

TALLAHASSEE REPORTS

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The Reports

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Tallahassee airport passenger traffic was down 11.8% in March. **P8**

City Commission Candidate Joe Kalicki is Suspending Campaign

By Steve Stewart

City Commission Seat 5 candidate Joe Kalicki announced he is suspending his campaign, citing the demands of running for office alongside a full-time job and concerns about his ability to mount a winning effort against incumbent Dianne Williams-Cox.

In a lengthy and candid social media post, Kalicki said the decision followed "radical transparency" about his strengths and limitations. While expressing pride in raising more than \$20,000 in three months and contributing new ideas to

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City Manager Reese Goad Announces Retirement Date

Goad: "It has been my honor to serve as Tallahassee's city manager.."

By Steve Stewart

In a move that is sure to have electoral implications, Tallahassee Reports has learned that Tallahassee City Manager Reese Goad has informed the city commission that he plans to resign.

In a letter addressed to the mayor and city commissioners, Goad announced his resignation would be "effective September 30, 2026, or upon your selection of the next City Manager, at which time I will retire from the City of Tallahassee."

Goad, who has been a frequent target of the progressive left via City Commissioner Jeremy Matlow, was selected as city manager in 2017.

"It has been my honor to serve as Tallahassee's City Manager for the last nine years.



Throughout my career with the City, it has been a privilege to work alongside exceptional colleagues to strengthen

our organization, which is defined by a culture of excellence, deep commitment to teamwork, and an unwavering

spirit of resourcefulness," City Manager Goad said. "Together, we navigated challenges, embraced opportunities,

and consistently strived to provide the best level of service to the residents of Tallahassee, and I'm proud to say we

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Teachers Union, Parents Sue State Over Universal Vouchers

By Ana Goñi-Lessan
The Florida Phoenix

Florida's largest teachers union filed a lawsuit Tuesday against the Department of Education, alleging the disparity between traditional public schools and private schools receiving taxpayer vouchers violates the state constitution.

The lawsuit filed in the Leon County Circuit Court by the Florida Education Association was joined by a group of parents, school board members and civil rights organizations. It alleges nearly \$5 billion in taxpayer dollars are being sent to private schools and charter schools via the Family Empowerment Scholarship, which aren't held to the same standards or oversight as traditional public schools.

That discrepancy violates the Florida constitution's requirement for the state to "make adequate provision for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high-quality system of free public schools," the lawsuit claims.

"With this lawsuit we are simply asking for accountability, transparency and a basic set of educational standards, which is what every parent wants - regardless of where they choose to send their children," said FEA President Andrew Spar. "Floridians have made it clear we should be strengthening not abandoning our public schools."

Education Commissioner Anastasios Kamoutsas defended the universal voucher program, saying the program empowers parents.

"Thanks to (Gov. Ron DeSantis), every Florida family has access to universal school choice, empowering them to select the learning environment that best fits their child's individual needs," Kamoutsas wrote in a post on X. "We stand unapologetically convicted on the principle of always putting students first!"

As of March, there were an estimated 521,000 students enrolled in private and home school options using voucher funds for the 2025-2026 school year, according to data from the state's Office of Economic & Demographic Research.

According to the lawsuit, about a quarter of the state's education budget is going to voucher programs, up from 12 percent in 2021.

In 2023 lawmakers expanded the existing voucher program, which was targeted initially to low-income families, to any K-12 student in the state. The law provides that money from corporate tax credits, which funded the initially program, be used first before general funds are used for the universal voucher program.

Last year, the state's auditor general found a "myriad of accountability challenges" within the voucher system. The report showed overspending and delays in scholarship payments

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County Solid Waste Fee Increase Considered

By Steve Stewart

After holding steady for three decades, Leon County's \$40 annual solid waste assessment for unincorporated residents could soon increase as officials confront rising costs and a growing reliance on general revenue subsidies.

The issue will be addressed at the May 12 Leon County Commission meeting.

The assessment, unchanged since 1996, was originally set to cover the cost of residential waste disposal and the operation of rural waste collection centers. Over time, however, those costs have outpaced revenues, forcing the County to supplement the program with general funds for more than 20 years. Officials say that approach is no longer sustainable amid inflation and uncertainty surrounding major revenue sources, including potential property tax reforms.

County staff argue the current funding model conflicts with fiscal policies requiring enterprise operations—such as solid waste services—to be self-supporting. To address the imbalance, a Solid Waste Assessment Rate Study completed in fiscal year 2025 recommended raising the annual fee to \$134 to fully cover operational costs.

Rather than implementing a sharp increase, commissioners are considering a phased approach. Under the recommended plan, the assessment would rise to \$80 in fiscal year 2027—about \$3.33 per month—followed by incremental increases

SOLID WASTE, Page 5

Leon County School Board Votes to Consider a Property Tax Increase

The Leon County School Board is looking to voters to approve a property tax increase this fall to help address the well document budget shortfalls. This proposal comes after the school board unanimously voted to seek the renewal of the half-penny sales tax.

The Board voted unanimously Tuesday night to move forward with a possible one-point millage rate increase. Board members directed Superintendent Rocky Hanna to prepare a draft resolution that would be ready for discussion on May 11th. A final vote on placing the language on the ballot could take place at the May 11th meeting.

The proposed one-point millage rate increase could generate \$24 million for the district.

Officials noted that the property tax plan will include a public workshop where constituents can weigh in.

Leon Classroom Teachers Association President Scott Mazur supports the measure.

INSIDE



Leon County Sheriff's Office Unveils First-Ever Chapel at Detention Facility. **P3**

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Community News

FSU Confers Honorary Degree on Alumna, Spanx Founder, Sara Blakely

By Patty Cox, FSU News

Florida State University awarded an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters to alumna and Spanx founder Sara Blakely during spring commencement Friday, recognizing a career built on instinct, persistence and a willingness to do things differently.

When Blakely took the stage, she didn't dwell on success. She talked about failure, self-doubt and the decision that shaped everything that came next.

"The most critical thing that I did — the thing that everyone here can do — is I made one big investment early on," she told the graduates. "I invested in me."

Blakely returned to campus 33 years after graduating from Florida State, where she said her dreams began, even if her path after college didn't go as planned.

She had hoped to become a lawyer. She failed the LSAT twice. She went to a job fair and was rejected by 20 companies. She hoped to be Goofy at Disney World and didn't meet the height requirement.

Eventually, she found herself selling fax machines door to door for seven years.

"It was brutal," she said, recall-

ing days of rejection while her peers moved into careers as lawyers, doctors and corporate executives.

At one point, she pulled her car to the side of the road and said out loud: "I'm in the wrong movie."

Two years later, she started a company called Spanx.

What began as a simple fix — cutting the feet off a pair of pantyhose to improve the way clothing fit — grew into a global brand that reshaped the shapewear industry. Blakely built the company without outside investors, eventually selling a majority stake in 2021 after turning it into a billion-dollar business.

She has continued working on another venture called Sneex, a footwear company she launched to combine the comfort of a sneaker with the look and style of a heel.

FSU President Richard McCullough conferred Blakely's degree during Friday evening's ceremony at the Donald L. Tucker Civic Center, the first honorary degree awarded during his presidency.

In introducing her, he described Blakely as someone defined by curiosity and perseverance and a cultural force whose success began with a simple belief: There must be a better way.

After the hooding, McCullough turned back to the audience and said, "It is now my honor to introduce, for the first time, Dr. Sara Blakely."

Blakely told graduates that the curiosity and persistence behind her success is available to anyone willing to do the work on themselves.

"You can be a spectator in your life or a participant," she said. "You can be a passenger of your thoughts or the driver of your thoughts. I chose to be the driver."

That idea, she said, traces back to her teenage years, when her father gave her cassette tapes by author Wayne Dyer that focused on mindset, visualization and not fearing failure. She listened to them so often she memorized them, even if it made her unpopular on car rides with friends.

Years later, after building Spanx and landing on the cover of Forbes for being the youngest female self-made billionaire, those same friends sent her a message: "Should have listened."

Blakely's speech mixed humor with hard-earned lessons. She told stories about scrambling to fulfill her first major order without the right manufacturing pieces, navigating embarrassing moments on international television and writing her own patent because she couldn't afford an attor-



ney. "I had no experience, but I had belief," she said.

She also warned graduates about the challenge of distraction in a fast-moving world and urged them to protect time to think, reflect and grow.

"You can distract yourself or you can discover yourself," she said.

At one point, Blakely held up a worn red backpack, the same one she carried as a student at Florida State and later to early business meetings. Today, it serves as a symbol for her Red Backpack Foundation, which supports women and girls around the world.

"It's a reminder that everything you need is already right there on your back," she said.

Blakely's recognition marks the 133rd honorary degree conferred by the university.

TMH Earns Third "B" in a Row in Leapfrog Hospital Safety Ratings

By Staff

Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare (TMH) has earned a "B" grade in the Spring 2026 Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade for the third rating period in a row. The TMH press release stated the grade demonstrates "a sustained commitment to patient safety and reinforcing the organization's commitment to providing the highest level of care to patients throughout the region."

The Leapfrog Hospital Safety Grade is a national independent rating system focused on 22 evidence-based measures of hospital safety, including infection prevention, error reduction, medication safety, patient experience

and staffing. TMH's grade reflects a successful standard the organization has maintained through a strategic focus on quality, safety and patient satisfaction.

"Earning a 'B' grade for the third consecutive rating period affirms that our approach to safety and quality is working," said Ryan Smith, Chief Operating Officer and President of Tallahassee Memorial Hospital. "This recognition aligns with what we are seeing across our organization — stronger processes, greater accountability and a continued focus on doing what's right for our patients every single day. I couldn't be more proud of our colleagues and the progress we're making together."

"We've built a foundation around standardization and



continuous improvement, and this grade reflects the consistency and discipline our

teams bring to patient safety every day," said Jana Iezzi-Tumblin, Vice President and

Chief Improvement & Analytics Officer for TMH.

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Community News

Governor Reappoints Three to the Tallahassee State College District Board of Trustees

By Staff

Governor Ron DeSantis has reappointed Sara Bayliss, Eugene Lamb, Jr., and Karen Moore to the Tallahassee State College District Board of Trustees. The Board provides strategic oversight of the College, guiding policy, ensuring fiscal responsibility, and supporting student-centered outcomes that strengthen the region's workforce and economy.

"We appreciate Governor DeSantis's continued confidence in Tallahassee State College and in the leadership of these trustees," said Dr. Jim Murdaugh, president of TSC. "Each brings a strong commitment to education and a deep understanding of our

community. Together, they will help shape the College's future as we continue to grow and innovate."

Sara Bayliss is a college admissions advisor at St. John Paul II Catholic High School in Tallahassee and a counselor at Game Plan College Admissions Counseling. Her experience guiding students and families through the college planning process provides valuable insight into the needs and priorities of today's students.

Eugene Lamb Jr. is a longtime educator and public servant with decades of experience in the classroom and community leadership. He was originally appointed in 2007 by Governor Charlie Crist and has been reappointed by Governors Rick Scott



and Ron DeSantis. His experience provides steady guidance in advancing the College's mission and priorities. He currently serves as Chair.

Karen B. Moore is the Chief Executive Officer and Founder of The Moore Agency, bringing extensive leadership

experience in business and advocacy. Her work at the state and regional levels strengthens connections between the College, industry, and economic development partners.

These appointments are subject to confirmation by the Florida Senate.

Leon County Sheriff's Office Unveils First-Ever Chapel at Detention Facility

By Staff

The Leon County Sheriff's Office recently unveiled the ALL IN Ministries Chapel, the first-ever chapel for inmates at the Leon County Detention Facility, marking a historic milestone and a shift from vision to execution in the agency's approach to reentry.

The chapel serves as a multi-faith worship and reflection space, with faith-based organizations invited to lead ongoing programming, reinforcing the agency's broader focus on reentry and long-term public safety.

The chapel is built entirely through community support, including donations, partnerships and hands-on contributions from Leon County Sheriff's Office staff, demonstrating what is possible when a community commits to being truly ALL IN.

Though the idea of a chapel had long been a goal, it became a reality over a ten-week period following Sheriff Walt McNeil's directive to revamp reentry efforts, turning a space once used for law enforcement training into one focused on reflection, growth, and restoration.

"This is about more than a physical space; it represents responsibility and opportunity. It reflects our belief that true public safety includes investing in the whole person," said Sheriff Walt McNeil. "If we want to reduce recidivism, we must ensure individuals leave our custody in better condition than when they arrived."

Designed as a space for reflection, accountability and personal growth, the chapel provides individuals in custody with access to faith-based services, mentorship and support from community partners.

The project comes to life through the reentry leadership team, alongside detention staff, community sponsors, and LCSO employees who worked side by side to transform the space installing flooring and lighting, making structural improvements, and donating Bibles and other reading material.

"This is heart work," said Shonda Knight, Senior Executive Director of Community Affairs and Reentry. "This chapel was built by the community, and it will be sustained by the community through service, mentorship and continued engagement."

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Trauma Surgeon

Local News

Violent Crime Incident Numbers Remain Elevated

By Steve Stewart

TPD crime incident numbers for April 2026 are in. The numbers show that year-to-date (YTD) property crime and violent crime incidents are up 19.87% when compared to YTD numbers in April 2025. The broader 12-month trends show that violent crime incidents are trending up while property crimes remain steady after a major decline in 2025.

The YTD Numbers

The incident data - tabulated by TR - show that YTD property crime incidents were up 12.0% and YTD violent crime incidents are up 33.7% through April when compared to one year ago. Property crimes encompass

YTD TPD Incident Comparisons				
	YTD (Apr 30)		Chg	%Chg
	2025	2026		
Total Incidents	749	897	148	19.8%
--- Property	482	540	58	12.0%
--- Violent	267	357	90	33.7%

burglaries, thefts, and incidents of vandalism. Violent incidents include aggravated assaults, armed robberies, and physical altercations.

A look at specific crimes reveals the increase in property crime was driven by increases in residential (25.4%) and commercial burglaries (89.6%). The Auto Burglary & Theft category - which accounts for approximately 55% of all property crimes - is

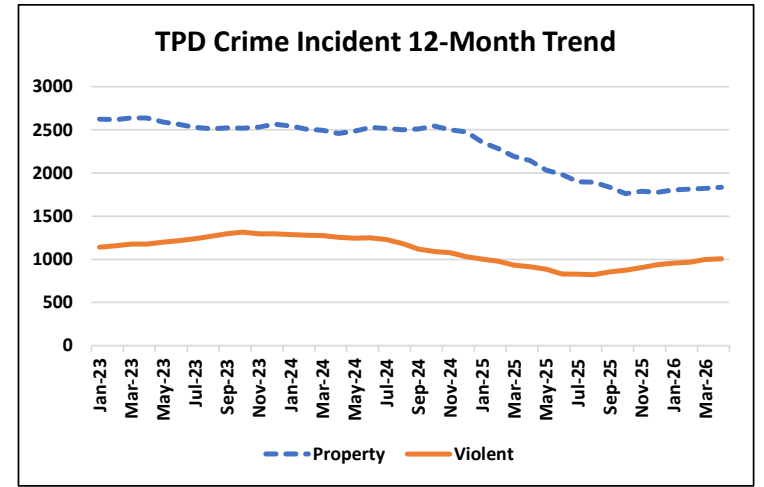
down 7.2%.

The violent crime data shows that robbery incidents were up 32.2% while assault & battery incidents were up 24.5%.

12-Month Trends

The chart below shows the 12-month trends of property and violent crime incidents from January 2023 through April 2026.

Property crime incidents



began to decline in December 2024 and reached a 3-year low in October 2025. For a brief period, the change in property crime has remained flat. However, over the last three months these crimes have started to increase.

Violent crime incidents peaked in October 2023 and reached a 3-year low in June 2025. Since then, violent crime incidents have been trending up.

City Manager Reese Goad Announces Retirement Date

GOAD, From Front Page

delivered."

During his time as city manager, Goad faced major challenges related to the FBI corruption investigation and resulting guilty verdicts, the COVID pandemic, and the election of progressive commissioners Matlow and Porter who routinely called for his resignation.

A city press release stated that "Over the past decade, the City of Tallahassee has earned national recognition for its governance, infrastructure, and quality of life. Notable achievements include Tallahassee's designation as a Top-20 U.S. City and the top-ranked Florida city in WalletHub's Best-Run Cities based on exceptional financial stewardship, service delivery, and operational efficiency. Additionally, Tallahassee was recognized with a 2025 All-America City Award and many other national rankings that highlight this community as one of the most livable and attractive

cities in the country."

A native of Florida, Goad moved to Tallahassee to attend Florida State University. He joined the City in 2000 and worked in a variety of roles including serving as Deputy City Manager under City Manager Ricardo Fernandez. He was appointed Interim City Manager in 2017 and then officially named City Manager by the Tallahassee City Commission on September 17, 2018.

Prior to joining the City, Goad held positions with the Florida Public Service Commission in the Bureau of Electric Regulation and Bureau of Conservation and System Planning. He has served on a variety of local and state boards, including the Florida Municipal Electric Association, and is currently a member of the International City/County Management Association.

The timeframe and details for hiring a new city manager will be determined by the City Commission. Goad's retire-

ment will be effective September 30, 2026, or when a new City Manager is selected.

The City Manager reports directly to the City Commission and is responsible for an annual budget of approximately \$1.2 billion, which includes both the operating and capital budgets, and maintaining the management functions of city government administering day-to-day operations.

Matlow Responds

City Commissioner and mayoral candidate Jeremy Matlow responded on social media to the news of City Manager Reese Goad's resignation, saying "it is a great day for the City of Tallahassee."

Matlow's full statement is provided below: "For the last six years I've raised warnings of the mismanagement and

toxic culture created by Reese Goad after his appointment by a lame duck city commission in the height of the Maddox Corruption era.

While the timing of his resignation immediately following the sale of the hospital and golf course for pennies on the dollar is suspicious, it is a great day for the City of Tallahassee and an opportunity for us to move on to a brighter future.

In the interim we are in very capable hands with DCM Karen Jumonville who will bring stability during a national search for the next City Manager.

In November, a new City Commission will be sworn-in and should have the opportunity to select the new administrator from a broad pool of qualified candidates from across the country that can turn the page on division and help unify our city."

Dot Inman-Johnson Jumps into City Commission Race

By Steve Stewart

Just days after Joe Kalicki suspended his campaign for Tallahassee City Commission Seat 5 while alluding to strategic reasons for the exit, Dot Inman-Johnson has now entered the race.

In the 2024 election cycle, Inman-Johnson took on Commissioner Curtis Richardson. Richardson won reelection, capturing 50.71% of the general election vote with Inman-Johnson receiving 49.29% of vote.

Like Kalicki, Inman-Johnson is part of the Tallahassee progressive movement led by City Commissioner Jeremy Matlow.

"I'm not willing to let Dianne Williams-Cox be re-elected without a meaningful challenge. City Hall is in disarray; it's clear we are going to need stability and ethical leadership in Seat 5 to guide our City through this interim period," said Inman-Johnson. "I'm willing to serve one term and make sure the transition is successful"

In addition to Dianne Williams-Cox,

the seat 5 race also includes candidates Tiffany Hill and Bernard Stevens.

The news release from the campaign is below:

Dot is back.

Dot Inman-Johnson filed to run for Tallahassee City Commission Seat 5 to challenge Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox.

"I'm not willing to let Dianne Williams-Cox be re-elected without a meaningful challenge. City Hall is in disarray; it's clear we are going to need stability and ethical leadership in Seat 5 to guide our City through this interim period," said Inman-Johnson. "I'm willing to serve one term and make sure the transition is successful."

Inman-Johnson cites the hostile state government takeover of Tallahassee Memorial Hospital, reckless selloff of Capital City County Club, questionable administration of the Fire Services Fee and chronic City Hall self-dealing, with political insiders benefitting themselves by sitting on local government boards in

her decision to run.

The announcement comes as embattled City Manager Reese Goad abruptly resigns leaving a void in responsible leadership to appoint his successor.

Dot Inman-Johnson served honorably as Mayor and City Commissioner, building consensus from neighborhoods and business interests alike. A historic figure in Tallahassee politics, Inman-Johnson was the first Black woman to serve as Mayor and gave the Key to the City to Civil Rights icon Rosa Parks.

A proven vote getter, she received 40,856 votes against incumbent Curtis Richardson last November and 15,791 votes in a first-place August primary result, for a total 56,647 ballots cast for Inman-Johnson in the most recent City elections.

"I have advocated and navigated high stakes community issues that divided our community like the coal plant, and helped guide the creation of Kleman Plaza downtown development that now bears my name at Dot Inman-Johnson Park."

Since 2024 Dot has remained in the



spotlight leading the fight against what she cites as an illegal tax in the way the Fire Service Fee is administered.

"We need to move forward with engaged neighborhoods, a responsible business community, leaders unwilling to blur ethical lines, and most of all the restored trust of everyday Tallahassee residents," she added.

"I have the expertise to bring stable, ethical leadership during this transition to get our house back in order," concluded Inman-Johnson.

Dot's official campaign operations will launch the week of May 18, when she will be available for media interviews.

City to Receive Update on DEI Regulations

By Steve Stewart

The Ron DeSantis administration's newly signed restrictions on diversity, equity and inclusion programs could require the City of Tallahassee to reevaluate a wide range of policies, contracts, events and economic development initiatives before the law takes effect next year.

City staff outlined the potential impact of Senate Bill 1134, titled "Official Actions of Local Governments," in a agenda item prepared for the May 13th city commission meeting. The law, signed April 22, 2026, takes effect Jan. 1, 2027.

The measure broadly prohibits cities and counties from funding, promoting or taking official action related to diversity, equity and inclusion, com-

monly referred to as DEI. The statute defines DEI efforts as programs or activities tied to race, color, sex, ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation, including initiatives intended to influence hiring composition, provide preferential treatment or conduct targeted training and programming.

City staff warned that the law could affect multiple areas of municipal operations. Among the areas identified for further review are human resources policies and employee training programs, city-sponsored events and celebrations, minority and women-owned business enterprise initiatives, community grant programs and ordinances containing DEI-specific language.

The proposed staff recommendation asks commissioners to direct a comprehensive review of all city ordinances,

policies, programs, sponsorships, grants and contracts that could be impacted by the legislation.

The law also prohibits local governments from funding or staffing DEI offices or employing DEI officers. In addition, municipal contracts and grants will now require recipients to certify they will not use city funds for DEI-related instruction or materials for employees or agents.

Staff noted that the legislation creates a resident enforcement mechanism allowing citizens to sue municipalities or officials for alleged violations. Potential remedies include injunctions, damages and legal costs. The law further states that local officials who knowingly violate the statute may be deemed guilty of misfeasance or malfeasance in office, which under Florida law could expose

them to suspension by the governor.

City officials said several exceptions remain in place, including actions necessary to comply with federal and state anti-discrimination laws and recognition of official holidays and commemorative observances.

During legislative debate, bill sponsor Clay Yarborough said public events open to all residents generally would not violate the law, while programs limited to specific groups could face scrutiny.

City staff said additional legal guidance from the Florida League of Cities is expected later this summer as municipalities across the state prepare for implementation.

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Local News

Police, Labor Groups Announce City Commission Endorsements

By Steve Stewart

Richard Murphy, president of the Big Bend Chapter of the Florida PBA, which represents over 500 police officers in Tallahassee, recently announced the endorsement of Lorraine Ausley for Mayor of Tallahassee and Talethia Edwards for City Commission Seat 3.

The group previously endorsed the candidacy of current city commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox.

On the mayoral endorsement, the press release stated, "On behalf of the dedicated and essential men and women, who help keep Tallahassee safe, I am proud to announce our endorsement of Lorraine Ausley for Mayor of Tallahassee. Throughout her tenure in the Florida State Legislature, Lorraine Ausley has always championed the issues that matter most to our officers and their families. She has consistently defended the rights of law enforcement officers and advocated for more funding to keep police officers safe, while they are on patrol,

protecting our communities. She also understands that investing in law enforcement officers is a smart investment in public safety."

Ausley stated on social media, "I am honored to receive the endorsement of the Police Benevolent Association. This support is built on years of working together and a shared commitment to keeping our community safe. Grateful for the trust - and for the men and women who serve Tallahassee every day. Ready to keep doing the work."

On the Edwards endorsement, the PBA stated, "We are equally proud to endorse Talethia Edwards for City Commission Seat 3. She will bring both a fresh voice to the City Commission and partner with us to advocate for law enforcement and enhance public safety. We ask our members, their families and fellow citizens to join us in electing these two outstanding public servants to keep Tallahassee moving forward, safer and stronger than ever before."

Edwards said, "I'm honored to receive the endorsement of the Florida Police Benevolent Association. Keeping our neighborhoods safe and supporting our first responders is a top priority for me. I believe working hand in hand with law enforcement to address the challenges our community faces, while continuing to build trust across all parts of our community, is key to moving Tallahassee forward. I'm grateful for the PBA's support and ready to get to work."

Big Bend Labor Council Endorses Jeremy Matlow for Mayor

The Big Bend Labor Council recently endorsed Jeremy Matlow for mayor of Tallahassee. The press release is provided below:

North Florida's largest labor union has endorsed City Commissioner Jeremy Matlow for Mayor of Tallahassee.

The Big Bend Labor Council represents over a dozen bargaining units representing over 5,300 employees across Leon, Gadsden, Franklin,

Wakulla, Liberty, Calhoun, Madison and Taylor counties, including more than 3,000 in our Capital County.

The endorsement comes just before May Day, a worker's holiday more than a century old where nearly half a million workers across the states went on strike to demand an eight-hour workday.

Today, the labor movement continues to align with elected leaders to pursue greater healthcare, workplace safety, and childcare benefits, entitled by the dignity of all who labor.

"This endorsement shows the broad support our campaign has gained from working families all across Tallahassee," said Commissioner Matlow. "Workers represented in the endorsement include Leon County Schools teachers, faculty at FSU and FAMU, support staff, bus drivers and postal workers."

"Our community faces the biggest decision in years at the ballot box in 2026 City Commission elections. The contrast between insider elites' and everyone else's

views could not be clearer. This endorsement means Tallahasseeans can walk through a new chapter at City Hall in solidarity, committed to reform and a new day in local government."

"I am proud to receive this endorsement and as Mayor, I will bring its spirit of pro-worker advocacy to my work at City Hall every day," Matlow concluded.

BBLC President Jordan Scott added, "Jeremy Matlow continuously receives endorsements from organized labor because he is committed to making Tallahassee a place for fair wages and safe working conditions. He knows that it is not developers who drive our economy but the majority of us who go to work every day to put food on the table for our families and loved ones. Building a better Tallahassee is about building a movement of workers, communities, and neighborhoods."



County Solid Waste Fee Increase Considered

SOLID WASTE, From Front Page

every other year until reaching \$134 by 2031.

If approved, the change would reduce the County's projected \$3.8 million general revenue subsidy for solid waste operations to about \$2.2 million in 2027, a 42% decrease. The subsidy would gradually decline and be eliminated entirely by 2031 as the higher assessment takes effect.

The proposed solid waste budget for 2027 totals rough-

ly \$24 million. Most funding would come from tipping fees paid by the City of Tallahassee and private haulers, estimated at \$15 million, along with \$3.6 million from recycling revenues, interest earnings, and other sources. The residential assessment currently contributes about \$1.6 million.

The issue comes as part of the County's broader multi-year fiscal planning efforts and a pending Revenue

Diversification Study, which has found Leon County collects less in service charges than many Florida counties. Officials say aligning fees with actual costs will be key to maintaining long-term financial stability.

Commissioners are expected to revisit the proposal during upcoming budget discussions in June.

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REPORTS!

City Commission Candidate Joe Kalicki is Suspending Campaign

KALICKI, From Front Page

the public conversation, he acknowledged that his campaign could not scale up the level of voter outreach needed to compete effectively.

"Running for office is hard, isolating, and is not for everyone," Kalicki wrote, adding that increasing campaign intensity would come at the expense of his professional responsibilities and personal well-being. He said he did not feel comfortable continuing to ask for donations without confidence he could meet the demands required to win.

Kalicki emphasized that his withdrawal was voluntary and not the result of outside pressure. He also said he chose to exit the race early to

give voters and potential candidates time to adjust before the election.

Despite stepping away from the campaign, Kalicki indicated he will remain civically engaged in Tallahassee. He plans to launch "Future Tallahassee," an initiative focused on economic development, redevelopment, and community-driven investment. He also intends to support other candidates aligned with his priorities.

In his post, Kalicki reflected on broader challenges in local politics, including the difficulty of fundraising, the need for more trained campaign staff, and what he described as limitations in current election

formats. He called for more debates over forums and expressed support for ranked-choice voting as a potential reform.

Kalicki also offered refunds to recent donors and said remaining campaign funds may be redirected to charitable causes with contributor approval.

He concluded by thanking supporters and encouraging future candidates to trust their instincts, noting the experience provided valuable insight into the city's political landscape and policy challenges.



Local News Briefs

Leon Teachers' Union Criticizes School Board Member

The Head of Leon County's Classroom Teachers' Association says he's disappointed by a local school board member's support of a bill he calls anti-union. Laurie Cox was applauded during Governor Ron DeSantis' signing of the bill. She says it will help to keep unions more accountable to the people they serve.

The new law raises the union membership requirement for public employee unions, including teachers' unions. Now, at least 50% of teachers in a district must be members to keep the union certified. Scott Mazur says Cox's support of the bill feels like another jab at the district's educators.

"As Board Member Cox has actually said a couple of times, (teachers should) have more of an attitude of gratitude. And I think even at one point, when she was talking about when the salaries weren't that great, that we just 'sucked it up.' I think that was mentioned in the October State Board of

Education meeting."

Tallahassee NAACP Files Lawsuit to Block Hospital Sale to FSU

A lawsuit has been filed looking to block the sale of Tallahassee Memorial Hospital to Florida State University.

The Tallahassee Branch of the NAACP and a group of Tallahassee residents have filed the lawsuit, saying TMH would be operating without a license due to them and FSU still being in negotiations about a new lease.

FSU reached an agreement with the City of Tallahassee in March to pay almost \$110 million for the hospital's assets, as well as pledge \$250 million in short-term improvements to TMH's healthcare offerings and over a billion in the long-term.

The issue was hotly debated and led to another 3 to 2 city commission vote that has decided most controversial items before the commission since 2020.

Tallahassee Mayor John Dailey supported the transfer,

saying it will help transform healthcare access in North Florida.

"Out of the 20 years that I have served in elected office, this will probably be the most important, if not one of the most important votes that I will take. (It's) one of the most important decisions as an elected official that we can take in our careers," he said.

Commissioner Jack Porter voted no, expressing concerns about transparency in the process and worries about handing a major community healthcare resource to a state entity.

Who will Choose Next City Manager?

Tallahassee City Manager Reese Goad is retiring after 26 years working for the city of Tallahassee. Goad's retirement is effective September 30, or as soon as another city manager is hired.

During a press conference just hours after Goad's announcement, Mayor John Dailey says he wants to start a search right away with plans to

hire Goad's replacement before the November elections. He's asking for the item to be brought up at the next commission meeting. Dailey says the experience of the current commission will help ensure a good selection process.

"With our collective wisdom, I have complete confidence that this commission will be able to select the next city manager," Dailey says. "To postpone to a new governing body where you have the potential of a new majority that has never had the opportunity to serve, I do not think serves this community well, and I think it's short-sighted to actually suggest that."

But Commissioner Jeremy Matlow, who has frequently butted heads with Goad, is pushing back on that idea. He wants to wait to hire Goad's replacement and thinks the new commission and new mayor should make the selection.

The makeup of the city commission will shift following the November elections. Dailey is not seeking another term as

mayor. Matlow is one of four people running to fill that seat. And two other seats on the commission are up for grabs this fall.

Three Found Guilty in Officer Related Shooting

Three men were found guilty in a violent 2023 crime in which a Tallahassee police officer was shot and nearly killed and another individual was shot and injured while asleep.

Rahyim Sanders, Tyrell Guinnie and John Darius Wright all faced felony charges. Wright was accused in two home invasions on the same night, while Guinnie and Wright were only accused in the second, in which Officer Caleb Babb was shot.

Sanders and Wright were found guilty of attempted first-degree murder, and Guinnie was found guilty of attempted murder of Officer Babb. He was found not guilty on count four.

The jury deliberated four hours before returning those verdicts.

State News

DeSantis Signs Bill Hiking Threshold For Union Votes

By Gray Rohrer
The News Service of Florida

Members of some public sector unions will need a greater share of their members to vote to keep their organizations alive, after Gov. Ron DeSantis signed legislation Friday taking aim at teachers unions.

The bill (SB 1296) will “provide once and for all for the decertification of partisan teacher unions,” DeSantis said before signing the measure at Fort Myers High School. “This is something people have been wanting to see for a long time. We should not have these entities operating if they do not have support from the people they purport to represent.”

The move was decried by Florida Education Association President Andrew Spar, who called the signing of the bill “yet another entry in a long

line of betrayals of working Floridians by Gov. DeSantis in favor of out-of-state, billionaire-backed, special interest groups.”

Two Fort Myers Republicans, Sen. Jonathan Martin and Rep. Jenna Persons-Mulicka, filed the bill after a teachers union in Lee County prevented the school district from paying bonuses to teachers who volunteered to work in low-performing schools.

“This bill doesn’t end unions. The unions will end themselves when they lose their way and focus more on politics than on representing employees at the bargaining table,” Persons-Mulicka said.

Under the bill, which takes effect July 1, at least 50 percent of the members of a union or prospective bargaining unit must participate in a vote to certify or recertify a union, and 50 percent of them must approve for

the union to remain intact.

Currently, only a majority of the members who vote in the certification election are required to start a union or keep it afloat.

Education Commissioner Anastasio Kamoutsas cited a union election of Florida Agricultural & Manufacturing University graduate assistants where three members were enough to recertify the union.

“Unions will now be required to show clear meaningful support from educators,” Kamoutsas said.

He and DeSantis also expressed frustration at unions for delaying raises for teachers in districts across the state. DeSantis also signed another bill (HB 1279) which makes it easier for school districts to pay teachers more to teach in low-performing schools.

While DeSantis directed his derision at teachers unions, the bill he signed

increasing the voting requirements for certification affects other public sector unions, such as nurses and other government workers.

Democrats blasted the bill because it targets those unions that typically support their party but it exempted other first responder unions – police, firefighters and emergency medical technicians – which often support Republicans.

“While wealthy special interests might believe they have the power in the halls of the Florida Capitol, Florida’s public sector workers have the power and support in our communities statewide to show them otherwise,” Florida AFL-CIO President Kimberly Holdridge said in a released statement. “We will organize and come back stronger than ever.”

Florida Jobless Rate Continues to Move Up in March

By Ana Goñi-Lessan
The News Service of Florida

Florida’s jobless rate ticked up for a seventh consecutive month, according to a Department of Commerce report released Friday.

The unemployment rate for March was 4.7 percent, reflecting an estimated 523,000 Floridians qualified as out-of-work from a labor force of 11.15 million.

There was a monthly increase of 7,000 unemployed workers, and a jump of 120,000 over the last 12 months.

Florida also shed 22,400 jobs over the last year, with only the education and health services and professional and business services sectors showing growth during that time.

State economists have pointed to new entrants to the job market needing more time to find work, as opposed to people losing their jobs as one of the culprits behind the rise in the jobless rate. They have also attributed a lack of growth in the labor force to an increase in people retiring.

The March report comes as the state received several layoff notifications in the past week that are set to take place this summer.

Peterson Brands advised the state

Monday 135 workers will be let go as it closed its Fort Myers plant on July 27.

Also, a national restructuring and sale of assets by Republic National Distributing Company to Reyes Beverage Group will affect 1,046 workers in Florida and 2,774 nationally. The layoffs are set to begin around June 21.

“We are providing this notice to you at this time since there is no guarantee that Reyes will provide employees with an offer of employment as discussions remain ongoing, and it is not yet known who will be needed to continue employment with the Company,” states the Republican National’s “worker adjustment and retraining notification” letter to the state Department of Commerce dated April 22.

The layoffs are expected to affect 363 in Deerfield Beach, 169 in Jacksonville, 121 in Pensacola, and 393 employees in Tampa.

Another 420 workers at Bay Correctional in Panama City and Graceville Correctional in Graceville are listed as potential layoffs as the contract to run the facilities by Management & Training Corporation expires June 30, the end of the state’s fiscal year. The GEO Group will operate the facilities after that date and the letter to the state notes that “many of the staff may be retained.”

Still, the recent advisories don’t indicate an increase in layoffs.

Through the first four months of 2026, Florida has received 105 layoff notifications involving 6,011 positions. In the same period of 2025, there were 87 notifications involving 9,038 workers.

In the monthly jobs report from Commerce, the biggest decline in positions over the past year involves government jobs, with a loss of 12,300 federal positions and 1,600 state positions. Local government added 1,800 workers in the past year.

The state also saw a decrease of 11,500 jobs involving financial activities, 8,700 construction jobs, 7,900 involving trade, transportation, and utilities, 4,500 in manufacturing and 3,000 in the leisure and hospitality field.

Within leisure and hospitality, the decline is driven by a loss of 13,700 positions involving restaurant and hotel jobs.

Meanwhile, education and health services jobs grew by 31,500 over the past year, mostly involving health care and social assistance jobs, which grew by 25,700. Also, the state saw an increase of 9,300 positions involving professional and business services, which includes areas involving admin-

istrative and waste services.

The national unemployment rate currently stands at 4.3 percent. A year earlier, the U.S. rate was at 4.2 percent. At that time, Florida’s rate was 3.6 percent.

Florida’s rate has grown in each monthly report released since August.

Among the state’s metropolitan regions, the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach area maintains the lowest unemployment rate at 3.7 percent, down from 3.8 percent in February. A year ago, the South Florida region had a 3.0 percent jobless rate.

Metro area rates are not seasonally adjusted, while the statewide mark was adjusted.

Next lowest was the tourism-dominated Orlando region at 4.4 percent, followed by the Naples and Tampa regions both at 4.5 percent, Panama City at 4.6 percent, and the regions including Melbourne, Sarasota, Tallahassee and Jacksonville each at 4.7 percent.

The Gainesville and Daytona Beach regions were at 5.1 percent and Lakeland was at 5.4 percent.

The highest rates continue to be for The Villages at 7.8 percent, Homosassa Springs at 6.5 percent and Sebring at 6.1 percent.

DeSantis Signs New Congressional District Map

By: Gray Rohrer
The News Service of Florida

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law Monday a new congressional map – drawn by his staff and passed by the Legislature last week – that could help Republicans retain the U.S. House.

“Signed, sealed, and delivered,” DeSantis wrote in a post on X.

The new map makes significant changes to 21 of Florida’s 28 congressional districts, a shift that could flip four seats from Democrats to Republicans.

Republicans currently hold a 217-212 advantage over Democrats in the U.S. House, with one independent member and five vacant seats.

President Donald Trump last year urged GOP-led states to redraw their maps to favor Republicans and give them a better chance of keeping hold of the U.S. House. Texas was the first state to do so, but Democratic-led states like California responded, sparking a tit-for-tat redistricting battle ahead of the midterms.

Democrats have decried the move, saying it’s a blatantly illegal power grab in violation of the state’s anti-gerrymandering Fair Districts laws.

“We will not back down and allow Ron DeSantis to violate Florida’s Constitution,” Florida Democratic Party Chair Nikki Fried posted on X. “These are unconstitutional and violate Florida’s 2010 Fair District Amendment. The fight has just begun.”

Voters approved the Fair District amendment in 2010, which prohibits drawing districts to favor or disfavor incumbents or political parties.

But DeSantis’ general counsel, in a memo to lawmakers ahead of the special session, said the amendment is unenforceable due to a 2025 ruling from the Florida Supreme Court. That ruling knocked down the part of the amendment that banned drawing districts that would diminish the ability for minority groups to elect a candidate of their choice, but left the rest of the amendment intact.

Within hours of the bill becoming

law, the voting rights group Equal Ground Education Group and more than a dozen Florida voters filed suit against the new map.

In the filing in the Leon County Circuit Court, the group alleges the new map violates the Fair Districts amendment.

“This map is not just flawed, it is a deliberate and unconstitutional attempt to manipulate our electoral system for partisan gain,” Equal Ground Executive Director Genesis Robinson said in a released statement.

But there’s little time for the courts to intervene. Qualifying for the U.S. House races starts June 8 at noon and ends June 12 at noon.

DeSantis has pointed to the increase in Florida’s population since the 2020 U.S. Census, and what he says was an error in the tabulations that led to Florida receiving only one new congressional district after the census instead of two as reasons for redrawing the map. Florida, though, has had surges in population in recent history and hasn’t conducted a mid-decade

redistricting without a court order.

But the primary reason for the redraw was a pending U.S. Supreme Court decision on a redistricting case out of Louisiana. That decision was issued last week, just as lawmakers were debating the redrawing on the floor.

The 6-3 decision undercut the part of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that allowed for legislatures to draw maps to ensure representation from racial minority groups. The VRA remains intact but it is more difficult to bring a lawsuit asking courts to redraw minority access districts.

DeSantis anticipated the ruling would eliminate the VRA, but still said he was vindicated by the court’s decision. He had pointed to District 20 in Broward and Palm Beach counties as a racial gerrymander to favor Black voters. The new District 20 is entirely within Broward County.

Teachers Union, Parents Sue State Over Universal Vouchers

VOUCHERS From Front Page

that resulted in a funding shortfall and a system without proper controls to verify where students who received the voucher payments were being educated.

A bill that would have implemented the recommendations from the report passed the Senate but never received a hearing in the House.

President/Publisher: Kathy Stewart

Editor: Steve Stewart

Writers: Steve Stewart, Casey Drayer, Robert Stewart

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The Leon County LINK

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LEON Growing Green

SUSTAINABLE THREADS

Weaving Paths to Sustainable Living

SATURDAY, MAY 30
9:30 A.M. TO 2 P.M.
EASTSIDE BRANCH LIBRARY AND PEDRICK POND PARK

Experience at the 2026 Sustainable Communities Summit with storytelling, resource sharing, engaging sessions, and live demos in mending, gardening, and more! Engage in sustainable topics and contribute to the fabric of our community with the creation of a community quilt!

Learn more about the event and register at LeonCountyFL.gov/Summit.

FARM SHARE FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Saturday, May 16, at 9 a.m.
Florida Department of Health in Leon County
2965 Major James Morgan Way

Carter's Corner, with support from Leon County, is hosting a free food distribution to support Leon County families and residents.

Food will be available on a first-come, first-served basis and will be distributed while supplies last. No registration required.

For more information, contact Carter's Corner at 850-510-6702.

One representative per family (max. 3) per vehicle

FLORIDA'S EMANCIPATION DAY

Join in the community celebration of Florida Emancipation Day with events and resources from the Leon County Public Library, including historical presentations and a documentary screening.

LEROY COLLINS
LEON COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Learn more at LeonCountyFL.gov/EmancipationDay

Discover Your Local Authors

Saturday, May 16
and Saturday, May 30
1:30-3 p.m.

Hear local authors read from their work across genres, followed by a meet and greet and book signing.

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LEON COUNTY
PUBLIC LIBRARY

For details and author information, visit LeonCountyLibrary.org/LocalAuthors.

TIRE AMNESTY DAYS

FREE DROPOFF OF USED TIRES

NOW THROUGH MAY 18, 2026
Learn more at LeonCountyFL.gov/Mosquito

FERTILIZER RAIN DELAY

The Fertilizer Rain Delay campaign reminds homeowners and professional fertilizer applicators not to apply fertilizer for at least one day ahead of forecasted heavy rain (1 inch or more in 24 hours). Check Leon County social media pages for a reminder to refrain from fertilizing whenever there is heavy rain in the forecast.

Learn more about fertilizer application and best practices at LeonCountyFL.gov/Fertilizer.

LEON COUNTY NEWS & EVENTS

Apply to Serve on Children's Services Council

Approved by voters during the November 2020 General Election, the Children's Services Council (CSC) functions to provide children with early learning and reading skills, development, treatment, preventative and other children's services.

Qualified applicants are encouraged to apply to serve on the council by 5 p.m. on Friday, July 31, 2026, at LeonCountyFL.gov/CSCApplication.

Let's Get There Together This National Bike Month

May is National Bike Month! Whether you're riding for fun, fitness, or taking essential trips to work or school, we encourage everyone to keep safety at the top of their mind. Be mindful of motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians on roads and trails to ensure everyone can get where they're going safely.

Visit BikeTallahassee.com for safety tips, local events, trail information, and more.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SCHEDULE MAY 2025

TUESDAY 12	3:00 p.m.	Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting County Courthouse, 5th Floor Commission Chambers – 301 S. Monroe Street
TUESDAY 12	6:00 p.m.	Board of County Commissioners Public Hearing County Courthouse, 5th Floor Commission Chambers – 301 S. Monroe Street

Live television broadcasts of Board of County Commissioners meetings are available on Comcast channel 16, the Leon County Florida channel on Roku, the County's Facebook page, YouTube channel, and X, and LeonCountyFL.gov.

For meeting and location updates, visit LeonCountyFL.gov

SIGN UP FOR LEON COUNTY NEWS AND ALERTS

LeonCountyFL.gov/News

Business News

Leon County March Jobs Flat, Workforce Down

The latest jobs report shows the Leon County March unemployment rate is 4.7%. The February unemployment rate was 4.9%.

After an increase in jobs in February, job growth was reported flat in March with a decrease in the workforce.

There were 158,822 people working in Leon County in March compared to February's revised employment number of 158,910. The size of the workforce in March was 166,613, down from the 167,161 reported in February.

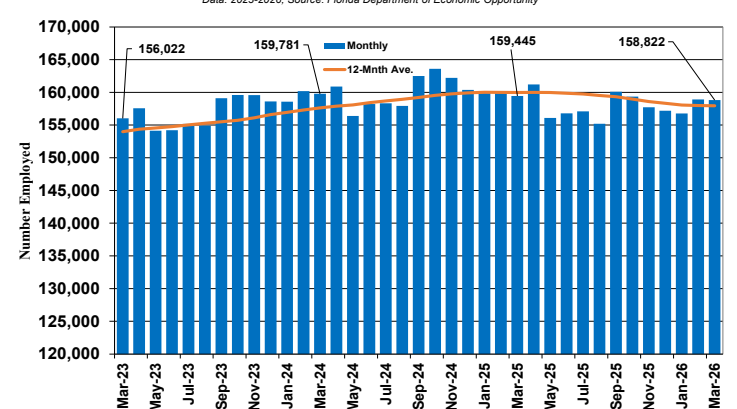
Year Over Year Comparisons

The Leon County Jobs Report, provided below, shows the number of people working in March 2026 was 623 less than in March 2025. The February labor force – those looking for jobs – came in at 166,13 which was 1,075 more than reported one year ago.

The March unemployment rate of 4.7% is up from the 3.7% reported one year ago. At the state level, the March unemployment rate of 4.4% (not seasonally adjusted) was up from the 3.5% reported one year ago.

The chart to the right shows the monthly level of jobs in Leon County over the last 37 months with a 12-month average trend line. The highlighted numbers relate to employment levels for the month of March back to 2023.

Leon County Monthly Employment
Data: 2023-2026. Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity



Leon County Jobs Report				
	Mar-24	Mar-25	Mar-26	Chg 25/26
Jobs Added	(409)	(429)	(88)	
Tot. Employed	159,781	159,445	158,822	-623
Tot. Labor Force	165,404	165,538	166,613	1,075
Unemploy. Rate (%)	3.4	3.7	4.7	1.0

Source: Florida Department of Econ. Opportunity

March Airport Traffic Down 11.8%

The latest information from the Tallahassee International Airport shows the March 2026 passenger traffic decreased 11.8% when compared to traffic one year ago. The number of passengers was down 9,908 from the 83,800 reported during March 2025 to 73,892 in March 2026.

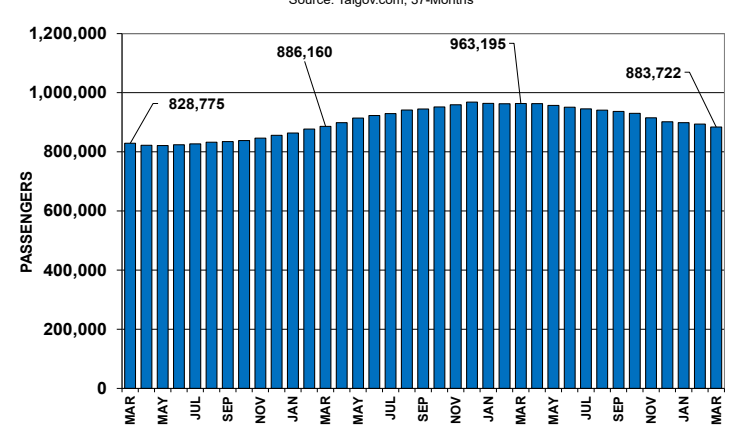
Relative to 2025, the Passenger Traffic Report

March Passenger Traffic Report			
	Mar-25	Mar-26	%Chg
Delta Group	35,724	37,132	3.9%
American	41,716	36,760	-11.9%
Silver Airways	6,360	-	
Totals	83,800	73,892	-11.8%

shows year-over-year passenger counts in February were down 11.9% for American Airlines and up 3.9% for the Delta Group. Impacting the numbers was the fact that Silver Airways ended service in June 2025.

The graph below shows the annualized number of passengers for the last 37-months. The highlighted numbers on the graph indicate the annual traffic during the month of March over the last four years. The annual rate of passengers at TIA in March 2026 – 883,722 – is down 8.25% when compared to one year ago (963,195). The annualized number of passengers is calculated by summing the previous 12 months of traffic.

Annual Rate of TIA Passengers
Source: Talgov.com, 37-Months



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Tallahassee Chamber Appoints Philip Browning as Director of Business Development

By Staff

The Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce recently announced the appointment of Philip Browning as its new director of business development, strengthening the organization's commitment to driving economic growth and expanding opportunities for businesses across the region.

In his new position, Browning will focus on fostering strategic partnerships, supporting member engagement and advancing initiatives that contribute to a more vibrant and competitive business environment in Florida's capital city.

"Philip's history of leadership within the Chamber and his strong background in growing businesses make him a natural fit for this role," said Michael Dalby, President and CEO of the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce. "He brings both the relationships and the results-driven mindset needed to support our members and move our mission forward."

Originally from Atlanta, Browning moved to Tallahassee in 2005 to play football at Florida State University under legendary Coach Bobby Bowden. He and his wife, Jessica, have made Tallahassee their permanent home, where they raise their three sons.

The press release noted that "Browning has been deeply engaged in the local business and civic community. He previously served as a member of Access Tallahassee, including roles on the Access Council and as Council Chair. During his tenure, he helped lead impactful community initiatives such as the installation of Little Free Libraries throughout the area."

Browning served five years on the Greater Tallahassee Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, where he was Chair of both the Economic Competitiveness Committee and the Talent and Workforce Committee. Browning was also a part of Leadership Tallahassee Class 38.

Most recently, Browning served as vice president of sales at Synchron, where he expanded the company from a regional payroll provider into a national payroll and HR solutions firm by cultivating new client relationships and driving strategic growth.

"I'm honored to step into this role with the Chamber," said Browning. "Tallahassee has given so much to my family and me, and I'm excited to contribute to its continued growth by supporting our business community and helping create new opportunities for success."

Mary Stafford
Vice President, Business Development Officer

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Local Sports

Lincoln Baseball beats Chiles in the Regional Semifinal Series

By Robert Stewart

On May 5th, the Lincoln baseball team upset the top seeded Chiles in the regional semifinal clinching the series winning the third and final game and advancing to the regional finals against Niceville starting on May 7th.

Game 1

The rivalry series between Lincoln High School and Chiles opened with Lincoln taking an 8-3 win in Game 1 on May 2 behind a strong offensive showing.

Lincoln totaled 11 hits and hit .379 as a team, led by junior Jayson Parker, who went 3-for-4 with two runs and two RBIs. Carson Koch and Chase Fuller each scored twice, while the team also drew six walks to keep pressure on Chiles throughout the game.

Chiles was led by senior S. Dinkelman, who went 3-for-3 with two runs and a home run, but the team managed just six hits overall.

On the mound, senior Ethan LaFuria allowed three runs over 5.1 innings, and sophomore Jacob Rabion closed with 1.2 scoreless innings to secure the win. Chiles pitchers combined to allow 11 hits and eight runs, as Lincoln took a 1-0 lead in the series.

Game 2

Game 2 of the series between Lincoln High School and Chiles flipped the momentum completely, as Chiles won a 1-0 pitchers' duel.

Chiles was powered by senior pitcher Noah Chavez, who delivered a dominant outing, throwing 6.2 scoreless innings with 11 strikeouts while allowing just four hits. Connor Borges also contributed in relief, helping close out the shutout and secure the win.

Offensively, Chiles managed just four hits, but junior Preston Ritchie delivered the game's only extra-base hit with a double, driving in the lone run of the game. Senior S. Dinkelman added three walks, helping keep pressure on

Lincoln throughout.

Lincoln's offense struggled after Game 1, managing only five hits and no runs. Junior Colin Walsh took the loss despite a solid outing, allowing just one run over five innings while striking out two. Zachary Burch was effective in relief, tossing two scoreless innings.

Both teams played clean defensively, but Chiles' pitching edge proved decisive, evening the series at 1-1 heading into the final game.

Game 3

Game 3 of the series between Lincoln High School and Chiles saw Lincoln respond with an 8-4 win on May 3 to clinch the series.

Lincoln's offense was sharp again, totaling eight runs on eight hits with a .286 team batting average. Junior Jayson Parker continued his strong series, going 2-for-4 with a double, while Cody Garber and Chase Fuller each drove in runs as part of a balanced lineup effort. Lincoln also capitalized

on patience at the plate, drawing five walks and consistently putting pressure on Chiles' pitching staff.

Chiles scored four runs on seven hits, including a home run, but struggled to fully contain Lincoln's lineup in key innings. Despite the offensive production, Chiles could not keep pace late as Lincoln separated the game in the middle innings.

On the mound, sophomore Jacob Rabion earned the win for Lincoln, allowing three runs over 5.1 innings while striking out four. Fuller also provided a key inning of relief, helping stabilize the game early. Chiles' pitching staff allowed eight runs overall, with Lincoln's lineup delivering consistent contact and situational hitting throughout the game.

Lincoln's defense held steady behind a perfect fielding performance, helping secure the final game and the series win after dropping Game 2.

Chiles Boys Tennis Team Finishes Season at States

By Robert Stewart

On April 30, The Chiles boys tennis team season came to an end after a deep post season run in the FHSAA 3A state tournament as they lost to Osceola High School in the semifinals.

Chiles' tournament run began on April 21 in the FHSAA 3A Region 1 semifinal, where they hosted Niceville and wasted little time asserting control in a 4-0 sweep.

Sophomore Evan Rodenberg set the tone at the top singles spot with a 6-0, 6-2 victory, while junior Shawn Sun delivered one of the most decisive wins of the match, blanking his opponent 6-0, 6-0 at No. 4 singles. Chiles carried that dominance into doubles play, where the No. 1 team of Rodenberg and senior Michael Metarko cruised to a 4-0, 4-1 win, and the No. 2 pair of Sun and senior Wesley Kuntz followed with a 4-0, 5-3 victory to seal the sweep.

Two days later, Chiles returned to the court for the regional final against Gulf Breeze and delivered an even more complete performance, winning 5-0. Rodenberg earned a solid 6-4, 6-3 win over a senior opponent at No. 1, while sophomore Omar Mongerie battled through a tightly contested second set to win in a tiebreak (7-6, 9-7) after taking the first set 6-4. Senior Michael Metarko controlled his match at No. 3 with a 6-2, 6-2 win, and Sun continued his strong post-season form with a 6-0, 6-2 victory at No. 4. Kuntz capped off the sweep at No. 5 singles, winning 6-3, 6-1 and officially sending Chiles into the state tournament with momentum.



That momentum carried over into the 3A state quarterfinals on April 29, where Chiles faced Jensen Beach and came away with a 5-1 victory. Once again, the singles lineup led the way. Rodenberg secured a 6-2, 6-4 win at No. 1, while Mongerie followed with a convincing 6-1, 6-3 victory. Metarko and Sun were especially dominant in the middle of the lineup, each allowing just two total games or fewer in straight-set wins. Kuntz added another strong performance to complete a clean sweep of singles play.

Jensen Beach managed its lone point in No. 1 doubles, defeating the Rodenberg-Metarko pairing, but Chiles responded immediately. The No. 2 doubles team of Sun and Kuntz closed out the match with a 4-2, 4-0 win, securing the team victory and a spot in the state semifinals.

Chiles ultimately lost to Osceola High School 4-1 during the state semifinals on April 30, putting an end to a very successful 2026 post season.

FSU Beach Volleyball Season Ends in Gulf Shores

No. 5 seed Florida State (35-3) split their final day of competition at the NCAA Championship in Gulf Shores, Alabama, beating No. 4 USC 3-0 before dropping the semifinal match to No. 1 Stanford (39-4) 1-3.

The Cardinal struck first, winning court four in straight sets 21-11, 21-16. All-American court one duo

Alexis Durish and Audrey Koenig tied it up after winning 21-17, 21-17.

Maddie Trusty and Gella Andrew forced a third set on court two, but Stanford clinched the match 29-27, 19-21, 15-10. Court five was left unfinished in set three, with Kyleene Filimaua and Saofe Duval trailing 12-14.



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Local Sports

Chiles Beach Volleyball Reaches State Tournament, Florida High's Season Ends in Regional Final

By Robert Stewart

On May 5th two Leon County beach volleyball teams competed in the regional finals for their respective region and classification. Chiles (19-1) beat Bishop Kenny (20-3) in the 2A region 1 finals advancing to the state semifinals, while Florida High (16-4) finished a very successful season with a loss to Episcopal School of Jacksonville (13-8) during the 1A region 1 finals.

Chiles

The Timberwolves started out strong winning a point at the first position, while Meg Hearn and Natalie Gibson beat Bishop Kenny's Chiamaka Nduka and Liana Sumpter in straight sets with set scores 21-9, 21-12.

Bishop Kenny evened the dual winning the second position with Claire Newell and Alexis Sowers just beating Chiles' Lindsay Smith and Sterling Carlisle 16-14 in the third set.

Chiles found another point at the third position with Loganne Abernathy and Riley Warmath beating Maggie Zahariadis and Aleena Lundy with set scores of 21-10, 21-12.

Bishop Kenny won at the fourth position beating Chiles' Riley Boykin and Callie Rowse with set scores 21-15, 21-12.

In dramatic fashion, the duel came down to the fifth position as Bishop Kenny forced a third set after winning the second set 21-17. Chiles' Anna

Holman and Jensen Glenn fought off Bishop Kenny's Maria Patelli and Sienna Selfors in a third set with set scores of 25-23, 17-21 and 15-13 sending the Timberwolves to the state semifinals as they beat Bishop Kenny 3-2.

Chiles will play Lourdes Academy at the Florida State University beach volleyball courts in Tallahassee, FL on May 8th with a chance to advance to the state finals.

Florida High

Florida High came into the regional final match against Episcopal with a record of 16-4. Episcopal got off to a good start winning the first set on the fourth position and the fifth position. Florida High's Olivia Woods and Addison Mayernick were able to win the first set at the two's position but lost the match in a third set with set scores of 21-17, 17-21, 9-15.

Sophie Ashworth and Tess Kyvik made a strong push for the Seminoles during the second set at the fifth position but were not able to win the match, losing 21-6, 21-17.

Episcopal found their third and final point of the dual at the fourth position beating Florida High's Annaliese Schoen and Mackenzie Taber with set scores of 21-14, 21-18. Since Episcopal clinched the dual winning three points, they opted to not play the first and third positions. win after dropping Game 2.



Chiles will play Lourdes Academy at the Florida State University beach volleyball courts in Tallahassee, FL



Florida High came into the regional final match against Episcopal with a record of 16-4.

Chiles Flag Football Advances to Regional Final Against Ponte Vedra

By Robert Stewart

On May 4th, the Chiles flag football team (16-2) beat Niceville (16-3) with a final score of 21-7 at Stan Goldstein field in Tallahassee to advance to the regional finals of the FHSAA 3A regional finals.

Chiles High School opened its FHSAA 3A regional semifinal with an early spark, taking a 7-0 lead on a double-pass touchdown to Kaitlyn Fagan with 6:30 left in the first quarter, followed by a successful one-point conversion run by Kendall Sadberry. The defense immediately backed it up with a critical fourth-down stop late in the opening quarter to keep Niceville off the board heading into the second.

Momentum continued in the second quarter when Charlotte Reynolds intercepted a pass for Chiles,

setting up another quick score as Sadberry punched in a rushing touchdown to make it 14-0. Niceville responded later in the quarter with a passing touchdown to cut the lead to 14-7, but Chiles regained control right after halftime when Sadberry added another rushing score to push the lead to 21-7. Defensively, Sadberry also came up big with an interception in her own end zone to prevent a Niceville scoring chance, and Chiles sealed the game despite a late fourth-quarter interception, holding on for the 21-7 win and a trip to the state championship.

Stats

Sadberry led the way with 124 passing yards and added two rushing touchdowns, finishing as the central dual-threat option for Chiles. The passing game was spread across

multiple targets, with senior Kaitlyn Fagan providing the biggest impact through the air, recording 62 receiving yards and a touchdown. Sophomore Ellis Smeltzer also contributed a passing touchdown, while the offense finished with 194 passing yards and 51 rushing yards, consistently moving the ball and capitalizing in key scoring situations.

Defensively, Chiles controlled the game with pressure and playmaking, holding Niceville to just seven points while forcing two interceptions. Sadberry added a pick on top of her offensive production, and senior Charlotte Reynolds returned an interception for 25 yards to swing momentum. The defense totaled 24 flag pulls and limited explosive plays



throughout the game, with multiple players contributing pass breakups and steady containment. With this win the Timberwolves will face off against the top seeded Ponte Vedra (16-0) in the regional finals looking to give the Sharks their first loss of the season. That game will be held in Ponte Vedra on May 7th.



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