiatives like today's Space Florida MOU that keep Florida at the forefront of the aviation and aerospace industry," said **Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Jared W. Perdue**. "These partnerships will continue to drive future innovation and economic growth."

"From the days of early aviation to today's space missions, Florida has played an important part in the history of manned flight," said **Secretary of State Cord Byrd**. "Expanding our partnership with the United Kingdom through this MOU brings together our shared expertise, technology, and pioneering spirit."

"Relativity is exactly the partner that helps advance our mission to solidify Florida as the world's hub for aerospace commerce," said **Rob Long, President and CEO, Space Florida**. "This project is a win for Florida's commercial space economy and is the direct result of how our infrastructure, strategy, and talent ecosystem makes Florida the inevitable choice. We look forward to actively helping them grow in our state."

"Every partnership Space Florida forges strengthens our state's position as the world's leading aerospace commerce hub. Our newly signed agreement with the UK is our first partnership under the International Aerospace Innovation Fund and gives Florida companies a direct path to international collaboration. Thank you to Governor Ron DeSantis for continuing to drive our aerospace economy forward," said **Jeanette Nuñez, Chair of the Space Florida Board of Directors**.

This new partnership between Space Florida and UKSA builds on the framework outlined in the 2023 Memorandum of Understanding signed by Governor DeSantis and U.K. Secretary of State for

Business and Trade Kemi Badenoch. Since then, through strategic efforts, Florida and the U.K. have seen steady momentum through multiple inbound and outbound trade delegations, ongoing implementation meetings, and strong educational and commercial ties that continue to make the U.K. one of Florida's most important economic partners.

Since 2019, bilateral merchandise trade between Florida and the UK has grown by more than 20%. In 2025, total bilateral merchandise trade between Florida and the United Kingdom was more than \$4.1 billion. Florida exported \$1.3 billion in Florida-origin goods to the UK, and the UK exported \$2.8 billion in goods to Florida. The U.K. is one of Florida's most important international economic partners. The U.K. is the state's largest international investment employer—accounting for roughly 1 in 5 international investment jobs in Florida. Florida serves as the UK's commercial gateway to Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Southeastern United States.

With a GDP of nearly \$1.9 trillion in Q1 of 2026, Florida would be the 14th largest economy in the world if it was a country. Florida's economy has been ranked #1 in the nation for two consecutive years by U.S. News & World Report. Florida has also been recognized as the #1 state in the nation for developing and attracting a skilled workforce by Lightcast and Florida has also ranked #1 in Higher Education for 10 consecutive years—becoming #1 in the nation for workforce education this year.

Florida's strategic infrastructure supports this economic strength, with three spaceports, 16 deepwater seaports, 21 commercial airports, 130 public-use airports, and more than 20 major military installations, including three combatant commands.

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**Governor DeSantis Commemorates the 250th Anniversary of The Wealth of Nations and Presides Over Academic Partnership Signing Between Florida International University and Heriot-Watt University During Florida's**

**International Business Development Mission**

**EDINBURGH, UNITED KINGDOM**—Today, as part of the International Business Development Mission to the United Kingdom, Governor Ron DeSantis commemorated the 250th anniversary of Adam Smith's landmark work, *The Wealth of Nations*, by presiding over the signing of a Letter of Friendship between Florida International University (FIU) and Heriot-Watt University at Adam Smith's historic Panmure House in Edinburgh. The agreement establishes a framework for academic cooperation that advances the study of free markets, moral philosophy, and political economy while further strengthening the longstanding relationship between Florida and Scotland.

The partnership builds upon the [2023 Memorandum of Understanding signed by Governor DeSantis](#) and then-U.K. Secretary of State for Business and Trade Kemi Badenoch, which expanded bilateral investment, strengthened commercial relationships, and fostered academic partnerships that continue to promote economic opportunity and innovation on both sides of the Atlantic.

"In the Free State of Florida, we understand that economic freedom is the foundation of prosperity," said **Governor Ron DeSantis**. "Adam Smith was the greatest economic thinker in history, and his timeless principles of free markets, limited government, and individual enterprise remain just as relevant today as they were 250 years ago. I was proud to establish the Adam Smith Center for Economic Freedom at Florida International University to ensure the next generation studies the ideas that have lifted more people out of poverty and created more prosperity than any other economic system. This partnership between FIU and Heriot-Watt University builds on that foundation, strengthens the enduring ties between Florida and Scotland, and prepares students for economic advancement."

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