A free publication serving the people of the Ocala area

ocala DownTown

Volume 17 Issue 10 October 2026

# 9-11

## From aFar and UP Close

By Tom Loury

While watching TV on 911, I remember seeing the planes hit the tower when it happened. I remember during the crisis, the air space was shut down because there were 6 planes un-account for, only one was a high jacked plane, but they did not know it at the time. President Bush was rushed to Air Force one. It would come out later they zig zag around the Gulf of America while they could make sure he was safe and the crisis was over. They were thinking about shooting down any plane that did not respond. It was shocking!

Today they estimate 9,000 death from the attack. A third died in the towers, the others from related illnesses from the toxic fumes and dust. I remember seeing videos of people being helped down the streets covered in dust / soot and blood. On a video I saw one man dive under a vehicle to take cover he was trying to get to his people and was not in time, I think he was the CEO that lost over six hundred people in the towers.

The remembrance was phenomenal at the ceremonys many of the families were there and honoring the fallen. Mamdani the Mayor of New York attended after being ask not to come with 110,000 signatures presented to him!

**Ocala** Bringing a little closer…In Ocala there was a Chelation Center that close around that time, there no record from the FBI closing them, but there a person working there that was confused about the closing…Well was It? **September 11, 2001**, the climate for Middle Eastern-owned businesses changed overnight, leading to sudden operational shifts and the eventual closure of several small independent businesses—including this specific center on State Road 200. So we don't know for sure what happened there and the FBI and the DOJ are not going to tell us. While the medical facility stopped regular operations shortly after that 911, the business entity itself lingered in state records until it was administratively dissolved by the state. **WOW!**

When I ask about the records it came from a source, the answer "you have a phenomenal memory!" it referred to ads in a local paper, while reading it suddenly disappeared, I could not get it back! I'm not sure I want too! That is our local connection to the 911 story (UP CLOSE). What the truth is ??? We reported!

**Marion County** A Lady that worked with us on the newspapers some time back was a Stewardess and would later be a Stewardess trainer. She was well traveled all over the world. She had trained one or two of the flight crew that went down on 911. She vowed to never fly again! She and her husband live quietly in Marion County!

If you have a story to tell about 911 send it to me, be brief and honest. tloury@att.net

# Meet Christine Calvert

I was born and raised in Ocala Florida. I've grown up watching Ocala grow to be The Horse Capital of the World and The Villages become one of the largest retirement communities in the US. I grew up on the dirt roads and playing in the open fields, where homes and businesses stand today.

I've been a Florida licensed insurance agent for over 20 years, specializing in Medicare plans. In my years in insurance, I've seen many changes affecting the lives of Medicare recipients. Plans change year to year but I pride myself on being the constant, for my clients, in the dynamic Medicare market. They can count on me being here year to year, as an advocate as well as a resource for Medicare insurance.

My insurance career is a part of my life and my business. My business philosophy is treating my clients as I'd want my own parents treated. Because of this, my clients are my strongest advertisement. They are comfortable referring their friends and family to me for guidance. I am very proud of this and never take it for granted.

Christine Calvert
Licensed Benefit Consultant
Office - 352-401-5611
Cell - 352-572-8510

Publishers Note: I endorse Christine Calvert she has been my Healthcare Insurance specialist for many years and I trust her with my health plan! I can ask any question and I get a good honest answer. She is also ready to help.

Thank You Christine! Tom Loury

# From the Internet

House lawmakers approved H.Con.Res.58 stating that Congress "denounces socialism in all its forms" and "opposes the implementation of socialist policies in the United States". Sponsors said the vote answers a growing push to normalize far-left economics and election ideas.

Backers argued the United States must protect liberty, markets, and family prosperity from centralized control. The measure passed with full Republican support among those voting and modest crossover from Democrats, signaling a clear, formal stand by the chamber.

The text links socialism with threats to freedom and prosperity and asserts that concentrated state power undermines individual rights. A House Financial Services Committee release said the resolution affirms that America rejects socialism because it endangers the freedoms that define the nation.

Lawmakers paired the message with commitments to free and secure elections. The stated aim is to tell voters, agencies, and states that Congress backs the Constitution's limits on government and the dignity of work and private enterprise.

# AI and My Search for My Grandfather

By TomL

AI who is afraid of the big bad AI? I have to say something. I have been using AI for information and it is holding true to form.The reason the Social Media does not like AI is it tells the truth about them! I went on a search and ask AI if Social Media could brain wash people into doing bad thins and it said YES! It explained how and if you ask it it will tell you.

I decide last week to give it the real test. There has been extensive researches done on trying to find my Dad father my grandfather???

My dad was left at a children's home in Alliance Ohio for nursing care, he had been burned in a house fire they think. The nurse fostered him took him home for special nursing. Her name was Loury but she never adopted him. She told the children's home his father was a professional Timber Surveyer name John Mines.

No one could find anything about him, the other day I was working on my computer and ask AI about John Mines a professional Timber surveyer, BOOM there is was. It gave me his whole history about his job. In 1910 he did timber surveying, in 1920 he was an Engineer, 1930 he went back to timber surveying, in 1940 he took up farming which must have been. Some where in there my father was born probably out of wedlock. My dad was the black sheep of the family. He was suppose to be half Indian! That is all I know but AI found him when no-one else could!

I think AI will be just fine as long as you use it as a tool and don't ask it to build a business for you or ask it to do something bad. If AI builds your business it you won't own it! I think if someone ask AI to help them do something bad AI would inform the authorities.

# CEP Chamber News

Matt McCormick, IOM, CCE

The signs have been out, the mailboxes have been full and another primary election is officially behind us. Now, attention turns to November.

At the CEP, our interest in election season is centered on public policy and its impact on the business community. Decisions made in Tallahassee and here at home can affect businesses, employees, property owners and communities in ways both large and small. Part of our role is helping Marion County's business community stay informed about those issues and better understand what they could mean locally.

And this November, there is more to watch than the names on the ballot.

Florida voters will consider three proposed amendments to our state constitution, each bringing a different conversation with potential implications for businesses and communities across the state.

One deals with Florida's Budget Stabilization Fund, commonly known as the state's "rainy day fund," and how much the state can set aside to prepare for economic downturns, hurricanes and other unexpected needs.

Another hits especially close to home here in Marion County. Voters will consider a proposed property tax exemption for certain tangible personal property used in agriculture and agritourism. With agriculture and the equine industry playing such a significant role in Marion County's economy and identity, this is an issue with clear local relevance.

The third proposed amendment brings property taxes into the conversation more broadly. Changes to property tax policy can have implications for homeowners, businesses and local governments, making it an issue that touches many parts of a community. As with any proposed constitutional amendment, understanding both the immediate and longer-term impacts is an important part of the conversation.

That is where statewide issues become local ones.

Much of the CEP's work involves issues that intersect with public policy — from workforce and infrastructure to economic development and the overall business climate. We regularly work with businesses, local governments and community partners, and we know these issues rarely have simple answers.

Over the next several months, there will be plenty of attention paid to the candidates running for office. We also hope to use this space and our other CEP platforms to share information about the issues appearing alongside those names on the November ballot and why they may matter here at home.

You don't have to follow politics every day to recognize that decisions made at the ballot box can eventually find their way to Main Street.

With the primary behind us, there is plenty to learn and discuss before November.

## Chewy Chocolate Cookies

**Ingredients**

2 cups all-purpose flour
3/4 cup cocoa powder
1 tsp. baking soda
Pinch kosher salt
1 1/4 cups (2 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
2 cups granulated white sugar
1 Tbsp. instant coffee granules
2 eggs
1 Tbsp. pure vanilla extract
1 cup walnuts, roughly chopped
1/2 cup chocolate chips

**Directions**

Adjust an oven rack to center position, and preheat oven to 350°. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, sift together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt.

In the bowl of a stand mixer (or in a large bowl with a hand mixer), cream the butter, sugar, and instant coffee granules on medium speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the eggs one at a time, fully incorporating between each addition. Add the vanilla and mix until just combined.

Add the dry ingredients to the butter/sugar mixture all at once, and mix until fully incorporated. Fold in the chopped walnuts and chocolate chips, being careful not to over mix the dough.

Using a medium cookie scoop, scoop about 2 tablespoons dough, and place onto baking sheets 3" apart.

Bake for 12 minutes. The cookies will still be very soft, but will firm up as they cool. Let them sit for 10 minutes on the baking sheet before moving to a wire rack to continue cooling. Repeat in batches as needed.


Medicare Advantage

**True Health Partnership Can Start Here**

Talk with a North Orlando area Medicare expert.

**Are you new to Medicare or rethinking your options? I'm here to answer your questions. Guide you to the right plan. And support you at every step.**

**Together, we are so much more.**SM

I'm **Christine Calvert**, local Licensed Insurance Agent.

**Experience:** Specializing in Medicare.

"Going beyond the expected to help you navigate Medicare is what I do."

**Questions? Let's talk.**
Christine Calvert
352-572-8510 (TTY 711) 5 days a week, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.
ccalvert@guidedmedicare.com
medicarehealthplus.com

**Reminder:** You may be eligible to enroll in a Medicare Advantage plan right away if you meet certain criteria, such as moving, retiring, losing coverage and more.

HealthSpring

We do not offer every plan available in your area. Currently we represent 10 organizations which offer 25 products in your area. Please contact Medicare.gov, 1-800-MEDICARE, or your local State Health Insurance Program to get information on all of your options. HealthSpring products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Health Care Service Corporation, a Mutual Legal Reserve Company. Image(s) may have been created or enhanced using artificial intelligence tools. © 2025 Health Care Service Corporation. All Rights Reserved.
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## Todd Belknap

Executive Director of the Veterans Helping Veterans USA

**THE VETERAN WATCHSTANDER: HAPPY 251st BIRTHDAY, UNITED STATES NAVY!**

On October 13, 1775, the Continental Congress passed a resolution authorizing the purchase and fitting of "two armed vessels, one to carry ten carriage guns and a proportionable number of swivels, with eighty men, to be fitted, with all possible despatch, for a cruise of three months." A second vessel of similar size was also authorized. This was in response to two British ordnance ships known to be sailing from England unescorted, and their capture would yield powder, arms, and equipment that Washington's army besieging Boston desperately needed.

On October 30, four more vessels were authorized and, on November 10, the Continental Marines were established. By the end of 1775, seven ships had been authorized, and 13 frigates of 24, 28, and 32 guns were under construction in American shipyards.

The Continental Navy never numbered more than 65 vessels, and it was gradually reduced by capture and attrition, effectively disbanding in 1785. The U.S. Navy traces its continuous institutional existence to the Naval Act of March 27, 1794. But, by convention and by act of Congress, October 13, 1775

# Meet Briggette Smith

Staff writer

Brigette quietly shown up and advocated for our children for over a decade, long before this election. Brigette an operating room nurse with 35 years of experience who trained at Shock Trauma, University of Maryland, a United States Army Reserves Nurse Corps, as a direct commission as a first lieutenant after 911 and a dedicated community volunteer, Board secretary to the Paul Chester Children's Hope Foundation and Medical missionary traveling abroad helping to perform life-changing surgeries on the indigent children of the area, She has built her life around service and leadership. Briggete has invested with skin in the game, she has two daughters who graduated from Marion County schools, and she currently have a granddaughter attending Dunnellon middle school. What's been missing on the School Board is a disciplined approach of assessing, intervening, and evaluating-the same cycle she use every day as a nurse. Despite rising budgets, Marion County has remained in the bottom academically for years. That's unacceptable. She says if elected, she will raise the bar for students, reject mediocrity, restore fiscal responsibility, and ensure every taxpayer dollar is spent efficiently- especially in school construction-so we can put those resources back into the classroom where they belong. As an operating room nurse she, knows that excellent professionals stay and grow where they are giving real pathways to advance while remaining in the work they love. Brigette says the same must be true for our best classroom teachers. We need to create paid teacher leadership and mentor roles to not only help mentor those alternatively certified teachers, but also strengthen teacher quality and support in high needed areas. By making reading proficiency a non-negotiable priority, she will raise the bar, close achievement gaps, and ensure every child gains a strong literacy foundation they need to succeed. Building stronger schools, stronger students, and stronger future for Marion County.

PUBLISHERS NOTE: I endorse Brigette Smith she is a no nonsense person and is dictated to improving the schools for our Children! TomL Publishing LLC

Tom Loury.

## Advertisers & Editorial

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tloury@att.net

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

Sabel Trail Transmission Line which is the gas line but they want to hide the name Gas Line is trying to intrude again. They say they want our approval to use our land again. They came onto our land the first time and started doing studies on turtle and lizards with no regard to the land owner. They even sent a turtle handler??? I met him when I went and ask each one of them what their title was while they were all in my woods leaning up against a truck.

I recently had a visitor in my drive way by one of the Sabel Trail Gas Line employees. He told me he was a preacher from two county's away. He was surveying how people felt about the gas line. He took notes when I said I was going to lawyer up. But I am waiting until I see the pathway, but they have already expressed the fact that they want to go along side of the existing gas line which through my farm on two parcels. They want permission now to survey and come on my land. They said they would not start the project until 2029. Don't believe it. They have never told the truth before. I think they are saying that because an attorney would not want to wait three year for their money. The attorney that represented my wife and I the first time won't even return my calls. So don't believe what they say! You can see how they operate by who they hired to come see us and ask questions. It's our land, it does not belong to the state to approve this! It does not belong to the county to approve this. The county should be all over them legally! The gas line was in direct line with two school in Dunnellon so they just went around the east side of the schools. There are water source that could be compromised, the is danger of a leak and explosion, It devalues the property. But don't wait for the county to adjust your value they want the taxes. Sabel Trail you do not have my permission to do anything. Recently I heard the governor say how he protects our Eminent Domain HE DID NOT! THANKS DESANTIS!

I worked my butt off here for 56 years to get comfortable. I live on a deadened dirt road and they are intruding on me! They just think they can take it.

**********

I heard the Veterans helping Veterans were losing one of their housing spot. The people protecting it don't have a staff it's mostly volunteer. I thank the people helping some others just want to obstruct. Help the veterans!

**********

Remember back to school means the students bring home all kinds of illnesses. I know I have experienced it years ago. Be careful.


## Newspaper Deadlines

***Editorial & Ad Copy for November***

**Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown**
**Noon, October 23rd**
**Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator**
**12am, October 28th**



## Seniors Voice of Ocala/Ocala Downtown

**Products of TomL Publishing, LLC**

P.O Box 1698, Dunnellon FL 34430

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

Inflation is often described as "too few dollars chasing too few goods" While that may be a n oversimplification of a complex issue, it captures an important truth: prices rise when the supply of money and purchasing power grows faster than the supply of products and services available for purchase. Let's see how the FAIRtax addresses the "too few goods" side of that equation by encouraging more production.

The current income/ payroll tax system taxes wages, profits, interest, dividends, capital gains and business income. The FAIRtax removes federal taxes from the production process and places the tax at the point of final retail sale. By doing so, the FAIRtax would stop penalizing work, savings, investment and business expansion.

Under our present system, businesses face corporate income taxes, payroll taxes, tax compliance costs, depreciation rules and other federal burdens that raise the cost of producing goods. Those costs are built into the prices we pay. They also discourage investment that would otherwise increase factories, equipment, inventory, transportation capacity and employment. As the saying goes, "the more something is taxed, the less you get of it".

Under the FAIRtax, companies earn profits without federal income/payroll taxes and workers earn wages without federal income/payroll taxes. When the current tax code goes away, businesses will invest in new machinery, expand facilities, hire workers and bring production back to the U.S.. Investors will also have greater incentive to fund production because capital gains will no longer be reduced by federal income taxation. More investment means more output and more output means more products to buy. When shelves are stocked, supply chains are stronger and domestic producers can respond more quickly to demands and inflationary pressure is reduced.

By removing tax barriers to production, the FAIRtax would attack one of inflation's root causes: scarcity. If inflation is "too many dollars chasing too few goods", then a tax system that helps create more goods is a powerful anti-inflation reform.

For more information, go to FAIRTAX.ORG

# Ocala Events

**Xavier Riddle and The Secret Museum**

Oct. 10, 2026 - Jan. 9 2027

This brand-new exhibit brings to life the acclaimed PBS KIDS® TV series, Xavier Riddle and the Secret Museum, which follows kid adventurers Xavier, Yadina, and Brad as they travel back in time to learn from real-life inspirational figures when they were kids!

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**After Dark in the Park Movie Series**

It's movie time! Join us for FREE movies throughout the year at different City of Ocala parks. We will bring the movie and popcorn; you just need to bring a blanket and/or chair to enjoy the show. No registration is required to attend our movies, simply show up, get comfortable and enjoy the show!

**Young Frankenstein | Friday, Oct. 23| 7 p.m.**

Fort King National Historic Landmark | 3925 E Fort King St.

An American grandson of the infamous scientist, struggling to prove that his grandfather was not as insane as people believe, is invited to Transylvania, where he discovers the process that reanimates a dead body.

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If you would like to know more about us call TomL 352-804-1223

# Marion County Youth Achievements

Look at the Marion County Youth achievements so far. Six students at Vanguard High School are competing in the seventy second Annual National Merit Scholarship Program. They are semifinalist!

Good Luck Marion County Youth. TomL

## O-Line Trolley Details

Ocala city leaders and the Ocala Metro and Economic Partnership (CEP) highlighting the new O-Line Trolley service in Downtown Ocala

· **Route time:** A full loop takes approximately 30 minutes.

· **Cost:** Completely free for riders.

· **Schedule:** Operates Wednesday through Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.

· **Stops:** Connects public parking areas (including Garage One), local shops, restaurants, and key city landmarks.

· **How to ride:** Board at designated stops or wave down the driver along the route.

More parking and a new way to explore downtown give people even more reasons to visit our shops and restaurants. Can't wait to take a ride!

# October 2026 Reilly Arts

Reilly Noir: JK & the Contraband

**Friday, October 2, 2026 at 7:30 PM | in the Midgett Black Box at the Reilly Arts Center**

**Tickets from $33**

JK & the Contraband delivers a genre-blurring live experience fusing jazz improvisation with the raw energy of '90s alternative rock. Their latest endeavor reimagines classic alt-rock and grunge icons through a fearless, instrumental lens—transforming the music of Nirvana, Soundgarden, Alice in Chains, Smashing Pumpkins, and Queens of the Stone Age into atmospheric, groove-driven arrangements. 90's nostalgia is dominating the zeitgeist and The Contraband is bringing their own spin to the era's most iconic music.

'Late Nite Catechism: Til Death Do Us Part

**Sunday, October 4, 2026 at 3:00 PM | AdventHealth Mainstage**

**Tickets from $40**

"Til Death Do Us Part: Late Nite Catechism 3" is the latest class to be unveiled in this sinfully funny series. After teaching countless students about the saints, venial sins, limbo and more, Sister is now offering up hilarious lessons on the Sacraments of Marriage and the Last Rites, including her own wacky version of the Newlywed Game. Classroom participation is a must, so bring along your sweetie and your sense of humor for a session with the country's feistiest couples counselor!

–Toast The Best of Bread

**Wednesday, October 7, 2026 at 7:30 PM | AdventHealth Mainstage**

**Tickets from $38**

TOAST will take you on a journey back in time, engaging a spectrum of emotions; from the tender moments that tug on the heartstrings to the upbeat classics that compel you to jump out of your seat and dance. And when combined with truly timeless music, this concert will "rise" to the top as one of your absolute favorite concerts of all time!

–Queen A Royal Tribute

**Saturday, October 10, 2026 at 7:30 PM | AdventHealth Mainstage**

**Tickets from $51**

Discovered on Canada's "The Voice" in 2016, Yvan Pedneault was handpicked by Queen legends Brian May and Roger Taylor to star as Galileo in the Canadian production of We Will Rock You. Now, Yvan brings his powerhouse vocals to America with Queen – A Royal Tribute, performing Queen's biggest hits with top musicians and no gimmicks. Hear favorites including "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Somebody to Love," "Don't Stop Me Now," "We Will Rock You," "We Are the Champions," and more.

Blues in the Box: Jason Ricci and the Bad Kind

**Friday, October 16, 2026 at 7:30 PM | in the Midgett Black Box at the Reilly Arts Center**

**Tickets from $33**

Multiple award-winning harmonica player, singer, and songwriter Jason Ricci is a powerhouse of the blues, jazz, funk, and New Orleans music scenes. A three-time Blues Music Award winner, he has performed at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and recorded a Grammy-winning album with Johnny Winter. Today, Ricci continues to tour with The Bad Kind and the Ricci/Krown Trio, bringing his electrifying harmonica playing and soulful storytelling to audiences around the world.

–WindFM Rocks the Reilly: Jaded An Aerosmith Tribute

**Saturday, October 17, 2026 at 7:30 PM | AdventHealth Mainstage**

**Tickets from $25**

They've got the look, the sound, and the attitude – Jaded is the ultimate Aerosmith tribute band. Covering nearly 50 years of hits, from Walk This Way and Livin' on the Edge to Back in the Saddle and Angel, this band channels the raw energy and charisma of Steven Tyler and company. If you love Aerosmith, this high-octane show will blow you away.

*Presented by WindFM*

Blues in the Box: Matt Schofield

**Friday, October 23, 2026 at 7:30 PM | in the Midgett Black Box at the Reilly Arts Center**

**Tickets from $33**

British-born and U.S.-based, Matt Schofield is a multi-award-winning guitar virtuoso, singer, songwriter, and one of the most influential blues guitarists of his generation. A three-time British Blues Guitarist of the Year and the first guitarist inducted into the British Blues Awards Hall of Fame, Schofield has earned international acclaim for his fluid playing, distinctive tone, and emotive vocals. With performances spanning nearly 30 countries and prestigious stages from Montreal to New York and London, Schofield continues to captivate audiences with his innovative original music and improvisational brilliance.

Ocala Symphony: Pictures at an Exhibition: From Dali to Mussorgky

**Saturday, October 24, 2026 at 7:30 PM & Sunday, October 25, 2026 at 3:00 PM | AdventHealth Mainstage**

**Tickets from $15**

Open the season with a feast for the senses as the full orchestra launches the year in spectacular fashion. This program transforms iconic works of visual art into sound—surreal, sweeping, and unforgettable. Michael Daugherty's dazzling The Hallucinogenic Toreador bursts with color and wit, channeling the dreamlike world of Salvador Dalí, while Rachmaninoff's haunting Isle of the Dead draws listeners into a darkly beautiful, hypnotic soundscape inspired by Böcklin's mysterious painting. After intermission comes one of the greatest orchestral showpieces of all time: Pictures at an Exhibition, Mussorgsky's vivid musical gallery, brought to blazing life in Ravel's brilliant orchestration. Bold, immersive, and thrilling from the first note to the last, this season opener is a must-hear celebration of art, imagination, and orchestral power.

*Sponsored by a Friend of the Ocala Symphony and Alva House of Style*

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**About the Reilly Arts Center**

Located just 5 blocks from Ocala's Historic Downtown Square in picturesque Tuscawilla Park, the Reilly Arts Center is Ocala's home for the arts and live entertainment. Featuring state-of-the-art acoustics and production equipment, the 705-seat venue hosts an eclectic assortment of events, concerts, meetings, and parties and has become a hub for the arts in Ocala. In addition to being the home of the Ocala Symphony Orchestra and producing local, regional and national acts, as the new flagship center for arts and culture in Ocala, the Reilly is committed to being an active and accessible venue in our community. The organization also brings live performances, movies, music, and art to Ocala's Marion Theatre in Downtown Ocala. To learn more visit reillyartscenter.com.

# A Plan for Florida Beef Industry

## Bring Down Cost!

By TomL

The price of beef as we remember just a few years ago. Is there a middle man? Is there a middle country? Are we being squeezed by China / Tyson Beef? The answer is a decade ago it started and yes we were and are being invaded. Remember China said the perfect way "to take over a country is take it without firing a shot!" They are imbedding themselves into our country. STOP THEM!

Here is what I think the answer is. Follow me now. People who want to be considered Agriculture must have acreage, Raise beef cows for self consumption and to sell at the market or private transaction. For instance you raise 5 steers, someone wants to buy a beef cow for the freezer. You sell a beef steer and send a copy to the state to prove you are raising to sell and to consume yourself.

Mean while the state will encourage hands on education on butchering, aging and packaging the beef correctly. The state also needs to address the quality of the beef before butchering. Butchering needs to be humanly done. Gainesville University had a program that taught this. I attended a processing plant. It was clean well explained and hands on processing. If every person that had acre raised a few beef steers there would not be a shortage. So what I am saying is when you make a list of education for the trades add raising live stock and butchering, along with Plumber, electrician, and etc.. Grass fed is very difficult. Probably not worth the effort. When they process the beef the animal has to be calm, not stressed. When aging the fat go ran-sit before the actual beef does so it needs to be monitored closely and beef needs to be aged, but properly.

Education is the answer to our food shortages! Not importing more out of country livestock or meat. Americans are resourceful, they can figure out how to do things without the federal government, surprise! This probably should be done on a state by state effort.

Florida AG is led by the Commissioner of Agriculture, Wilton Simpson.er of Agriculture in Florida! He needs to endorse this to make it work!

I attended a program before it was discontinued it was great.

# They're Taking Our Land!

Cross Florida Barge Canal in the 1970's Started harassing the Marion County residents (Me they wanted to go through my farm) After great stress and a hard battle it was Halted in 1971 with the intent to look at it again in a few years.

Turnpike Extension 2015 started harassing residents Through great stress to the residents of Marion County and me Again they wanted to go through our farm!

A second attempt was made. Marion County Residents fought it to a stand still. Again they wanted to go through my farm.

Commissioners voted no build!

Then came the Sabel Trail Gas Line. A man came on my land and I threw him off. I did not know but he was the project engineer. It did not matter he had no business my property. My wife and I have been living and working on this property for 56 years. The lawyers moved in, the county folded, the state folded or approved it maybe it was their idea. Well I lost the battle, the gas line went in.

Again they come back they think because they paid me for a one time easement that now they can come back and push me around again and put a second gas line in my land. If that gas line ever exploded we would be dead now they want double jeopardy.

We have had people on our land that did not belong there. I ran them off. The Sabel Trail Transmission line (gas line) put a gate up at every property owner with the same gate combination from Alabama to Orlando. Our cows have been out no explanation on how the gate got open. The gas line is suppose to be silent. Not true they run a thing called the PIG it inspects the welds and clears the gas line of any obstructions. It's not silent!

The gas line reps have been notorious liars and make strategic moves on people. They want us to approve them coming on our land to survey. They want our approval but they say they are not going to do anything till 2029. What attorney would want to wait that long for their money?

The State of Florida should not put us through this. It's not their land! Not to use not to take! No money is worth them intruding on my wife and I. We are 84 years old and still working we won't be able to handle the stress they are producing!

# SI Overview

**I have added publisher notes all through this that did not appear in the Gettysburg address but should have!**

Citizens have rights and freedom in this country because those who came before you and fought for your freedom and some died! Don't take voting lightly.

The phrase "of the people, by the people, for the people" defines a true democracy where the power of the government comes from its citizens and serves their interests. Abraham Lincoln famously popularized these words in his Gettysburg Address!

**What Each Part Means**

· **Of the people:** The government gets its power and authority from the citizens, not from a king, queen, or ruling upper class. The people who run the government are regular citizens from the same community. **(Publishers Note added) NOT THE MAYOR!** They must have worked in the united States on a regular job for at least five years before running for office and must swear allegiance to the United Staes Constitution! A Free election means by the citizens vote not visitors!

· **By the people:** The citizens create the government and control it through voting. The people choose their leaders in free and fair elections and take part in the political process.

**For the people:** The government exists to help and protect the public. Its rules and actions are meant to support the safety, rights, and well-being of all citizens, rather than serving just one powerful person or group.

**What say you?**

**Email: TLoury@att.net**

# Fire Arnold Truss Manufacturing

**Commercial Structure Fire at Arnold Truss Manufacturing**

**(OCALA, FL) Sept. 16, 2026** – Ocala Fire Rescue and Marion County Fire Rescue responded to a structure fire at Arnold Truss Manufacturing, located at 2250 NW 42nd St. The emergency call was received at 5:38 p.m., reporting flames engulfing the commercial structure.

Ocala Fire Rescue's Engine 1, Squad 7, Ladder 3, Battalion Chief 11, and a Safety Officer responded. Upon arrival, firefighters encountered a fully involved medium-sized sawmill shed, with access restricted by a bolted gate. The Safety Officer assisted Engine 1 in cutting the chain to gain entry while additional crews conducted a secondary 360-degree assessment of the structure.

Marion Country Fire Rescue crews from Stations 1, 11, 19, and 21 arrived shortly after, established a water supply, and aided in the fire attack.

Because of severe fire conditions and a partial collapse of the structure, crews transitioned to a defensive strategy to extinguish the fire. Despite these challenges, firefighters had water on the fire within four minutes of arrival.

The fire was under control at 5:56 p.m., preventing the flames from spreading to surrounding structures.

No injuries were reported.

Marion County Sheriff's Office also responded.

# Marion County FL Statistics

I have been wondering about the success of Marion County. When our country was in a slump and the economy was down \Marion County was doing OK not great but money was moving. I ask how and why? Well we had many seniors spending retirement checks and no one was talking about the thousands of Veterans receiving and spending their checks. Back then the horse industry was not growing like it is now. Now the Horse industry is turning over a lot of money.Now we have the World Equestrian Center, (for horses and people) which s turning out to be entertainment, hotel stays, restaurants and many things that go with that. But we have the Florida Horse Park which caters to a little bit different crowd of horse competitions that are very popular. I think they have national competition in horses jumping coipition s and all the things that go along with it. The two venues are totally different the only thing that is the same is they compete with Horses. Here are the stats about Marion County that is online.

The numbers can be confusing because some of the numbers overlap. But we have a lot of people spending a lot of money! Our county seems to be poor because the powers to be keep raising our taxes instead of lowering them! The invisible expense is the mortgage insurance. Every time the County raises the value go your home your insurance goes up. It has put people into a poverty level they never expected to be. Some their mortgage payment has gone up just because of the value increase the county has put on their homes to charge them more money so they have it to spend! Publishers note The numbers I have heard for veterans are 28,000???

********

Based on the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs, and the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association (FTBOA), Marion County has an estimated overall population of 442,660 residents. .

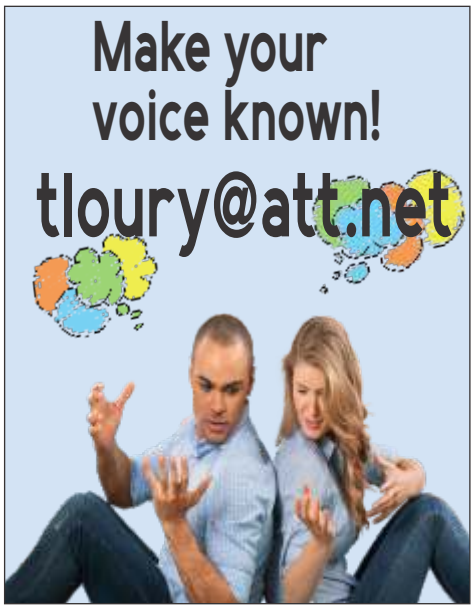
The demographic breakdown across your requested categories shows a high concentration of veterans, retirees, and equestrians, though "snowbirds" are inherently more fluid to track.

- **Veterans** ~45,000 veterans (approx. 9.9%–10.5% of the adult population) Marion County veterans services / Censes Report. This rate is significantly higher than both the state and national averages.
- **Retirees / Seniors** ~120,000+ residents (approx. 27%–29% of the population) Based on Census estimates, more than a quarter of the county is age 65 or older. This includes massive senior retirement hubs like On Top of the World and parts of The Villages.
- **"Horse People"** ~75,000 horses (supporting ~20% of county employment) FTBOA / Ocala Star-Banner. Marion County is the "Horse Capital of the World". While the exact number of people fluctuates, the industry directly accounts for roughly 1 in 5 local jobs.
- **Snowbirds** ~30,000 to 45,000 seasonal residents (Estimated) Seasonal residents are not tracked by the official census because their permanent addresses are out of state. However, local utility and tourism estimates show a population surge of roughly 8% to 10% during the winter months (November to April).

**Data Nuances & Overlap**

It is important to note that **these categories heavily overlap**. A significant portion of the "horse people" moving to Ocala to utilize the World Equestrian Center (WEC) are also winter snowbirds. Similarly, a large percentage of the county's 45,000 veterans are also fully retired seniors living in the area's active adult communities.

If you are researching this for business or community planning, would you like to dive deeper into the **economic impact** of the equine industry, or look into specific **senior housing growth trends** in the Ocala area?



FROM THE DESK OF

# Congresswoman Kat Cammack

Twenty-five years ago this morning, America watched the unthinkable unfold. 343 New York City firefighters went up the stairs of the World Trade Center so everybody else could come down. They did not come back.

I was 13 years old and living in Colorado. I remember the shock of that morning. I remember watching first responders run into danger while thousands of people fought to get out. That image has stayed with me ever since.

It never left a young man named Matt Harrison either. What he saw that day set the course of his life. He chose the fire service. Today he serves Gainesville Fire Rescue as a firefighter and paramedic, and he spent six years as a SWAT medic. I am proud to be his wife.

Life in a first responder family gives you a close view of service. The tones can go off at any hour. Dinner goes cold. The person you love walks out the door to meet a stranger on the worst day of that stranger's life.

Then you wait.

Every family across North Central Florida with a firefighter, a deputy, a dispatcher, or an EMT at the table knows that wait. Their people run to wrecks on Interstate 75 and Interstate 10. They go into burning homes. They carry neighbors through hurricanes. They handle medical emergencies behind closed doors that nobody else will ever hear about. There is no applause at the end of a long shift. There is another call.

So this is a love letter. To every fire department in our twelve counties, from the big stations in Gainesville and Ocala to the volunteer companies that cover a hundred square miles with one engine. To the police departments and sheriff's offices that stand with them on every scene. To the dispatchers who take the worst call of someone's life and never get a headline. You are the reason our neighbors sleep at night. Thank you.

Gratitude comes easily on an anniversary. It has to carry into the other 364 days. In my office, that work starts with the equipment our first responders rely on.

Start with the gear. A firefighter should never have to choose between a working air pack and a working engine because a budget got tight. In Congress I voted for the Fire Grants and Safety Act, which extended the Assistance to Firefighters Grant program that pays for protective gear and equipment and the SAFER program that helps departments keep enough people on the truck.

This spring I introduced the First Responders' Equipment Access Act to fix federal rules that get in the way of fire engines and emergency equipment reaching the departments that need them. When Washington argues about spending, I think about who is standing in an apparatus bay in a small county wearing turnout gear that was handed down twice.

Then there are the survivors.

September 11 did not stop killing people on September 11. The federal Victim Compensation Fund reports that deaths from 9/11-related health conditions have far surpassed the number of people killed in the attacks. More than 10,000 FDNY members are living with a certified 9/11-related physical health condition.

Some responders and survivors now call North Central Florida home. My district team works casework for people fighting serious illnesses while navigating federal paperwork. We help eligible constituents work with the World Trade Center Health Program and the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund. Our job is to make sure a federal form does not stand between them and the help available under the law.

Today I will climb the stairs at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium with the firefighters of Alachua County. Last year hundreds of first responders and neighbors climbed 2,071 steps in The Swamp for the people we lost. Then I will travel to Lake City and stand in the apparatus bay with the men and women who protect Columbia County. Most of them were kids on September 11, 2001. Some were not born yet. They chose this work anyway.

Twenty-five years later, they still run in. We still owe them. We honor the promise to never forget when we remember the fallen. We keep it when we take care of the ones still carrying the cost of that fateful day.

One day I will tell Auggie why her dad does what he does. I will start with the 343.

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**Congresswoman Kat Cammack Issues Statement on the Censure of Rep. Chuck Edwards**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03), Chair of the Republican Women's Caucus, released the following statement after the House voted 413-2 on Tuesday to censure Rep. Chuck Edwards (R-NC) following a bipartisan House Ethics Committee investigation into his conduct toward two staffers:

"Yesterday, I voted to censure Congressman Chuck Edwards.

I read the Ethics Committee's report, and I read his letter and his lawyers' response with the seriousness they deserve. He had every right to defend himself. It did not change my vote.

The Committee found a persistent pattern of unprofessional and inappropriate conduct toward two young women on his staff, and he did not deny much of the underlying conduct. In fact, defends it. He defends the gifts and the poetry, and he defends traveling with a young woman who had only just left his office. His argument is that none of it broke a rule, and that is precisely the problem.

I was a congressional staffer myself before becoming a Member. I understand the responsibility Members have to the people who work for us. Members of Congress hold enormous power over the people who work for us. 'Technically permitted' is a low bar. Judgment is the standard.

I co-founded the Republican Women's Caucus to raise the standard in this institution, and that starts with how we treat the people who serve alongside us. Two young women left his office, and the Committee said the House lost them because of his conduct.

Congress cannot ask the American people to trust this body if we refuse to hold ourselves accountable. Yesterday's vote was accountability after the fact. My work with Chairwoman Leger Fernández and the Democratic Women's Caucus is about making sure the next staffer never has to get that far. We will have more to share on that work soon."

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**Congresswoman Kat Cammack Secures $50 Million in Water Infrastructure Authorizations and Horseshoe Beach Storm Protection Study in House-Passed WRDA**

Washington, D.C. — Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03) secured $50 million in new and expanded federal water and wastewater infrastructure authorizations for Columbia, Suwannee, Marion, and Gilchrist Counties, along with a coastal storm risk study for Horseshoe Beach in Dixie County, in the Water Resources Development Act of 2026 (H.R. 9497), which passed the House of Representatives today by a vote of 415 to 9.

The House-passed bill:

Authorizes up to $39.3 million for water and wastewater infrastructure in Columbia and Suwannee Counties.

More than doubles Marion County's existing authorization, from $10 million to $20.5 million, providing an additional $10.5 million in authorized capacity.

Authorizes up to $200,000 for water and wastewater infrastructure, including stormwater management, in Gilchrist County.

Directs the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to study coastal storm risk management for the town of Horseshoe Beach, including shoreline damage prevention and mitigation.

"Our water and wastewater systems in North Central Florida carry the weight of decades of growth and back-to-back storms. Columbia, Suwannee, Marion, and Gilchrist Counties needed a federal partner. Securing these three priorities in the House-passed WRDA is an important step toward delivering the infrastructure these growing communities need," said Congresswoman Kat Cammack. "Horseshoe Beach took a direct hit from Idalia and Helene, and this study is the first step toward advancing long-term coastal storm protection for the community.

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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 Xolaitzcuintli, 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 Proposes the Florida Anti-Spam Communications Act to Stop Robocalls, Robotexts, and AI Voice Scams**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Attorney General James Uthmeier proposed legislation that gives the Attorney General independent authority to investigate and shut down spam calls and texts and gives prosecutors new tools against impersonation, fake warrants, undisclosed AI voices, and the phone farms that power those campaigns.

"Floridians should not have to fear every unknown call or text," said Attorney General James Uthmeier. "What we are talking about is fraud—pure and simple. It just arrives as a phone call, a text, a fake warrant, or an AI voice. This proposal lets our office investigate and act independently, and it gives prosecutors the tools to put the worst offenders in prison."

Spam floods Florida phones. Scammers spoof government agencies, banks, and utilities. They send fake warrants and official-looking papers by text. Artificial voices make the fraud sound real. Under current law, some of these crimes don't carry tough penalties, and Florida law does not provide consequences for the phone farms and SIM farms that blast thousands of numbers from one room.

The Florida Anti-Spam Communications Act would:

1. Crack down on phone and text fraud, including AI voices and fake warrants.

Impersonating an official, spoofing a number, using an undisclosed AI voice to obtain money, or sending a fake warrant by text or e-mail is treated as communications fraud and simulated legal process. High-volume or high-loss cases would be an elevated felony and carry mandatory prison time. Possession or importation of a phone farm or SIM farm becomes a felony, and the equipment is designated contraband.

2. Cut off unlawful traffic.

Communications providers would be required to authenticate caller ID, answer traceback requests, and cut off a named unlawful campaign after written notice.

3. Strengthen consent and opt-outs.

Florida's telemarketing consent law is tightened, and a STOP request must be honored within days instead of weeks. Selling stolen lists used to target Florida numbers is its own civil violation.

4. Give the Attorney General independent authority.

The Department of Legal Affairs may investigate spam calls and texts on its own and seek injunctions, restitution, and civil penalties, including against those who sell or traffic in illegally obtained records.

5. Educate seniors before the next call lands.

The Department of Legal Affairs would run a statewide campaign so older Floridians know how to spot a fake warrant, a spoofed number, and an AI voice—and how to hang up and report it.

Floridians who receive a suspicious call or text should not send money. A real court does not text a warrant. Report it at 1-866-9NO-SCAM or MyFloridaLegal.com.

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**Attorney General James Uthmeier Takes Legal Action Against Amazon for Secret Ad Surcharge Scheme Driving Up Prices for Florida Families**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier joined the Federal Trade Commission and 21 other states in suing Amazon, alleging the company spent years secretly inflating the prices Florida businesses pay to advertise on its platform—costs that were then passed on to Florida families at checkout.

"Amazon told Florida businesses they were bidding in a fair auction. That was false," said Attorney General James Uthmeier. "Amazon hid a surcharge, padded its own profits, and those costs landed on Florida families buying groceries, medicine, and everyday essentials. Amazon should expect to be held accountable."

According to the complaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, Amazon represented for years that it ran "second-price" auctions in which the winning advertiser would pay only one cent more than the next-highest bidder. In practice, Amazon added an undisclosed surcharge and used an "invented auction participant" to drive prices higher than genuine competition would have produced. By 2024, Amazon charged Sponsored Products advertisers their own winning bid approximately 80 percent of the time, converting a nominally second-price auction into a first-price auction without telling customers.

The complaint alleges Amazon began testing hidden surcharges in 2019 and 2020. After concluding advertisers could not detect the extra charges, Amazon rolled them out across the platform and ramped them higher on Prime Day and Black Friday. Internal documents quoted in the complaint describe "a surcharge hidden in it" and a "clever non-transparent way to charge first price."

Those overcharges did not stop with the businesses that buy ads. The complaint alleges that a significant portion of the advertising costs paid by Amazon sellers "are ultimately passed through to and paid by Amazon shoppers in the form of higher prices," including on low-margin necessities families buy every day. Nationally, the scheme is alleged to have extracted more than $20 billion from approximately 1.2 million advertising customers, including more than 500,000 small- and medium-sized businesses. Sellers and vendors based in Florida have been overcharged by hundreds of millions of dollars over more than four years.

Amazon understood that disclosing the change would cause advertisers to lower their bids. The complaint alleges the company concealed the surcharges, gave false and misleading answers when advertisers asked whether the auction format had changed, and continued the practice after the FTC notified Amazon of its investigation.

The lawsuit alleges Amazon violated the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act. Attorney General Uthmeier seeks a permanent injunction, consumer restitution, disgorgement of ill-gotten gains, civil penalties, attorney's fees, and other relief authorized by Florida law.

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FROM THE DESK OF

# GOVERNOR DESANTIS

**Florida Announces the Start of Workforce Pell Grant Funding to Support Short-Term, Career-Focused Training**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced Florida's initial list of eligible short-term workforce programs for purposes of implementing the new federal Workforce Pell Grant program. This program is a Trump Administration priority and provides federal financial aid to students enrolled in short-term workforce training programs that lead directly to employment in high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations.

Aligned with state workforce demand, the Workforce Pell Grant supports students' continued education and career advancement while strengthening the state's workforce pipeline. Workforce Pell eligible programs must prepare students for occupations that demonstrate strong labor market demand or fulfill critical workforce needs within Florida's economy and communities.

"Florida is number one in workforce education, and the Workforce Pell Grant funding enables us to build on our track record of success," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "The programs eligible for Workforce Pell funding are preparing students for high-wage, in-demand careers. We're glad that thousands more Floridians will be able to take advantage of these opportunities without needing to take out loans or break the bank."

Governor Ron DeSantis has delegated Commissioner of Education Henry Mack to lead the statewide implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant. The Florida Department of Education is using the Targeted Occupations List managed by FloridaCommerce and the CareerSource Florida Master Credential List to determine eligible programs.

"By prioritizing short-term workforce training that allows students to earn a credential in as little as 8 weeks, the Workforce Pell Grant helps students earn the skills they need to enter the workforce with little to no debt," said Commissioner of Education Henry Mack. "The programs identified as eligible for Workforce Pell funding are within high-wage and in-demand industries, ensuring students will be able to find fulfilling careers after completing their programs."

Under Governor DeSantis' leadership, Florida has been named the nation's number one state for workforce education, and the Workforce Pell Grant further showcases his commitment to workforce education, adding to the $12 billion already committed during his administration.

For more information about Florida's implementation of the Workforce Pell Grant and to view the inventory of eligible programs, visit www.fldoe.org/workforcepell.

For more information about the Florida Department of Education, visit www.fldoe.org.

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**Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Second Annual Second Amendment Sales Tax Holiday**

LAKELAND, Fla. — Today, Governor Ron DeSantis announced Florida's Second Amendment Sales Tax Holiday is back for a second year, providing tax relief on firearms, ammunition and a wide range of hunting, fishing and camping supplies through December 31. The Governor also broke ground on the new Florida Archery Center at Tenoroc in Lakeland, expanding opportunities for Floridians to participate in shooting sports and enjoy the outdoors.

"Since I became governor, we have enacted billions of dollars in tax cuts. This year's hunting, fishing and camping sales tax holiday—ongoing through December 31—will provide Floridians with even more tax relief," said Governor DeSantis. "We are proud to protect Floridians' Second Amendment rights while helping hunters, anglers, and sportsmen keep more of their hard-earned money."

The Second Amendment Sales Tax Holiday began September 1 and runs through December 31, 2026. During the holiday, Florida will suspend the collection of sales tax on eligible firearms, ammunition and hunting, fishing and camping equipment.

Eligible purchases include:

Ammunition;

Firearms, including pistols, rifles and shotguns;

Firearm accessories, including holsters, grips, sights, stocks and cleaning kits;

Bows, crossbows and related accessories;

Fishing rods, reels, bait and tackle; and

Eligible camping supplies, including tents, sleeping bags, camping stoves and lanterns.

Following the success of last year's inaugural holiday, Florida expanded tax relief for 2026. This year, the state doubled the eligible price thresholds for fishing bait and tackle to $10 for individual items and $20 for multiple items sold together. Florida also expanded tax relief for firearm accessories through a separate sales tax exemption that includes magazines, range bags, firearm barrels, triggers, slings, bipods and suppressors.

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**Governor Ron DeSantis Awards More Than $10 Million to More Than 1,500 New Law Enforcement Officers**

Since 2022, nearly 12,500 new law enforcement officers across the state have received bonuses through the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Payment Program, totaling more than $83 million.

LAND O'LAKES, Fla.— Today, Governor Ron DeSantis awarded more than $10 million in bonuses to 1,506 new law enforcement officers through the Florida Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Program, including 38 new recruits in Pasco County. Since 2022, nearly 12,500 new law enforcement officers across the state have received bonuses through the program, totaling more than $83 million.

"In 2022, while some cities were reaping the disastrous results of "defund the police" experiments, I signed landmark legislation to strengthen law enforcement recruitment and retention in Florida," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "In the four years since, we have awarded nearly 12,500 bonuses totaling more than $83 million to our law enforcement officers. We have also made record-breaking investments in officer pay, benefits, training, and protections for the men and women who put their lives on the line to protect the people of our state. We continue to build on this foundation to keep Florida the most law enforcement-friendly state in the country."

"Governor DeSantis has made Florida the national model for supporting law enforcement and the nearly 12,500 recruitment bonuses awarded since 2022 are a testament to the success of that commitment," said Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly. "Through a comprehensive commitment to the men and women who protect our communities—including investments in pay increases, expanded education opportunities and wellness benefits—Florida remains committed to our sworn officers and their families."

The program provides a one-time $5,000 bonus—after taxes—to newly recruited and employed officers as a show of appreciation and incentive for choosing to serve Florida. The bonuses are part of a broader initiative to solidify Florida's position as the Nation's law-and-order state.

Under the Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget, the Governor secured $19.8 million in pay increases for sworn state law enforcement officers, $20 million for the Law Enforcement Recruitment Bonus Program, and $2.5 million in pay increases for state firefighters. In the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget, state law enforcement officers saw a raise in the minimum base pay to $60,000 and significant raises for both entry-level and veteran officers—10% and 15% increases, respectively.

**James Tackett,** REALTOR®

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