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Volume 30 Issue 11
November 2026

Missiles Contractor Lockeed Martin



Lockheed Martin Gets More Than $35 Billion U.S. Contract for Thaad Systems

As demand for missile defense interceptors continues to rise around the globe, the US Army awarded Lockheed Martin a $9.8 billion contract for Patriot missiles, the largest in the company's history.

It is the largest order ever of Patriot missiles, covering close to 2,000 missiles and related hardware. Lockheed is manufacturing the newest version of the interceptors that arm the Patriot, known as PAC-3 MSE, which costs about $4 million each, according to Army budget documents.

The Navy also anticipates integrating the Lockheed Martin-made missiles with ships' air defenses.

The defense contractor will quadruple production of its high-end Thaad missile-defense systems

CEP Hosted Horse Parade



October Ocala Metro Chamber & Economic Partnership's Equine Initiative hosted the annual All-Breed Horse Parade, presented by Pat Myers Electric. See story page two.

Meet Dan Kapellen



Could your home equity help you enjoy a more financially comfortable retirement? Dan Kapellen, known as "Your Loan Navigator," helps homeowners 55 and older explore reverse mortgages and other home equity solutions to improve financial flexibility and retirement lifestyle.

As a Mortgage Loan Officer with Prime Path Lending Team, his CMA, CREV, and CVLS credentials reflect specialized training in mortgage planning, retirement home equity strategies, and helping clients make informed financial decisions.

Dan is also the author of the Amazon bestselling book The Housing Wealth Advice That Retirees Never Get and hosts educational Lunch & Learn seminars.

Wells Joins Mike Klein to Try to Defeat Cammack

Tom Wells joins Mike Klein to defeat Trump ally Kat Cammac

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (Oct. 20, 2026) — **Tom Wells**, former Democratic congressional candidate and longtime progressive advocate in Florida's 3rd Congressional District, has endorsed Independent candidate **Mike Klein**, joining the growing coalition supporting Klein's campaign to unseat Republican incumbent Kat Cammack in the November 3 general election.

Wells, who challenged Cammack as the Democratic nominee in 2024 and has campaigned for the congressional seat since 2016, brings years of political activism, grassroots organizing, and a commitment to progressive causes.



CEP Chamber News

Matt McCormick, IOM, CCE



Horse Parade (continued from pg 1)

Downtown Ocala was once again filled with a different kind of horsepower on Saturday, October 10, as the Ocala Metro Chamber & Economic Partnership's Equine Initiative hosted the annual All-Breed Horse Parade, presented by Pat Myers Electric. The Equine Initiative, presented by Pyranha Animal Health, works to strengthen connection between Marion County's equestrian community, local businesses, and residents.

The parade brought Marion County's equine community into the heart of our downtown, showcasing the horses, riders and traditions that have helped shape our region's identity. More than just a parade, the event serves as a reminder of the important connection between our equine industry, local businesses and the community we call home.

For those of us at the CEP, bringing this event downtown is intentional. Our historic downtown represents the heart of Ocala, and the equine industry is an essential part of what makes this community unique. Bringing the two together creates an opportunity for residents, visitors and business owners to experience a piece of Marion County's heritage while supporting the continued vitality of our downtown.

The equine industry contributes an estimated $4.3 billion annually to our local economy, supporting jobs, businesses and investment throughout Marion County. But its impact extends well beyond the numbers. From family-owned farms and local feed stores to world-class equestrian facilities and international competitions, the industry touches nearly every corner of our community.

Through the CEP's Equine Initiative, we work to strengthen the connection between our equestrian and non-equestrian communities. The All-Breed Horse Parade is one of the most visible examples of that mission in action.

"The beauty of the All-Breed Horse Parade is that it brings so many different parts of our equine community together in one place," said Louisa Barton, Director of Equine Initiative for the CEP. "We have such an incredible variety of breeds, disciplines and traditions right here in Marion County, and not everyone gets to experience that firsthand. Bringing these horses and riders downtown gives families and visitors an opportunity to see just how special our equine community is and hopefully inspires them to learn more about the industry and the people behind it."

The parade also represents the kind of collaboration that helps our community thrive. It takes dedicated horse owners, riders, volunteers, sponsors, downtown businesses and community partners to bring an event like this together. We are especially grateful to Pat Myers Electric for presenting this year's parade and to Pyranha Animal Health for its continued investment in the CEP's Equine Initiative.

As Downtown Ocala continues to grow and evolve, events that celebrate our history and connect people to our local industries remain more important than ever. Our goal is not simply to bring people downtown for a morning, but to create experiences that strengthen community pride, introduce new audiences to our local businesses and remind us of the traditions that make Ocala such a special place to live, work and visit.

The All-Breed Horse Parade is a celebration of where we've been, who we are and the opportunities ahead. We look forward to continuing this tradition and finding new ways to connect our equine community with the heart of Ocala.

Thank you,
Jessica Gilbert

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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
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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.

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Todd Belknap

Executive Director of the Veterans Helping Veterans USA



NOVEMBER EVENTS CELEBRATE SERVICE & SACRIFICE

The month of November not only ushers in the holiday season, but it also brings a boatload of Veterans activities to town. Annually, Veterans Day is observed on November 11; this year it falls on a Wednesday. Most Veteran groups in the gated communities have their own Veterans Day observances.

To offer a ceremony NOT on a weekday when most people are working or attending school, Veterans Helping Veterans USA is collaborating with **Highland Memorial Park** this year to host a Veterans Day service on **Saturday, November 7** at **10 am**. The public is welcome and encouraged to attend this Community family event at **1515 NE 3rd Street in Ocala**! Please arrive by 9:45 am to secure parking and grab a seat.

Another outstanding Veterans Day celebration takes place on **Friday, November 6** at **St. John Lutheran School**, 1915 SE Lake Weir Avenue, Ocala 34471. Activities include the American Honor Foundation landing two helicopters on the baseball diamond; a free hot dog luncheon takes place before a 1 pm ceremony. Spouses are welcome!

A listing of all upcoming reported events can be explored at www.mission1776.org/upcoming-events.

Have a peaceful and joy-filled Thanksgiving!

Can AI Reprogram Drone in Flight?

From the Internet
By TomL
I ask AI

Can AI remotely hack, reprogram, or Hijack a foreign or operational drone in mid-flight to send it back to its origin?

Why Mid-Flight Reprogramming Fails

· **Encrypted Links:** Modern military and commercial drones use secure, heavily encrypted communication protocols that prevent unauthorized remote access or signal injection.

· **One-Way Control:** Many long-range or combat drones operate on rigid, pre-programmed flight paths or closed-loop systems that do not accept external real-time commands from untrusted sources.

· **Physical Isolation:** An AI system requires physical or network access (such as a compromised control link or a connected companion computer) to alter flight firmware or waypoint data, which cannot be done purely externally from thin air against a secured target.

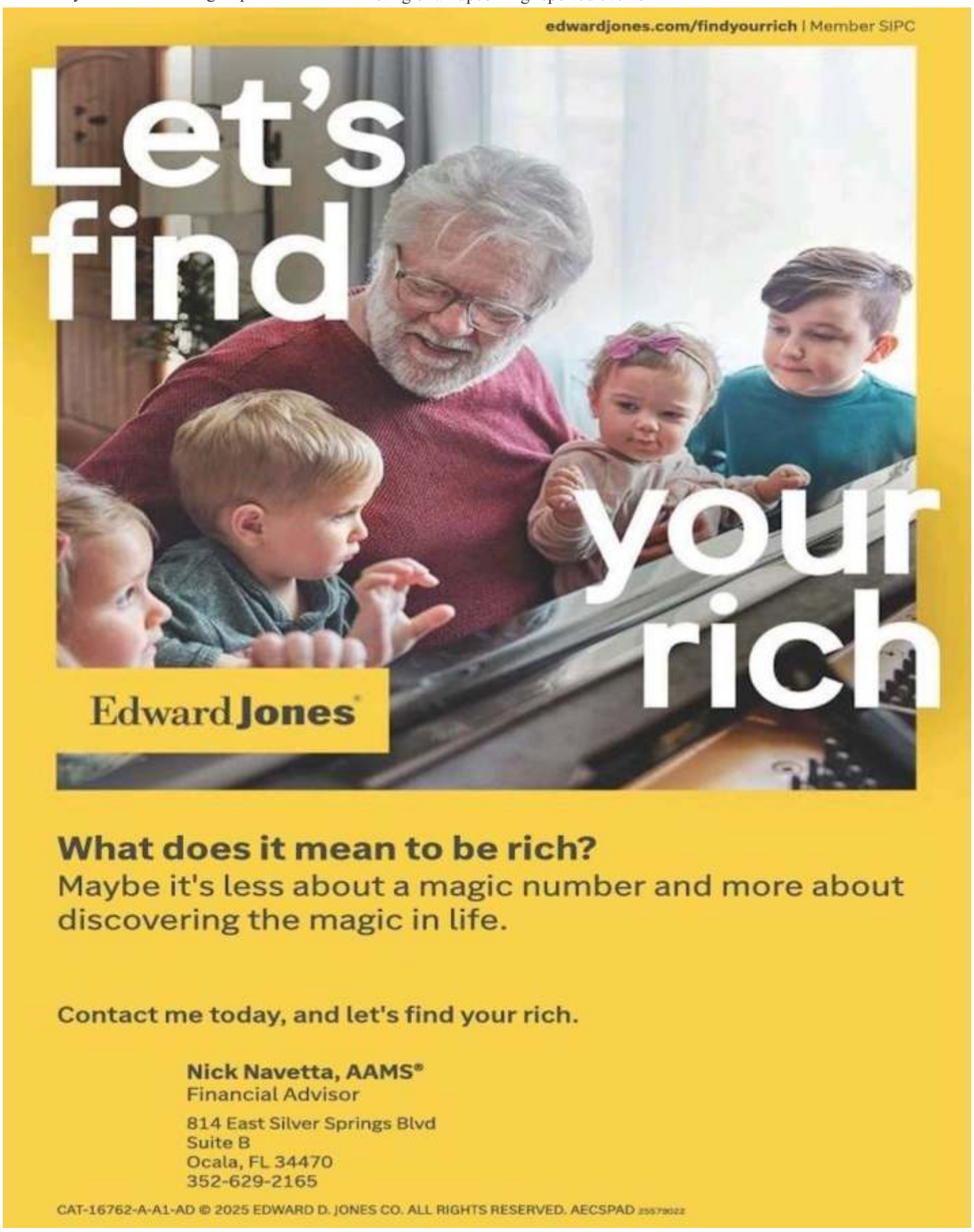
What AI *Can* Do in Flight

· **Autonomous Navigation:** AI can control a drone it already has authorized access to, using machine learning and computer vision to avoid obstacles or track targets dynamically.

· **Return-to-Home (RTH):** Standard drones have built-in failsafes to return to their launch point automatically if they lose connection to their original operator, but this is an onboard pre-set function, not an external AI hijacking the craft.

If you are curious about the mechanics, would you like to know more about **how electronic warfare (EW) and signal jamming** interact with drone navigation instead?

Lockheed Martin's Ocala Operations facility ranges over 340,000 square feet, housing almost 1,449 employees.



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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



By TomL

How about "The AMERICAN BROTHERHOOD!" Republican / Democrats / Independents and those who don't want to vote! All can join if they love America and are not out to destroy it!

Independent Americans would have to run it. Maybe the Supreme Court could over see it! An agency to vent the applications for membership?

How many candidates with foreign ties are standing against America and its constitution? Now we know there are a lot of people running for office that are United States Citizens and are up standing American but there are a few that do not pledge allegiance to our country and our constitution. Live here but don't try destroy our country.

RESULTS FROM GOOGLE Thousands of candidates with immigrant roots, diverse heritages, and non-Anglo-Saxon or non-traditional American surnames run for local, state, and federal offices across the U.S. every election cycle. How about Barack Hussein Obama. In my opinion Obama Bernie Sanders and Soro's are probably the leader of the Socialist Democratic Party but, look what has happened since he has been in the back ground. Look at some of the candidates and what they stand for. Do you think he was good for our country???

Obama and Fauci was the reason I went Republican. I was writing story about Obama and Fauci giving money to the Wuhan lab in China hiding the fact by sending it through a non-profit in a grant to a company they made a deal with.

If you ask who did Fauci serve under google will say Trump, but when money was changing hands it was Obama! Obama is as guilty as China and fauci!

I read a note from a person saying vote yes on 3 will cut money from the veterans. Veterans services money comes primarily from federal tax revenue appropriated by Congress to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), supplement by state and local government funds.

There has been more discovery of hate from the Campus where Charlie Kirk was murdered. The leaders of the college hated him and accused him of spewing divisive information. The college was as guilty as the person that murdered him. I have heard the word Assassination, but I think the word murder fits it better! The college's have way to much power, the teachers union's have to much power. It is distracting them from teaching which is their job. Just look at the student test scores! What we put into the minds of students will come out is good verses evil. Leaders or followers.

Just as AI it can be used as a tool very effectively or you can ask it to do your work for you and you become a victim. If you want to start a business use it as a tool but if you want to take the easy route and ask AI to create your business and run it won't be yours! Enough said!

Newspaper Deadlines

Editorial & Ad Copy for December

Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown
Noon, November 20th
Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator
12am, November 25th

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
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FairTax

When you purchase an item such as a loaf of bread, a shirt, an automobile or a service, you see the sales tax on your receipt. Most people think that that is the total tax your are paying but, unfortunately, that is far from the truth. What you don't see on the receipt is the embedded taxes.

Hidden inside the price of everything you buy are the tax costs of every entity that had a hand in the production and distribution of that item. To stay in business, a business must recover their costs - including labor costs, cost of materials and taxes - through the prices they charge. It is estimated that 15%-30% of the retail price you pay for an item is due to these tax costs being passed on to you.

Goods and services involve a lot of labor with federal payroll taxes alone demonstrate the magnitude of taxes associated with labor. Social Security and Medicare taxes are 7.65% for the employee and 7.65% for the employer for a total of 15.3%. In addition to payroll taxes, corporate income tax affects consumer prices. Research by the National Bureau of Economic Research examining actual retail prices, found significant pass throughs and estimated half of the corporate tax incidence examined ultimately fell on the consumer.

Let's look at a loaf of bread. The farmer grows the grain and sells it to the miller for $3.00. The miller adds his tax costs and sells it to the baker for $3.30. The baker adds his tax costs and sells it to the distributor for $3.63. The distributor adds his tax costs and sells to the retailer for $3.99. The retailer adds his tax costs and the final price to the consumer is $4.39. This example illustrates the cumulative effect of embedded costs. Each participant can introduce additional federal income and payroll tax costs into the chain and these costs become part of the company's selling price and are then marked up by every subsequent business.

The FAIRtax repeals federal individual and corporate income taxes and federal payroll taxes and replaces them with a transparent national retail consumption tax. Isn't it time that we have a federal tax system that rewards things that benefit society? Let's get rid of the these embedded costs and enact the FAIRtax.

For more information, go to FAIRtax.org





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

Florida Gateway College



I joined Florida Gateway College in Lake City to announce $3 million for workforce training, the largest federal grant in the college's history!

This funding will help build a new Building Construction Technology Center, including a 4,800-square-foot construction lab, and launch new trade programs for students across our rural communities. These opportunities will help students learn a trade and prepare for good-paying jobs close to home. Team Kat proudly sent a letter of support backing FGC's application.

Thank you to Dr. Barrett, Dr. McIntire, and the entire FGC team

Healthcare Roundtable



Local and statewide healthcare leaders together at Gainesville District Office for a roundtable on the challenges facing providers and patients across North Central Florida.

First Coast Honor Flight



It was an honor to join First Coast bright and early to help send off an incredible group of veterans traveling to Washington, D.C., for an **Honor Flight** celebrating their service and sacrifice.

Ocala Fire Welcomes Welcomes Special team



Ocala Fire Rescue Welcomes 12 Members to its Special Operations Team

(OCALA, FL.) Oct. 16, 2026 – Ocala Fire Rescue is proud to announce the induction of 12 fire service members into its Special Operations Team, a significant milestone under the 2026-2029 Collective Bargaining Agreement, which took effect on October 1st, 2026.

With this expansion, the Special Operations Team has grown from 32 to 44 members. This strategic enhancement reflects our commitment to ensuring our community receives the highest level of emergency response capabilities and that we have a robust team ready to respond to critical incidents.

The Special Operations Team is composed of highly trained personnel who have dedicated at least four years to Ocala Fire Rescue. Members are specifically trained in technical rescue and hazardous materials identification and response. They undergo rigorous training that includes completing at least five specialized courses in areas such as Trench and Collapse Rescue, Vehicle and Machinery Rescue, Hazardous Materials, Confined Space Rescue, Rope Rescue, and Structural Collapse Operations, among others.

To maintain their skills and readiness, all team members participate in at least four monthly drills and two quarterly drills each year, ensuring they are prepared to respond effectively to any emergency. Congratulations to the new team members for their commitment to excellence and their readiness to serve our community in this crucial capacity.

New OFR Special Operations Team Members:

· Driver Engineer/ Paramedic Aaron Bertine
· Captain/ Paramedic Justin Clavier
· Driver Engineer/ Paramedic Micah Day
· Captain/ Paramedic Brandi DuCoeur
· Firefighter/ Paramedic Chase Howard
· Firefighter/ Paramedic Eduardo Ignacio-Simon
· Firefighter/ Paramedic Jake Marrall
· Driver Engineer/ Paramedic Christopher Maxson
· Firefighter/ Paramedic Hayden Mulder
· Firefighter/ Paramedic Darius Sampson
· Driver Engineer/ Paramedic Cale Susdorf
· Firefighter/ Paramedic Jeffrey Saunders

"We're excited to welcome these members to the Special Operations Team," said Clint Welborn, Ocala Fire Rescue's Fire Chief. "The addition of these 12 members, with a combined 87 years of experience, will enhance our already outstanding team with renewed insight and strategies."

Be a People Person MOVING FORWARD

Dear Editor

My goal in life is to be a people person and encourage them to help one another! Just "Keep Moving Forward!" I have always said I do business with a person, not a business. When a person gives you a promise normally you can count on it!

That is why I like the CEP Ocala Florida, they use the term"Moving Forward" every day and they don't talk politics at meetings, although some work very hard for candidates.

My dad raised me as a Democrat he said "they were for the working man" and I believe they were until Barak Husain Obama. I still don't believe was a US citizen!

I stay the course for many years voting for the person I like! Late in life I figured it out. Some of the Democratic states were stealing us blind. I say COVID started the whole thing. They dumped money into funds to help their people, then they realise there was no one checking it, no feed back on where the money was going and new funds were born! Billions of dollars were taken out of our tax money. I believe once we get our economy stabilized and the fraud is minimized we should be able to pay down the debt!

We should show Elon Musk a lot of gratitude for the brain power working behind the scene. Elon lost a fortune because of terrorist ruining his products.

From The Optimist !

A Letter from Byron Donalds

Dear Thomas,

Thank you for reaching out. Making Florida affordable will be Byron Donalds's number-one priority as Governor. In Congress, he repeatedly voted to cut your taxes and lower costs – he'll bring that same attitude to the Governor's Mansion. Here are some of his plans to make life more affordable:

Bring Down Your Insurance Bill:

- Protect reforms and stop lawsuit abuse that jacks up rates for everyone, saving homeowners hundreds of dollars a year.

- Lower costs by trimming down state fees when reserves are full so those extra dollars stay in your wallet. Pursue regulatory reforms that lower insurance premiums.

- Reform the My Safe Florida Home program and other grant programs to fund real, storm-hardening upgrades that lower your annual premium the most.

- Keep Citizens Insurance small so everyday drivers and homeowners never get hit with a surprise "hurricane tax" bill after a big storm.

- Cut the red tape and slow permitting that make rebuilding a home after a storm needlessly expensive and drive up your insurance premiums.

Hold Insurance Companies Accountable – Put Consumers First:

- Create a simple online Scorecard where you can compare insurance companies side by side on price, how fast they pay claims, and how often they deny coverage.

- Require insurers to report accurate data or pay real fines, keeping the tool free for taxpayers by having the insurance industry cover the cost.

Protect Homeowners & Utility Payers:

- Keep property taxes in check so seniors and working families aren't taxed out of their homes.

- Stop giant industrial data centers from passing their massive electric and water bills onto everyday households.

Please visit byrondonalds.com to learn more!

Sincerely,

Byron Donalds

American Plan for Recovery

As I see it Trump had a plan and was well on his way and at a meeting his team was told our enemy was two weeks away from having a nuclear weapon and they want us dead! Iran who has paid terrorist to kill our people and the jewish people was a problem that needed a fast reaction.

Iran who has been threatening Europe with nuclear total annihilation if they don't do what they tell them to do. Years of presidents have folded or ignored or paid them to behave and have let them slide for decades! The planned growth of our people, the safety of our country was at risk. It was a promise of another 911.

Trump reacted as he is suppose to, when we are facing a threat of total destruction, he wiped out the leaders that was threatening us are gone, the second batch of leaders left were threatening us and Israel, again we wipe out their leaders. At this point no-one wants to admit they are leading Iran but the Iranian army. Trump wiped out the Navy, Air Force, radar equipment, most of the tools left except what was under ground. He buried some important weapons by bombing them.

Meanwhile our other enemies (the Socialist Democrats) let by the Biden team here in the United States were making moves against Trump and our way of life. Iran and other enemies tried to kill him! He came up fighting. He has continued great successes in the war against our enemy. But stop short of completely destroying them because he did not want to kill the Iranian people.

Now the challenge has changed, thirty percent the world has been running on Iranian oil for years. The money Iran made from oil sales was used to terrorize the world. Trump and our allies have stopped the money flow, stopped the oil flow to our enemies and the clock is ticking.

It looks like independent terrorist are making move all over our country and each time they are killed but some times they kill our people. We must remember Iran has been threatening the world with nuclear action, we must stop them and help the Iranian people rebuild their country with the money from their oil wells!

Another thing to remember they don't have clean drinkable water they must process it so that is another problem they have. They need to turn control over to the people of Iran and form a new government. They need to take off the bounties they put on our peoples heads to kill them!

Once that is done the world will calm, prices will calm and the American way of life will return if the socialist don't win control of the Senate! God help us!

Sunset Songs Series

Sunset Songs Series
Kendall Street Company
Date:11/13/2026 7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Location: Citizens' Circle
151 SE Osceola Ave., Ocala, Florida 34471

The Sunset Songs Series brings free monthly concerts to Citizens' Circle in Downtown Ocala from 7 to 9 p.m., showcasing a vibrant mix of genres from professional touring and emerging artists. Now in its third season, the series fosters community connection, supports downtown businesses, and offers a relaxed atmosphere to enjoy live music. Come early for dinner, grab a bite from on-site food trucks, and enjoy beer and wine available for purchase through our beverage partner, the Ocala Outreach Foundation. Bring a chair, invite friends, and settle in for an evening under the open sky—free and open to all.

Nov. 13 - Kendall Street Company
Sponsored by Angie Lewis State Farm

Kendall Street Company is a genre-blurring, high-energy Virginia band known for their unpredictable, fun-filled live shows featuring improvisation, comedy, crowd interaction, and eclectic songwriting. Over ten years, the five-piece has evolved into a prolific touring and recording group with a vast range of influences, producing everything from space operas to heartfelt ballads and quirky character-driven songs. In 2026, they released two singles with producer Dave Schools and will unveil their eighth studio album, *Yodeling Astroman*, on October 23rd. Their extensive live catalog, packed with diverse covers and unreleased jams, is available on major streaming platforms and subscription archives. Composed of Louis Smith, Brian Roy, Ryan Wood, Ben Laderberg, and Jake Vanaman, the band has played major festivals and shared stages with leading acts across the jam and improvisational music scene, all while accompanied by their beloved mascot, Lenny the Lemon.

Light Up Ocala



Saturday, Nov 21, 2026
3 - 8 p.m. | Downtown Ocala
Lighting ceremony begins at 6 p.m.

About Light Up Ocala

Light Up Ocala is a longstanding community tradition to kick off the holidays that attracts thousands to downtown Ocala. This year marks the 42nd anniversary of the holiday merry making event!

Light Up Ocala will have over 100 vendors including crafts, art and plenty of food options to choose from! Live entertainment will fill the air with festive sounds and an interactive kids' zone will keep the whole family entertained. You won't want to miss the Junior Sunshine holiday parade with a special appearance by Santa. All of which culminates in the most exciting part of the event: lighting up downtown Ocala!

Vendor Opportunities

Vendor applications for Light Up Ocala are now closed.

Junior Sunshine Parade

The Junior Sunshine Parade is a beloved part of Ocala's annual Light Up Ocala celebration, giving local youth and community groups a chance to showcase their holiday spirit. Featuring performances by school bands, dance studios, Scouts, and more, the parade winds through downtown and leads up to the grand holiday lighting ceremony.

Applications are closed for 2026 Community Showcase

The City of Ocala Recreation and Parks Department is now accepting applications for the Light Up Ocala community showcase.

- Performance groups may include choirs, choral groups, dance teams, and acoustic or classical ensembles.
- All performances must be holiday-themed.
- Each group will have about 15 minutes; exceptions must be approved in advance.
- Application submission does not guarantee acceptance.
- Performances will take place on the Citizens' Circle stage, which is approximately 25 feet wide and 15 feet deep. Groups must be able to perform within this space.
- Large groups may choose to divide into smaller groups and request multiple performance slots.

Applications are closed for 2026 Sponsorships

Sponsorship opportunities are now open for Light Up Ocala, and we invite local businesses and organizations to help make this beloved community tradition possible. Sponsors play a vital role in supporting event features, enhancing guest experiences, and keeping this celebration free for the public. To explore sponsorship levels, benefits, and visibility options, download the Sponsorship Guide. Join us in bringing holiday magic to downtown Ocala!

First Friday Art Walk

The First Friday Art Walk takes place the first Friday of each month, October through May from 6 to 9 p.m. First Friday Art Walk is a free event located within Ocala's historic downtown. Event festivities include over 40 artist displays, monthly live entertainment, free family art activities provided by local arts organizations and extended shopping hours. The public is invited to enjoy an evening of art, live performances, and downtown shops and restaurants.

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FROM THE DESK OF

Congresswoman Kat Cammack



Congresswoman Kat Cammack, Florida Gateway College Announce $3 Million Federal Grant for New Construction Trades Center

LAKE CITY, Fla. — Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03) joined Florida Gateway College (FGC) leaders on the college's Lake City campus today to announce a $3 million federal grant, the largest in the college's history, to build a new Building Construction Technology Center and launch trades programs for students across rural North Florida.

Rep. Cammack backed FGC's application with a letter of support. The five-year award comes through the Strengthening Institutions Program, a U.S. Department of Education program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration. This year's competition prioritized rural institutions and programs that build career pathways and workforce readiness.

"North Central Florida is full of folks who build things with their hands, and they shouldn't have to leave home to learn a trade. This center means they won't have to," said Rep. Kat Cammack. "Florida Gateway put together a winning plan, and I was proud to back it. This is a federal investment done right, and I can't wait to see the first class walk into that lab."

Rep. Cammack was joined by FGC President Dr. Lawrence Barrett, State Rep. Chuck Brannan, an FGC Trustee, and Kathy Hebda, Chancellor of the Division of Florida Colleges at the Florida Department of Education.

"This grant is a tremendous investment in our college, our students, and the future of North Central Florida. The Building Construction program will create new opportunities for students to build skills, earn credentials, and pursue rewarding careers without having to leave the communities they call home. We're grateful for the support that made this project possible, and we are excited to get to work," said FGC President Dr. Lawrence Barrett.

The grant will renovate an existing campus building for classroom space and add a 4,800-square-foot construction lab with modern tools and technology, new HVAC and exhaust systems, and upgraded electrical and IT capabilities. FGC will use the funding to create two stackable programs, a Building Construction Specialist certificate and a Building Construction Technology Associate in Science degree, so students can choose how far they go and which credentials they earn.

Year one of the grant, funded at $1,583,000, covers the building renovation and the foundation for the new lab. Construction, equipment purchases, and curriculum development follow in year two, with classes expected to begin in fall 2028.

Congresswoman Kat Cammack Secures Continued Housing for Homeless Veterans in Ocala and Gainesville

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congresswoman Kat Cammack (FL-03) today announced that veterans experiencing homelessness in Ocala and Gainesville will keep their housing after she worked directly with the Department of Veterans Affairs to secure a new contract for Volunteers of America. Beginning October 1, the VA's Contract Emergency Residential Services (CERS) program will fund 36 beds at the Ritz Veterans Village in Ocala and 18 beds in Gainesville, part of 102 beds across North Florida. The facilities' previous VA funding was set to expire September 30.

When Volunteers of America contacted Congresswoman Cammack's office for help, she immediately called VA Secretary Doug Collins. Her district team then worked with VA leadership to confirm the new contract ahead of the October 1 transition.

"No veteran who wore this country's uniform should have to wonder where they'll sleep next month. The moment we heard these men were at risk, our team went to work, and we didn't let up until this was done," said Congresswoman Cammack. "They deserve a roof over their heads and a system that has their back. I'm grateful to the VA for working with us and to Volunteers of America for the work they do every day."

"The office of Congresswoman Kat Cammack was critical for the success of obtaining alternative new funding. Thanks to her strong advocacy and commitment to serve our homeless veterans, we are now able to offer our veterans a safe place to rest and heal," said Janet Stringfellow, President and CEO ofVolunteers of America of Florida.

"In Marion County, honoring our veterans means showing up for them when they need us most. Keeping Ritz Veterans Village open means a veteran has a safe place to sleep, people to lean on and a chance to move forward with dignity," said Carl Zalak III, Chairman, Marion County Board of County Commissioners. "We're deeply grateful to Volunteers of America, Congresswoman Kat Cammack and everyone who worked to keep that hope alive. Our veterans stood for us, and this community will continue standing for them."



Complaint About City Manager Pay

By TomL

Some info for the web.

I read a complaint about the Ocala City Manager was making more than the Governor. That's BS what the Governor makes is not visible, let's look at it!

Complaint: Ocala City Manager earns more than Governor Ron DeSantis, making double his gubernatorial salary. (ON THE SURFACE)

Ocala City Manager (Peter Lee): $267,608 annual base salary.

Florida Governor (Ron DeSantis): $141,400 annual state salary.

Salary Comparison Breakdown.

Peter Lee Position Annual Base Salary Key Additional Benefits / Income

Ocala City Manager $267,608 21% employer retirement contribution, $750 monthly car allowance, and standard executive insurance.

Florida Governor $141,400

First the Governor could be making more but he excepted this amount. Now the governor is provided with a historic, 30-room executive mansion in Tallahassee.The state completely covers the operational expenses of the mansion, which includes a private chef, full support staff, and domestic personnel.The governor is given full access to state-owned automobiles and airplanes for official travel.The state budget allocates specific funds for catering, travel reimbursements, and official entertainment/operational expenses.State-subsidized healthcare coverage is included as part of the executive benefits package.FL House OK's raising governor's salary by more than $100K – but not until 2027

Let's face it Florida was in good shape when Governor DeSantis took over but he has improved it dramatically, with emergency funds and other special projects! (there is no comparison!) Governor DeSantis make many times more. To you who were complaining. It took me five minutes to google it! Check the facts before to start talking about someone!

Before this City Manager status, Lee held several key roles within the organization, including Planning Director for the city's Growth Management department. While serving as an Assistant City Manager, he had oversight for the Ocala International Airport, Growth Management, and Community Development Services.

The city manager has proven his worth many times over the 10 years of employment in the past . He was in charge of growth Management for the city before 1994 to 2009. The first time he was with the city. He had oversight for the Ocala International Airport, Growth Management, and Community Development Services. He worked for the city ten years then left. So it sounds to me like the city wanted him back bad. Who do you think can do the job better and cheaper! No not you!

Personally if he is worth the money that means he is making the city money. Cut his pay and you won't be happy with the out come.

At the end of this story the Governor makes many times over what the city manager of Ocala makes and they should not be compared!

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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** 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.*

Bilbie



***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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FROM THE DESK OF

ATTORNEY GENERAL UTHMEIER



Attorney General James Uthmeier Files Lawsuit Against Discord for Deceiving Florida Families and Exposing Children to Predators

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier filed a lawsuit against Discord, alleging the popular online chat platform marketed itself to Florida families as safe for children while failing to verify users' ages, shield minors from strangers, or keep predators off the app.

"We've arrested more than 2,100 child predators in this state since I took office," **said Attorney General James Uthmeier**. "Again and again, their trail to our kids leads back to Discord. Discord told parents that safety is at the core of everything they do. That was false. It's time for this app to get serious about protecting our children or face serious consequences."

"Invisible predators are locating Florida's children online," **said Patti Rendon, District Four, Hillsborough County School Board**. "The Attorney General's office is ensuring that online platforms know they have a responsibility to keep our children safe. Attorney General Uthmeier and Hillsborough County Sheriff Chronister are critical partners in this mission."

"Online chat platforms are powerful tools that can connect, inform, and support people," **said Joe Pepe, EdD, Florida Department of Health**. "Thanks to Attorney General Uthmeier's leadership, we are ensuring these benefits are maximized while protecting users, especially young people, from preventable harms."

Discord markets itself to children as "all fun & games" and tells parents that "safety is at the core of everything we do." The platform has more than 200 million monthly users worldwide, sells paid Nitro subscriptions to Florida users, including children, and reported approximately 2.7 million monthly active U.S. users under the age of 18 as of February 2024.

Despite millions of vulnerable users, Discord has not required age verification. Adults can pose as children with nothing more than an email address and a birthday. For years, its default settings let strangers send children friend requests and messages, and Discord still does not scan all private chats for rule breaking.

In one Florida case, a 60-year-old St. Cloud man posed as a 14-year-old boy and contacted nearly 300 minors on Discord. He is now serving life in prison. A 19-year-old Highlands County man lured an 11-year-old Miami-Dade County girl from Roblox to Discord, then sexually assaulted and kidnapped her.

The lawsuit alleges Discord has violated the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act and Florida's law protecting children in online spaces (§ 501.1735). It also brings claims for negligence, negligent misrepresentation, and public nuisance.

Specifically, it alleges that Discord:

- Engaged in unfair, unconscionable, and deceptive acts or practices by promising safety and failing to deliver in violation of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act;
- Processed the personal information of Florida children with actual knowledge or willful disregard that it would lead to substantial harm or privacy risk for children in violation of § 501.1735, Fla. Stat;
- Breached its duty to exercise appropriate care when designing, marketing, selling, promoting, and/or distributing its platform;
- Negligently misrepresented that its application was safe, while knowing that it was not safe for Florida children; and
- Created a public nuisance through its unreasonable and unlawful conduct, which has caused public harm in Florida and continues to jeopardize the health and safety of Florida children.

Attorney General Uthmeier is asking the court to:

- Permanently bar Discord from the unfair, unconscionable, and deceptive practices alleged in the complaint, including operating without real age verification and collecting children's data without parental consent;
- Impose civil penalties of up to $10,000 per willful violation of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act;
- Impose civil penalties of up to $50,000 per violation of Florida's law protecting children in online spaces (§ 501.1735), or up to $150,000 per violation where Discord had actual knowledge that a Florida child was under 18;
- Order Discord to give up money and property acquired from Florida consumers through its continued misrepresentations, deceptions, false promises, and unfair practices, and provide restitution to consumers;
- Award damages and the cost of abating the public nuisance Discord created; and
- Award attorney's fees and costs.

This lawsuit is part of Attorney General Uthmeier's effort to hold social media and gaming platforms accountable for creating harmful environments for children. It follows Uthmeier's March investigation and subpoena of Discord. Six months later, on September 22, 2026, Discord announced new teen safety settings. The lawsuit alleges those changes are too little, too late.





FROM THE DESK OF
Governor DeSantis



Governor Ron DeSantis Announces Tourism Support to Northwest Florida Following Hurricane Isaias

Governor Ron DeSantis announced a $1 million investment through VISIT FLORIDA to support tourism recovery efforts in Northwest Florida following Hurricane Isaias. The funding will be awarded to the Northwest Florida Tourism Council to resume the successful Northwest Florida Beaches marketing campaign, helping drive visitation and support local businesses throughout the Panhandle.

The investment comes from VISIT FLORIDA's dedicated crisis recovery budget, which is reserved to support Florida's tourism industry following hurricanes and other disasters.

"Today, I was proud to announce that VISIT FLORIDA is awarding $1 million to the Northwest Florida Tourism Council to resume their successful marketing campaign following Hurricane Isaias," **said Governor Ron DeSantis.** "This investment comes from a dedicated disaster recovery budget that is set aside to help Florida's tourism industry. The returns are proven to be great: For every dollar invested in this strategic tourism marketing effort in 2024-2025, Northwest Florida generated $58.95 in total economic impact."

The recovery campaign builds on a successful partnership between VISIT FLORIDA and the Northwest Florida Tourism Council, representing eight Gulf Coast counties. Through a previous marketing initiative funded in part by Triumph Gulf Coast, Inc., the partnership generated more than 2 million additional visitors between 2024 and 2025, contributing $327 million in additional visitor spending and supporting nearly 3,000 jobs. For every $1 invested, the program generated $35.74 in direct visitor spending and $58.95 in total economic impact.

"When a community is ready to welcome visitors again after a storm, good marketing is essential," **said Bryan Griffin, President and CEO of VISIT FLORIDA.** "Our partnership with the Northwest Florida Tourism Council has built an effective Panhandle-focused campaign, and VISIT FLORIDA is stepping in to keep that work funded so Northwest Florida can recover quickly."

"On behalf of the Northwest Florida Tourism Council and the eight counties we proudly represent, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to Governor Ron DeSantis and VISIT FLORIDA for their support following Hurricane Isaias," **said Matt Algarin, Tourism Director for Walton County and Northwest Florida Tourism Council Chair.** "As our communities come together, we are confident in our ability to emerge stronger than ever, and look forward to welcoming visitors to experience the unforgettable adventures that make our region so unique."

The $1 million investment will support the Northwest Florida Beaches brand campaign, highlighting the region's beaches, outdoor recreation, and unique visitor experiences, with an emphasis on fall and winter drive-market travel and will further support the most affected counties. VISIT FLORIDA will coordinate with local tourism leaders to launch the campaign.

Governor Ron DeSantis Awards 14 Florida Communities through the Rural Infrastructure Fund for Infrastructure Improvements

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. – Today, following Hurricane Isaias' direct hit to the Florida Panhandle, Governor Ron DeSantis announced $27 million in awards to small and rural communities across Florida through the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF). Awards were made to 14 Florida communities for projects that will complete critical infrastructure and strengthen rural economies—including eight communities and counties throughout the Panhandle. This funding will go towards projects like enhancing roadway connectivity, enhancing stormwater infrastructure, and renovating a building that will house a new primary care clinic, rural specialty care clinic and EMS operations. In addition to these awards, Governor DeSantis also announced that the Town of Century has been awarded nearly $500,000 through the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund for a building renovation and fire suppression system upgrade, supporting a potential tenant. As Hurricane Isaias recovery efforts continue, this funding is mission critical to ensure long-term, reliable infrastructure and economic growth in the Panhandle and beyond.

"As we continue helping communities recover from Hurricane Isaias, we are also making investments to strengthen rural Florida and support economic growth," **said Governor Ron DeSantis.** "Today in Washington County, I announced $27 million in Rural Infrastructure Fund awards for critical projects in 14 small and rural communities across Florida. We're also awarding $24.3 million to 12 additional rural communities to invest in infrastructure and economic opportunity. Florida has made tremendous progress recovering from this storm. We are committed to supporting the families, businesses, and communities that have been affected so that they can rebuild in the short term and thrive in the long term."

"Since taking office, Governor DeSantis has prioritized getting Florida's rural communities the resources and support they need to thrive," **said Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly.** "Through the Rural Infrastructure Fund, Florida has continued to make strategic investments into the critical infrastructure and economic prosperity of Florida's rural communities—promoting job growth, spurring investment and enhancing the quality of life for rural Floridians."

The RIF program supports infrastructure projects that drive job creation, capital investment and strengthen economies in Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO), rural counties and rural communities. In June 2026, FloridaCommerce announced that a total of $27 million was available to rural communities statewide, including $5 million dedicated to Panhandle-specific counties including Calhoun, Gadsden, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty and Washington. This year, FloridaCommerce received a record 141 applications requesting more than $193 million in funding during the 2026-2027 RIF application period.

Governor Ron DeSantis Issues Updates on State Response and Recovery Efforts for Hurricane Isaias

Governor Ron DeSantis was joined by Florida Division of Emergency Management Executive Director Jared Perdue in Jay and Florida Department of Commerce Secretary Alex Kelly in Vernon to provide updates on Florida's ongoing recovery efforts following Hurricane Isaias.

In Jay, Governor DeSantis highlighted the state's efforts to safely reopen schools and provide additional recovery resources to impacted Floridians. The Governor announced that 11 Points of Distribution are now operating across Escambia, Santa Rosa, Walton and Washington counties, providing free water, shelf-stable meals, ice, tarps and other essential supplies to residents impacted by the storm.

In Vernon, Governor DeSantis announced $2.6 million in Rural Infrastructure Fund awards for Washington County to support roadway improvements, downtown revitalization and economic development. These awards are part of nearly $27 million awarded to 14 small and rural communities across Florida.

Hurricane Isaias made landfall near Destin at approximately 9:30 p.m. EDT on Friday, October 9, as a Category 2 hurricane with maximum sustained winds of 105 mph. The storm brought damaging winds across Northwest Florida, with gusts reaching 116 mph in portions of Escambia and Santa Rosa counties.



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