

TALLAHASSEE REPORTS

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TallahasseeReports.com

The Reports

Leon County Schools Employs More Administrators, Support Staff Than State and Peer Districts

By Steve Stewart

FDOE data shows that the Leon County School District employs more non-instructional staff than comparable school districts. **A1**

An analysis shows that City of Tallahassee general funding spending growth since 2019 has outpaced the combined growth rates of population and inflation by approximately 19 percent. **A6**

The Leon County School Board is looking to voters to approve a property tax increase this fall to help address the well document budget short-falls. **A1**

TPD crime incident numbers for May 2026 show that year-to-date (YTD) property crime and violent crime incidents are up 23.8% when compared to 2025. **A4**

A federal grant program intended to protect children and families from the dangers of lead-based paint has become the focus of growing controversy in Tallahassee. **A1**

The latest information from the Tallahassee International Airport shows the April 2026 passenger traffic decreased 8.5% when compared to traffic one year ago. **B1**

Lawmakers approved a \$114.5 billion spending plan Friday, wrapping up a special session. **A6**

CRC Advances "Historical Harm" Proposal

By Steve Stewart

The Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee voted Thursday, May 28, to advance a proposed "Historical Harms Amendment," reviving a measure that had previously stalled and setting the stage for further consideration by county officials and ultimately voters.

The amendment was approved on a 14-3 vote during a special committee meeting held specifically to revisit the issue. The proposal had failed earlier this year when the committee deadlocked 9-9, preventing it from moving forward. After the

CRC, Page A5

According to 2025-26 data published by the Florida Department of Education, the Leon County School District (LCS) maintains a higher ratio of administrators and non-instructional staff to student population when compared to both the Florida average and the average of comparable school districts.

These higher ratios translate to more employees and has significant financial implications for the district.

For example, if LCS operated with the same non-instructional staff to student ratios as the average of Florida's 67 school districts, LCS would employ approximately 130 less staff.

But what about school



The Leon County School Board recently voted 4-1 to place a \$24 million property tax question on the November ballot.

districts with comparable student enrollment and that are located in the same region of Florida?

Peer Group Analysis

A comparison of five similarly sized Florida school districts shows Leon County Schools

employs significantly more administrators and non-instructional staff than most of its peers, despite

having a student population nearly identical to several neighboring districts.

The Florida De-

LCS, Page A4

Property Tax Overhaul Headed To Ballot

By Jim Turner and Ana Goñi-Lessan
The Florida Phoenix

Lawmakers on Tuesday approved a sweeping tax cut for homestead property owners pushed by Gov. Ron DeSantis, sending it to the November ballot.

The measure increases the existing \$50,000 exemption for homestead properties to \$150,000 starting in 2027, and it increases to \$250,000 in 2028. The exemption, though, doesn't apply to school taxes, after lawmakers changed DeSantis' plan Monday to protect districts from drastic cuts.

The constitutional amendment (HJR 1F) needs 60 percent support from voters to take effect. If it passes into law, the measure is expected to cut local government revenue across the state by more than \$8.4 billion a year.

"I'm proud of the opportunity that we are giving the voters by letting them decide if this is something that's going to come to fruition or not," House Speaker Daniel Perez, R-Miami, told reporters after the two-day special session. "And if it doesn't, I am still going to say that this was the right decision, that we produced a good product, and that I would do it all over again."

In votes that mostly followed party lines, the House voted 75-26 on the ballot measure, and the Senate voted 30-9. Three Democratic senators,

Mack Bernard of West Palm Beach, Daryl Rouson of St. Petersburg, and Barbara Sharief of Miramar voted for the measure.

Rep. Nathan Boyles, R-Baker, and Patt Maney, R-Shalimar, were the only Republicans voting against the constitutional amendment.

Some Republicans expressed angst over the vote amid concerns about cuts to local governments in their area, but ultimately approved it.

"This issue has created heartburn for me from day one, because I'm getting it from both sides," said Sen. Ed Hooper, R-Clearwater.

Hooper, who is the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and is retiring this year, said he received 27 text messages since debate began Tuesday morning. Local elected officials were against the proposal while other constituents told him to vote yes, Hooper said.

Most Democrats and local government officials argued the monumental changes to the state's tax structure will bankrupt some cities and counties, cripple water management districts and other special districts, shift tax burdens to renters and businesses, and regressively hit Floridians with fees for basic services.

"When the bill comes due, it won't be paid by Tallahassee," said Sen. Lavon Bracy Davis, D-Ocoee. "It will be paid by your city, your county, your neighborhood school, your library,

BALLOT, Page A6

HUD Scrutiny of Tallahassee Lead Paint Grant Sparks Financial and Political Fallout

By Steve Stewart

A federal grant program intended to protect children and families from the dangers of lead-based paint has become the focus of growing controversy in Tallahassee after the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) determined the city failed to meet key federal requirements tied to the program.

The controversy centers on a \$4.4 million HUD Lead Hazard Reduction grant awarded to the City of Tallahassee to identify and remove lead-based paint hazards in older housing occupied by low-income residents. In early May, HUD designated the city's grant program as "high risk" and launched an audit after raising concerns about contractor costs, project eligibility and compliance with federal regulations.

According to city records and correspondence with federal officials, approximately \$1.6 million has been spent through the program, with HUD having reimbursed the city about \$1.03 million. Federal officials questioned several expenditures, including the cost of replacing doors at an apartment complex on Holton Street, where some door replacements reportedly exceeded \$8,000 each.

The situation escalated on May 26 when HUD informed the city that costs associated with the Holton Street project were ineligible for reimbursement under the

HUD, Page A5

Capital Conservatives to Host Mayoral Forum, Tuesday, June 9th

The four contenders for Tallahassee Mayor will all have an opportunity to speak to the Capital Conservatives Club on Tuesday, June 9th.

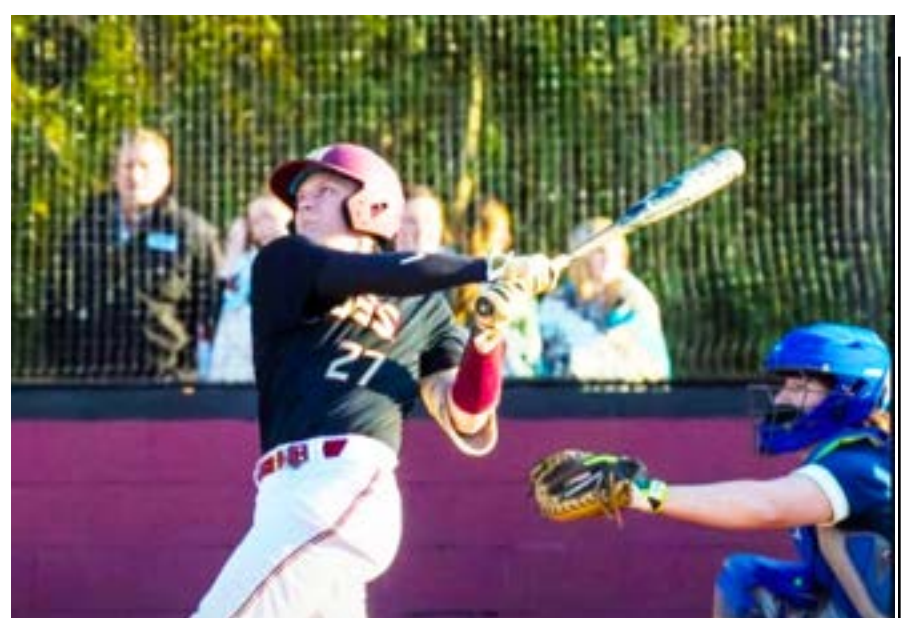
The club told TR that all of the mayoral candidates, Lorraine Ausley, Michael Foust, Jeremy Matlow, and Daryl Parks will be in attendance.

According to the press release, each candidate will be given ten minutes to state their case for being the next mayor, and then the floor will be open for a question-and-answer period.

The club, which was founded in 2009, meets at the Elks Lodge, located at 276 North Magnolia.

If you are not a member and are interested in attending, contact Norm Mears at normmears1@aol.com.

INSIDE



Leon County High School Baseball Leading Hitters. B4

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Community News

Leon County Launches 'Beyond Your Block: America 250 Edition' Summer Campaign

By Staff

Leon County Government recently launched its "Beyond Your Block: America250 Edition" summer promotion, a five-week campaign designed to inspire residents to explore all corners of the community and discover the rich adventure that Leon County has to offer. Exploring Leon County and Tallahassee has never been more fun and rewarding than with this epic challenge that highlights local hotspots, historical landmarks, unique events, and more.

This month, the Beyond Your Block program features local businesses and attractions, including restaurants, breweries, shops, museums, parks and events, while highlighting six historic America250FL Road Trip stops located within Leon County.

Through an interactive challenge featured on the Visit Tallahassee mobile app, the campaign encourages residents and visitors alike to explore new areas of town, support local businesses during the summer season and experience Leon County as a destination beyond their usual rou-

tines. Participants can earn points by visiting featured locations and checking in through the app, with each stop contributing toward rewards and prize opportunities.

To further encourage heritage tourism and exploration, check-ins at any of Leon County's six official America250FL Road Trip sites will earn 50 points, the highest point value within the challenge. The first 50 participants to reach 250 points, will receive a limited-edition Tallahassee, FL, commemorative America 250 T-shirt celebrating the campaign.

In addition, every location visited throughout the campaign will count as an entry into the grand prize sweepstakes. At the conclusion of the initiative, one grand prize winner will receive a two-night Tallahassee staycation package featuring hotel accommodation and tickets to local attractions.

Throughout the program, the Leon County Division of Tourism will host on-site activations at six partner locations across the community. These pop-up promotions will feature "Summer Essentials" prize packs designed



to encourage participation, drive engagement and inspire residents to explore new areas of Tallahassee-Leon County throughout the campaign.

Pop-up promotion locations and activation times will be announced exclusively through Visit Tallahassee's social media channels on Instagram and Facebook.

To participate, download the free Visit Tallahassee mobile app and click the "Challenges" tab to begin exploring participating locations, earning rewards, and experiencing the unique character of your Leon County-Tallahassee all summer long.



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Community News

HCA Florida Capital Hospital, UCF College of Medicine Announce New Transitional Year Residency Program

By Staff

HCA Florida Capital Hospital recently announced its new Transitional Year Residency Program through the University of Central Florida/HCA Florida Healthcare Graduate Medical Education (GME) Consortium. HCA Florida Capital Hospital currently has dermatology, psychiatry, and internal medicine residency programs.

The UCF-HCA Florida Healthcare GME Consortium is the fastest growing residency and fellowship training program in Florida, designed to address the state's physician shortage. By June, it will be training more than 820 physicians in 49 accredited programs

across Florida that have graduated almost 1,300 physicians. About 50 percent of those graduates stay in Florida to practice.

HCA Florida Capital Hospital has had a dermatology residency program since 2022. Specialties such as dermatology, anesthesiology and physical medicine and rehabilitation require residents to do a transitional year of training that emphasizes inpatient medicine, ambulatory care, emergency medicine, critical care, surgery and elective specialty experiences tailored to each resident's future field of practice.

The program is expected to welcome its first class of 15 residents in

July 2026 and interviews are complete for the incoming cohort. This new residency expands graduate medical education opportunities in North Florida and strengthens the UCF/HCA Florida Healthcare's commitment to developing highly skilled, adaptable physicians prepared to enter specialized residency pathways.

"The launch of the Transitional Year Residency Program at HCA Florida Capital Hospital represents an exciting step forward in the continued growth of graduate medical education at our institution,"



said Sarah Vocelle, DO, program director. "We are building a program that prepares physicians to lead, innovate and deliver exceptional care across a wide-range of specialties."

TOC Expands Hand and Wrist Services with Addition of Dr. Drew Nute

By Staff

Tallahassee Orthopedic Clinic (TOC) recently announced the addition of Dr. Drew Nute, a fellowship-trained hand and wrist surgeon, further expanding the organization's comprehensive orthopedic care offerings in Tallahassee and Panama City Beach.

Dr. Nute joins TOC following a distinguished career in the United States military, where he gained extensive experience in diagnosis and treatment of hand, wrist, and upper extremity conditions, including fractures, arthritis, tendon and nerve injuries, sports-related injuries, and minimally invasive surgical procedures. His patient-centered approach and advanced surgical expertise will help

provide patients with expanded access to specialized upper-extremity care.

"I'm excited to join the talented team at TOC and begin serving patients throughout the region," said Dr. Drew Nute. "My goal is to help patients return to the activities they enjoy as quickly and safely as possible by providing the latest treatment options and surgical techniques. I look forward to building relationships within the community and contributing to TOC's strong reputation for orthopedic excellence."

The press release noted that the "addition of Dr. Nute strengthens TOC's growing network of orthopedic specialists and reinforces the organization's commitment to delivering high-quality, comprehensive musculoskeletal care close to home."

"We are excited to add another highly dedicated hand and wrist specialist to our growing team as we continue investing in advanced orthopedic services for our communities," said Kelby Tardi, Chief Executive Officer of TOC. "Dr. Nute's experience, clinical excellence, and patient-focused philosophy align perfectly with TOC's mission and vision for compassionate care."

TOC continues to expand its physician network and services to meet the evolving healthcare needs of patients across the region. With more than 10 locations and a multidisciplinary team of orthopedic specialists, TOC remains dedicated to providing innovative treatment options and exceptional patient care.

Dr. Nute is now accepting new pa-



tient appointments in Tallahassee and Panama City Beach, with patient visits beginning June 12, 2026. For more information or to schedule an appointment, visit TeamTOC.com.

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Leon County Delays Decision on Cultural Grant Administration, Schedules Further Review

By Staff

The Leon County Commission voted May 12 to postpone a decision on a proposed overhaul of the county's cultural grant administration system, directing staff to bring the issue back for discussion during the June 16 budget workshop.

The proposal centered on whether Leon County should continue contracting with the Council on Culture & Arts (COCA) to administer cultural and tourism-related grants or move management of the program in-house through the county's Division of Tourism.

County staff recommended bringing the grant program under direct county administration beginning in fiscal year 2027. According to agenda materials, the change would generate approximately \$213,000 in annual savings, including the elimination of \$150,000 in general revenue support currently provided to COCA. Staff estimated the proposal would maintain cultural arts grant funding at roughly \$2 million annually while increasing tourism event grant funding to \$1.4 million.

The recommendation drew significant public opposition. Fifty-one speakers addressed the commission in support of maintaining the current structure, known as Option 2. Many praised COCA's long-standing role in supporting local arts organizations and argued that additional time was needed to evaluate the proposal before any changes were made.

Following public comment, Commissioner Carolyn Cummings initially moved, with support from Commissioner Bill Proctor, to postpone the issue until the commission's budget workshop.

Commissioners spent more than an

hour debating the proposal, possible alternatives, and uncertainty surrounding ongoing discussions in the Florida Legislature regarding property tax reform and state budget decisions.

Commissioner Brian Welch was absent from the chamber during the final vote, while Commissioner Rick Minor argued the board should carefully coordinate with all stakeholders before making any structural changes. Minor said the proposed transition could have a significant financial impact on COCA and noted that the issue originated from a commission request made in late 2025.

County Administrator Vincent Long emphasized that the proposal was not about reducing arts funding but determining whether the county could more efficiently administer the grants itself rather than paying another organization to do so. Long noted that similar proposals were considered by the commission in 2018 and 2020 but were not adopted.

Vice Chairman Christian O'Keefe questioned the need for the proposed changes and argued the commission should focus on larger county priorities. He opposed both the proposal and holding another workshop on the issue.

Ultimately, Commissioner Cummings, seconded by Minor, moved to revisit the matter during the June 16 budget workshop. The motion passed 5-1, with O'Keefe voting no and Welch absent from the chamber.

The commission is expected to continue evaluating both the financial and policy implications of the cultural grant program before making a final decision later this year.

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Local News

May Crime Numbers Show 2026 Increases

By Staff

TPD crime incident numbers for May 2026 are in. The numbers show that year-to-date (YTD) property crime and violent crime incidents are up 15.9% when compared to YTD numbers in May 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 11.5% and YTD violent crime incidents are up 23.8% through May when compared to one year ago.

Property crimes encompass

	YTD (May 31)		Chg	%Chg
	2025	2026		
Total Incidents	971	1125	154	15.9%
--- Property	626	698	72	11.5%
--- Violent	345	427	82	23.8%

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

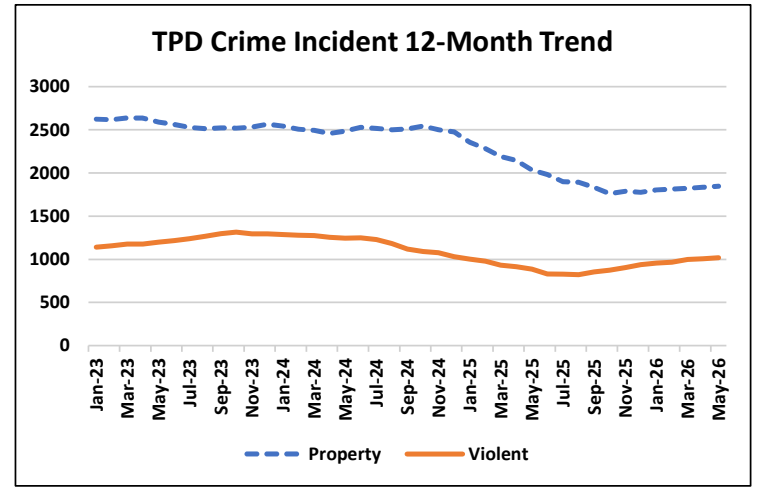
A look at specific crimes reveals the increase in property crime was driven by increases in residential (13.6%) and commercial burglaries (76.9%) when compared to 2025. The Auto Burglary & Theft category - which accounts for approximately 55%

of all property crimes - is down 1.4%.

The violent crime data shows that robbery incidents were up 21.5% while assault & battery incidents were up 24.4%.

12-Month Trends

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

Leon County Schools Employs More Administrators, Support Staff Than State and Peer Districts

LCS, From Front Page

partment of Education data provides a standardized comparison among districts and their peers, offering a snapshot of how Leon County's staffing levels compare with those across the state during the 2025-26 school year.

The FDOE administrator category includes principals, assistant principals, and deans. The non-instructional category includes social workers, school psychologist and school counselors.

According to 2025-26 staffing data, Leon County Schools serves 30,964 students, making it the second-largest district among the comparison group behind Okaloosa County, which enrolls 31,055 students. Despite the similar enrollment figures, Leon County employs 211 administrators, substantially more than Okaloosa's 144 administrators. Leon also exceeds Santa Rosa County's 110 administrators and Alachua County's 173 administrators. Only Bay County, with 222 administrators serving 27,126 students, reports a higher administrative total.

The disparity is even greater among non-teacher instructional and support staff. Leon County employs 415 non-instructional personnel, the highest total among the five

LCS employs more non-instructional staff than comparable school districts.

districts. By comparison, Santa Rosa and Alachua counties each employ 248 non-teacher staff members, Bay County employs 239, and Okaloosa County employs 226.

The staffing comparison comes as school districts across Florida face budget pressures tied to enrollment trends and increased scrutiny of administrative spending.

The figures come as LCS continues to confront declining student enrollment, a trend that reduces state funding because Florida's education formula is largely based on student counts. Critics have

argued that administrative growth has outpaced enrollment trends and have called for closer scrutiny of staffing levels outside the classroom.

Supporters of the district's staffing structure contend that modern school systems require specialized personnel to manage student services, accountability requirements, technology, safety initiatives, and other operational responsibilities that have expanded in recent years.

The staffing comparisons are likely to attract additional attention as district leaders evaluate budget priorities and as community members debate proposals involving school funding and operational efficiency.

LCS Addressess Staffing Issue

During the last school board meeting, elected officials voted 4-1 to approve the placement of a 1 mil property tax increase on the November ballot. If passed by the voters, the tax would raise approximately \$24 million. After the vote, Chair Marcus Nicolas acknowledged

	Admin. per 1,000 Students	Non-Teacher Staff per 1,000 Students
Florida Average	5.48	10.44
Peer Group Average	5.74	8.44
Leon County	6.81	13.4

	Student Population	Admin	Non-Teacher Instructional Staff	Total
OKALOOSA	31,055	144	226	370
LEON	30,964	211	415	626
SANTA ROSA	28,759	110	248	358
ALACHUA	27,385	173	248	421
BAY	27,126	222	239	461

the concern about staffing, but took the position that the tax increase and the "administra-

tive structure" were not connected. The board scheduled a workshop to address the issue.

Leon County Review Finds No Foul Play in Five Inmate Deaths at Detention Facility

By Steve Stewart

Leon County commissioners will receive a detailed report on June 9 outlining the circumstances surrounding five inmate deaths that occurred at the Leon County Detention Facility during 2025, with county staff concluding that all investigations have been completed and found no evidence of foul play.

The report was prepared at the request of the County Commission following public interest in inmate deaths and the procedures used to investigate them. According to the review, the five deaths represented less than 0.07% of the approximately 7,255 individuals who were incarcerated at least once in the detention facility during 2025.

County staff noted that inmate mor-

tality rates at the Leon County facility remain below national averages. The U.S. Department of Justice reports a mortality rate of approximately 0.17% in local jails nationwide, compared with Leon County's rate of less than half that figure.

The report explains that every in-custody death triggers both criminal and administrative investigations by the Leon County Sheriff's Office, along with an independent review by the Medical Examiner. Investigators examine evidence, interview witnesses, review medical records and determine whether any criminal conduct or policy violations occurred. The Sheriff's Office is also required to report all inmate deaths to state and federal authorities under the federal Death in Custody

Reporting Act.

The five inmate deaths reviewed included two overdose deaths, two deaths from natural medical causes and one death involving self-inflicted head trauma.

According to the report, a 46-year-old male inmate died in October after suffering an overdose. Another inmate, a 36-year-old man, died in January from an overdose after being found unresponsive in his cell.

Two deaths were attributed to natural causes. A 72-year-old inmate receiving hospice care through the Sheriff's Office Inmate Comfort Care Program died from stage 4 throat cancer in September. A 36-year-old inmate died in June from a pulmonary embolism while housed in the medical unit.

The fifth death involved a 26-year-old female inmate who was being treated in the medical unit after engaging in self-injurious behavior. The Medical Examiner ruled her death accidental, citing severe cerebral edema caused by self-inflicted head trauma.

The report also highlights ongoing efforts to improve inmate safety, including increased staffing, enhanced behavioral health services, suicide-prevention measures, and facility upgrades such as suicide-resistant furnishings. The detention facility maintains accreditation through the National Commission on Correctional Health Care and conducts medical screenings for inmates shortly after intake.

City Updates Policy for Filling Commission Vacancies

By Steve Stewart

The Tallahassee City Commission is moving to update its policy governing how vacancies on the City Commission and in the mayor's office are filled, following a voter-approved amendment to the City Charter that significantly extends the appointment timeline.

Under a Charter amendment adopted in June 2025, the City Commission now has 60 days to appoint an interim commissioner or mayor after a vacancy occurs. Previously, the Charter

required the appointment to be made within 20 days. If the Commission fails to act within the new 60-day window, the vacancy must be filled by the Governor.

City staff said the proposed revisions to City Commission Policy 144 are intended to align the policy with the Charter change while also addressing legal and procedural concerns identified in recent years.

The policy governing vacancy appointments was originally adopted in 2002 following the unexpected death

of City Commissioner Charles Billings. Since then, the process has generally included public notices, solicitation of applications from eligible voters, verification of residency and voter-registration status, candidate interviews, and Commission meetings to narrow the field before selecting an interim appointee.

According to city records, extending the timeline to 60 days was intended to avoid concerns about a rushed selection process. Officials noted that a vacancy appointment process in 2018

resulted in a special meeting that continued late into New Year's Eve.

The proposed policy revisions also include measures designed to strengthen compliance with Florida's Sunshine Law and reduce the risk of future legal challenges. Additionally, the update addresses potential constitutional dual-office holding concerns by clarifying that a sitting commissioner automatically resigns their commission seat if elected by the Commission to fill a mayoral vacancy.

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Local News

School Board Members Comment on Tax Increase Resolution

By Steve Stewart

In a 4-1 decision on Tuesday, May 26, the Leon County School Board voted to move forward with a property tax millage referendum, clearing the way for voters to decide this November whether to increase taxes to fund employee salaries and school safety. The debate preceding the vote highlighted deep divisions over administrative spending and the timing of a tax increase during a period of rising property values.

The adopted resolution specifically targets “compensation” for teachers and staff. Board members spent significant time debating the word “compensation” versus “pay,” eventually settling on the former because it is broader and includes benefits. While the ballot title focuses on teachers due to word count limits, the

full 75-word ballot language will explicitly include support staff, such as bus drivers, custodians, and cafeteria workers.

The lone dissenting vote came from Laurie Cox, who expressed deep concern over the burden on local taxpayers. Cox noted that while the board had not raised the millage rate in years, rising property values have already resulted in de facto tax increases. “I just feel like right now is not the right time to ask our taxpayers for more money,” Cox said, arguing the district should find savings within its existing budget rather than adding to a tax load that already includes the Children’s Services Council.

Other members, however, argued that the district has reached a breaking point. Rosanne Wood contended that the board has already “cut

to the bone”. She noted that Leon County is competing with Georgia, where teachers often make significantly more, and with 29 other Florida counties that have already passed similar millage increases. Wood stated that to find equivalent funding without the tax, the district would have to close approximately 26 neighborhood schools, which she called “pillars of our communities”.

Member Smith offered what she called “reluctant support”. Though she campaigned on increasing teacher salaries, she expressed frustration that the board had not pursued school consolidations or administrative downsizing before asking the public for more money. Ultimately, she decided to support the measure to let the community decide the value of teacher pay.



Member Daryl Jones emphasized the importance of “direct democracy,” framing the vote as an opportunity for citizens to weigh in on community values.

Addressing public concerns about “administrative bloating,” the Chair Marcus

Nicolas acknowledged the issue but insisted the board could “walk and chew gum at the same time,” addressing administrative structure through separate, ongoing discussions while the tax measure proceeds.

HUD Scrutiny of Tallahassee Lead Paint Grant Sparks Financial and Political Fallout

HUD, From Front Page

grant. Federal reviewers also concluded the city failed to provide sufficient documentation verifying tenant income eligibility, occupancy requirements and whether the project prioritized households with children under six years old — a central goal of the lead hazard reduction program.

As a result, HUD is requiring Tallahassee to repay at least \$1.03 million in federal funds and warned that additional ineligible costs could be identified as the review continues. The city has suspended grant activities while working with federal officials to address the findings.

However, city officials are disputing HUD’s conclusions and have indicated they intend to appeal the repayment determina-

tion. Assistant City Manager Christian Doolin told city commissioners that staff believes documentation previously submitted to HUD adequately demonstrates compliance with program requirements. City officials contend the issue is not whether the work was performed, but whether the documentation provided satisfies federal standards. The city maintains that it can address HUD’s concerns through the appeals process and hopes to overturn the repayment demand.

The controversy has also triggered political fallout at City Hall. Commissioners have debated responsibility for the program’s management, while calls have emerged for a forensic audit and further investigation into

the handling of federal housing funds. Allegations from a former employee and public disputes among elected officials have added to the scrutiny.

Federal officials have not alleged criminal wrongdoing, but the audit continues. The outcome could determine whether Tallahassee must return additional grant funds and what corrective actions may be required before the city can resume the lead hazard reduction program. The appeal process is expected to focus heavily on whether the city can provide sufficient evidence that grant-funded projects met HUD’s eligibility and documentation requirements.

CRC Advances “Historical Harm” Proposal

CRC, From Front Page

Leon County Commission voted to revive the concept and return it to the citizen committee for additional review, supporters revised the language in an effort to address legal concerns and broaden its scope.

The proposal seeks to require Leon County to examine the impacts of past public policy decisions on geographic areas within the county and consider actions to address lingering effects. Supporters say the amendment is intended to create a long-term framework for transparency, accountability, and data-driven evaluation of historical government actions.

Dr. Bruce Strouble, the amendment’s sponsor, said revisions shifted the focus away from race-based con-

siderations and toward geographic impacts. According to reports presented to the committee, references that could raise concerns under state restrictions on diversity, equity and inclusion programs were removed. Supporters argued the measure would comply with state law while still allowing the county to study how past government decisions affected neighborhoods and communities.

Opponents, including county staff, questioned whether the amendment is necessary, arguing that Leon County already has authority to conduct similar analyses and warning about potential legal risks associated with Florida’s recently enacted anti-DEI legislation. Some commissioners and

committee members have expressed concerns that the amendment could expose the county to litigation or jeopardize state and federal funding if interpreted as conflicting with state law.

The proposal remains several steps away from appearing before voters. The Charter Review Committee is expected to continue its work through the summer before submitting final recommendations to the Leon County Commission. County commissioners would then decide whether to place the amendment on the November 2026 ballot, where Leon County voters would have the final say on whether the charter should be amended.



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Local News Briefs

County Seeking Applications for Children’s Services Council of Leon County

Leon County Government is seeking applications from qualified individuals interested in serving on the Children’s Services Council of Leon County (CSC Leon). Approved by voters during the November 2020 general election, CSC Leon was established to fund early learning, developmental, treatment, and prevention services for children.

All applications must be submitted electronically by 5 p.m. on Friday, July 31, 2026, at LeonCountyFL.gov/CS-CAApplication. To be eligible, applicants must be a resident of Leon County for the previous 24 months and be willing to submit an annual Statement of Financial Interests form.

In accordance with Florida Statutes § 125.901, CSC Leon consists of 10 members, five of whom are appointed by the Governor from a list of candidates submitted by the Leon County Board of County Commissioners. This list will include at least three recommendations for the upcoming vacancy.

As part of the application,

applicants are asked to attach a resume or provide a brief explanation of how their skills, experience, or educational background will contribute to CSC Leon. Additionally, Florida Statutes § 125.901 requires that, to the extent possible, those appointed represent the demographic diversity of the population of Leon County. To ensure full consideration, applications should thoroughly respond to each question.

For more information, contact Lisa Davis, Leon County Administration at 850-606-5300 or DavisLis@LeonCountyFL.gov, or Mathieu Cavell, Leon County Community and Media Relations at 850-606-5300 or CMR@LeonCountyFL.gov.

School Zone Speed Cameras Register 50,000 Violations

According to a report by the Tallahassee Democrat, school zone speed cameras in Tallahassee generated nearly \$1 million in revenue during their first full school year of operation, according to data obtained from the Tallahassee Police Department.

Since the program began in March 2025, more than 50,000 notices of violation have

been issued to drivers caught speeding in school zones. At \$100 per citation, the violations have the potential to generate roughly \$5 million in fines, with the City of Tallahassee receiving an estimated \$2 million share if all citations are paid.

Between Sept. 11, 2025, and May 21, 2026, 24,778 violations were paid, resulting in \$966,342 in revenue for the city. Drivers who fail to pay citations can face driver’s license suspensions.

The cameras were first activated at two school zones near Ruediger Elementary and Raa Middle School, and at Desoto Trail Elementary. The program has since expanded to 48 cameras operating along 27 roadways in 20 school zones.

Tallahassee Man Arrested Following LCSO Child Exploitation Investigation

An investigation by the Leon County Sheriff’s Office Human Exploitation and Trafficking (HEAT) Unit led to the arrest of a Tallahassee man on 45 counts of Aggravated Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material following a CyberTip from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Chil-

dren (NCMEC).

In November 2025, LCSO received information from NCMEC after an electronic service provider reported suspected child sexual abuse material (CSAM) associated with an online account. During the course of the investigation, detectives determined the account belonged to 44-year-old Andrew Williams. Additional investigative efforts led to the seizure and forensic examination of a cellular device belonging to Williams. Digital forensic analysis revealed numerous files containing child sexual abuse material, including files that matched material previously identified during the investigation.

Williams was arrested by the United States Marshals Service on May 29, 2026, and transported to the Leon County Detention Facility.

Accused FSU Gunman Makes First Court Appearance

The accused gunman in last year’s mass shooting near the Florida State University Student Union was in court on May 26. It was the first physical appearance in court for Phoenix Ikner. Ikner is facing two first-degree murder charg-

es and additional attempted murder charges. The state attorney is seeking the death penalty in the case.

During a case management conference, Ikner’s lawyer, Blake Johnson, and State Attorney Jack Campbell discussed a timeline for the defense team to disclose witnesses. Campbell says he needs that information so he can be prepared.

Campbell says if Ikner’s defense team uses expert witnesses, like mental health professionals, he’ll need time to find his own expert witnesses with similar areas of expertise. But Ikner’s lawyer says the volume of discovery, including Ikner’s alleged conversations with an AI chatbot and the Attorney General’s criminal investigation against the artificial intelligence company have made the case complicated. And Johnson says meeting the proposed deadlines would be “virtually impossible.”

“We could not be ready to list our experts by the state’s proposed dates simply because our investigation is not complete,” Johnson says.

Neff said he would take the arguments under consideration. The trial is currently set to take place in October.

State News

Lawmakers Pass \$114.5 Billion Budget

By **Jim Turner & Gray Rohrer**
The News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE – Lawmakers overwhelmingly approved a \$114.5 billion spending plan Friday, wrapping up a special session to complete the budget more than two months after they failed to do so during the regular session.

The Senate voted unanimously in favor of the budget and the House voted 99-6 for the plan, but the vast support for the measure belied the tense process to produce it.

House Speaker Daniel Perez, R-Miami, insisted on cutting the current budget of more than \$115 billion, while Senate President Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, preferred to keep funding essentially level.

“Floridians expect their government to spend responsibly and prioritize the issues that matter most to families across our state,” Perez said in a released statement. “For the second year in a row, the Florida House has led the charge in passing a budget that reduces spending while continuing to invest in public safety, education, environmental protection, health care, and infrastructure.”

For his part, Albritton, a citrus

farmer, was pleased with the \$196 million in the budget to support the beleaguered citrus industry, which has endured freezes, a greening disease and encroaching development that has led to a massive shrinking in the number of boxes it produces each year.

“Florida citrus is making a comeback, one tree at a time,” Albritton said in a released statement. “This heritage industry is not only vital to our state’s economy, but it is truly a part of our DNA. Mark my words, Florida citrus is not going down on my watch. Citrus matters, and I am running to this fight.”

The budget includes \$30 billion for K-12 schools, with \$201 million for teacher pay increases. That raise, though, will only go to teachers with 10 years of experience, with the increase capped at \$3,000 per year.

Republicans said they wanted to use the money to prevent veteran teachers from leaving the field.

“That’s a great approach to trying to retain veteran teachers,” said Sen. Danny Burgess, R-Zephyrhills, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee on PreK-12 Education.

Democrats, though, said the funding isn’t enough, as many districts faced potential cuts this year due to declining enrollment and teachers

struggle to keep up with inflation.

There were funds included to mitigate the effect of enrollment declines for school districts, but Sen. Carlos Guillermo Smith, D-Orlando, said that would still leave Orange County with a \$13 million shortfall for its schools.

Smith voted for the budget, but also took issue with the zeroing out of preeminence funding for universities. The University of Central Florida recently qualified for the funding, which is designed to push schools to boost research. But now the school won’t be able to receive the money. In the current budget, \$40 million was set aside for preeminence funding, which went to the University of Florida, Florida State University, Florida International University and the University of South Florida.

“The preeminence framework remains a part of Florida law,” said Sen. Jennifer Bradley, R-Fleming Island, Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Higher Education, in response to Smith. “This is something that I hope we will revisit next year.”

Other Democrats called for raises for all state workers, instead of the 4 percent raises are targeted only corrections officers, state law enforcement

officials and firefighters included in the budget.

“Our state employees are having difficult times paying their bills, paying for childcare, paying their car note, paying for property insurance, car insurance, all those things,” said Rep. Bruce Antone, D-Orlando. “There’s nothing we can do about pay raises this year, but for those coming back next year, I hope that we will put this on our radar screen and make sure that it happens.”

Still, only six House Democrats voted against the budget, although the main theme from Democrats was that it doesn’t do enough to help Floridians facing cost of living constraints.

“I don’t know what it’s going to take for us to wake up one day and realize that we are really not doing the things for the people in the state of Florida that we should be doing, as opposed to doing what companies need,” said Rep. Dianne Hart-Lowman, D-Tampa, who voted against the budget.

House budget chief Rep. Lawrence McClure, R-Dover, defended the spending plan as putting the state on a better fiscal path that will avoid the deficits in future years projected by state economists.

Property Insurance Experts Cautiously Optimistic Ahead of Storm Season

By **Jim Turner**
The News Service of Florida

A “below-normal” year for storms could further a positive trend for Florida’s insurance market, industry experts contend.

But because of Florida’s location between the Atlantic and Gulf, homeowners will always be at risk, which will temper any potential reductions to premiums.

Heading into the Atlantic storm season that begins June 1, insurance experts said legislative reforms in 2022 and 2023 targeting “frivolous” lawsuits, along with a year without any storm hits, have allowed some “softening” in homeowners insurance prices, growth in new carriers into the state, and a fall in the policy count by state-backed Citizens Property Insurance from 1.41 million policies in October 2023 to 336,000.

“We are just becoming more and more resilient in the state. So, I’m kind of optimistic that, as we see the next storm, we are going to be in better shape than we have been in the past,” said Patricia Born, who is the Midyette

Eminent Scholar in Risk Management and Insurance at Florida State University’s Herbert Wertheim College of Business.

The industry is further helped right now from a “soft cycle” for reinsurance, the insurance for insurers.

But don’t anticipate any decline to erase the sharp rise in premiums Florida residents endured in the last 10 years, according to the nonprofit Coalition for an Insurable Future.

And as with every hurricane season, it only takes one storm to upend years of work that industry officials say helped attract 20 new property and casualty insurance companies with more than \$850 million in new capital into the state’s market.

On May 20, Insurance Commissioner Mike Yaworsky and Chief Financial Officer Blaise Ingoglia announced the three latest property and casualty insurers entering Florida’s market: Texas-based Builder Reciprocal Insurance Exchange, Lake Mary-based Frontline Insurance Reciprocal Exchange and Arizona-based Wingsail Insurance Company.

“Competition is the best way to en-

sure that Floridians can access the best coverage at the best price,” Ingoglia said in a released statement.

Born said while the industry looks strong, the Florida market needs more nationwide providers.

“We would prefer that more insurers that have a footprint across the whole country would be writing in Florida, so that they’re diversified more broadly,” Born said.

Chris Dittman, executive managing director for Dothan, Alabama-based Aon Corporation, said the reforms in Florida have resulted in sustained profitability.

“Florida is a very risky state, and it is the peak risk in the world, and so there is underwriting income needed in these (non-catastrophe) years to pay for the (catastrophe) losses, because those will happen,” Dittman said during a media call hosted by the AM Best insurance ratings firm.

Lawmakers in 2022 and 2023 eliminated one-way attorney fees and banned assignment of benefits, where contractors would take over policyholder claims. The efforts also imposed larger rate increases for customers of

the Citizens Property Insurance Corp., to bring rates closer to private carriers and reduce the number of policies held by the state-backed insurer.

An AM Best report out last week said Florida’s market had stabilized and called it an “increasingly manageable market.”

The report stated Florida-domiciled personal property specialist companies recorded nearly \$1 billion in underwriting gains, a vast improvement from the \$132 million underwriting loss two years earlier.

“The improved Florida property insurance landscape reflects reduced litigation and claim solicitation, attracting new writers to the state while allowing existing writers to recover from losses in earlier years and take advantage of more refined pricing sophistication,” said Lauren Magro, AM Best senior financial analyst. “While 2024 marked the first year of an underwriting profit for the segment in over a decade, results in 2025 only further extended this trend and benefited from no named hurricanes making landfall.”

Property Tax Overhaul Headed To Ballot

BALLOT, From Front Page

your community. This proposal does not eliminate costs, it simply moves them. It is not tax relief, it is a tax shift.”

Perez said he would have preferred the discussion to have occurred during the regular session, when the House settled on a measure in February that sought to eliminate most non-school homestead property taxes.

“We put up a select committee. We had the bills, the proposals run through the process. That was never reciprocated by our friends in the Senate and it wasn’t held in high regard by the governor,” Perez said.

A little more than a year ago, Perez and DeSantis proposed competing tax restructuring plans, with the House plan favoring a lower state sales tax rate. The House later rolled out a series of potential property tax proposals. However, members of the Senate expressed concerns about the fiscal impacts to mostly rural, fiscally constrained counties.

In a released statement, Senate President Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, expressed gratitude to DeSantis for “leading the conversation on cutting

property taxes and putting forward this robust proposal.”

On Monday Republicans in both chambers amended the proposal put forward by DeSantis to protect school districts and allow local governments to use property taxes to fund constitutional offices, such as supervisors of elections, tax collectors and property appraisers.

Under the measure, cities and counties would be restricted to spending property tax revenues on “core services,” including schools, police, firefighters, infrastructure and the environment. But constitutional offices were left out of the initial proposal.

Republicans also removed the establishment of a fund that would purportedly assist local governments with lost revenue. But the initial proposal from DeSantis’ office didn’t include money for the fund or outline how it was to be distributed.

Lawmakers anticipate future legislators will have to address local government funding.

Rep. Allison Tant, D-Tallahassee, said the change will result in cities and counties cutting back or consolidating

public safety and other services.

“They’re worried about loss of autonomy, independence, and losing their identity,” Tant said. “They are worried about becoming wards of the state and essentially be treated like welfare recipients.”

For the second day, Democrats unsuccessfully tried to amend the bill to allow water management districts use property tax revenue, to use state dollars to cover lost revenue for senior programs, law enforcement, corrections and veterans services, and to prohibit the use of public money to advertise the ballot initiative.

The measure would also lower the

cap on annual assessment increases for non-homestead properties, which include vacation and investment homes and commercial properties, from 10 percent to 5 percent.

Starting after Jan. 1, 2027, first-time homeowners would have to display five years of residency to qualify for the new super exemption. Until they qualify, they would receive the current exemption that lifts local government and school district taxes on the first \$25,000 of the appraised values of their primary properties and from non-school taxes on the value between \$50,000 and \$75,000.

President/Publisher: Kathy Stewart
Editor: Steve Stewart

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Tallahassee Reports is a project of Red Hills Journalism Foundation Inc. and publishes reports on local government, politics, consumer affairs, business and public policy. Red Hills Journalism Foundation Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

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Stay informed on **LOCAL NEWS**

Analysis

City Spending Growth Outpaces Inflation, Population by \$29 Million

By Steve Stewart

An analysis shows that City of Tallahassee general fund spending growth from 2019 through 2026 outpaced the combined growth rates of population and inflation by approximately 19 percent.

Spending Growth

From 2018 to 2026, COT general fund spending increased from \$151.5 million in 2018 to \$225.945 million in 2026, a 49.1% increase. During this same period, population growth (3.31%) and inflation (26.8%) totaled 30.1% growth.

The graph below shows that cumulative general fund

spending growth since 2019 followed population and inflation growth from 2019 through 2023. However, from 2024 to 2026 spending accelerated relative to population growth and inflation rates.

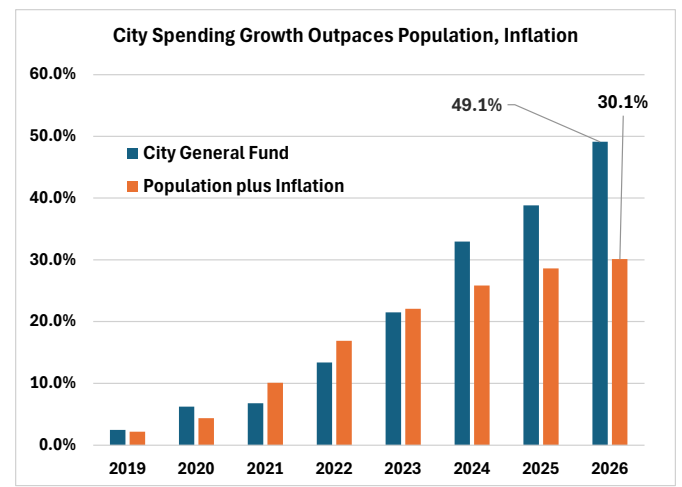
If general fund spending had followed population and inflation growth rates since 2024, the 2026 proposed budget would have been approximately \$197.0 million or \$29.0 million less than the approved 2026 budget of \$226.0 million.

City Responds to Spending Growth

Tallahassee City Commissioners recently voted 3-2 to offer "voluntary separation"

to its entire workforce of 2,700 employees beginning in May. Eligible employees, which are those hired before Jan. 1, 2026, who agree would be paid \$20,000 or 12 weeks of pay. Those employees would keep health insurance through the end of the calendar year. The city expects between 100-175 employees may separate.

"The program is intended to reduce and contain personnel expenses, minimize the impact of workforce reductions on employees and provide employees with an option if they're considering retirement or other career opportunities," Resource Management Director Robert Wigen said



during the city's latest budget hearing. The reduction in positions would assist in balanc-

ing Fiscal Year 2026's budget, with more impact Fiscal Year 2027.

City Buyout Program Could Save \$12M in Salaries

By Staff

City records show that approximately 170 city employees are taking a voluntary separation package recently offered to all city employees.

The program, which passed with a 3-2, offers employees \$20,000 or 12 weeks of base pay, whichever is greater, continuation of existing health insurance for the year, and payment of any accrued leave. Any full-time city employees that were hired before the beginning of 2026 were eligible for the severance package.

According to city budget officials, the program is a way to help manage the size of its workforce and balance the budget.

Salaries of the departing employees total approximately \$12 million and range from \$35,000 to near of \$220,000. Staff are leaving from fields including Fleet Management Services, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and Police.

Police Chief Lawrence Revell said 21 of his employees are taking the package.

"There will certainly be an impact, you know, you can't lose that many years of experience, and it's bitter-sweet, because these are our friends, these are our colleagues that we worked with for, you know, 20-30 years, and so there will certainly be an impact," Revell said.

Revell confirmed that no response times or police operations will be impacted.

"We have great people that will step into acting roles in the meantime, and then we'll make promotions in the next, you know, couple months. We're not rushing into anything, we're going to be very methodical about it, but it is a great time with this opportunity to look at restructuring and what that might look like," Revell said.

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The Leon County LINK

LeonCountyFL.gov



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June 1 marks the start of the Atlantic Hurricane Season.



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- ✓ **ACT**
- ✓ **RECOVER**

Prepare for hurricane season with the Leon County 2026-27 Disaster Survival Guide or visit LeonReady.com, our hub of resources to help individuals, families, and neighborhoods prepare for disasters. Throughout hurricane season, the County will continue to share preparedness tips and resources across social media to help develop a prepared and resilient community.

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Learn more at LeonCountyLibrary.org/SummerPrograms.

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.

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SCHEDULE JUNE 2026

TUESDAY 9	3:00 p.m.	Board of County Commissioners Regular Meeting County Courthouse, 5th Floor Commission Chambers – 301 S. Monroe Street
TUESDAY 9	6:00 p.m.	Board of County Commissioners Public Hearing County Courthouse, 5th Floor Commission Chambers – 301 S. Monroe Street
TUESDAY 16	9:00 a.m.	Board of County Commissioners Budget Workshop 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.



SUMMER BREAK SPOT

Leon County Government and Second Harvest of the Big Bend are proud to offer free healthy, packaged meals to kids and teens 18 and under at Leon County Public Library locations throughout June and July. No registration is required.

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Breakfast: Tuesday through Friday • 11 a.m.-12 p.m.
Lunch: Tuesday through Friday • 3-4 p.m.

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Woodville Branch Library, 8000 Old Woodville Rd.

Breakfast and lunch: Tuesday through Friday • 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

Fort Braden Branch Library, 16327 Blountstown Hwy.

Breakfast and lunch: Tuesday through Friday • 2-4 p.m.

VIEW THE SCHEDULE AT
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BUSINESS & SPORTS

TALLAHASSEE REPORTS

June 6, 2026 | B1

Tallahassee MSA Median Single-Family Sales Price Up in April

The Tallahassee Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) housing market posted modest gains in both home prices and sales activity in April 2026 compared to the same month a year earlier, signaling continued resilience despite broader affordability challenges.

According to the April 2026 sales data, the median single-family home sales price increased from \$329,000 in April 2025 to \$340,800 in April 2026, a gain of \$11,800 or 3.6%. The increase suggests that home values in the Tallahassee area continue

Tallahassee MSA SFR Sales				
	Apr-25	Apr-26	Chg	%Chg
Median Price	\$ 329.0	\$ 340.8	\$ 11.8	3.6%
Transactions	329	340	11	3.3%
YTD	\$ 330.0	\$ 335.0	\$ 5.0	1.5%
Transactions	1,043	1,109	66	6.3%

to appreciate, although at a moderate pace that is more consistent with a stabilizing market than the rapid price growth experienced during the pandemic-era housing boom.

Sales activity also improved during the month.

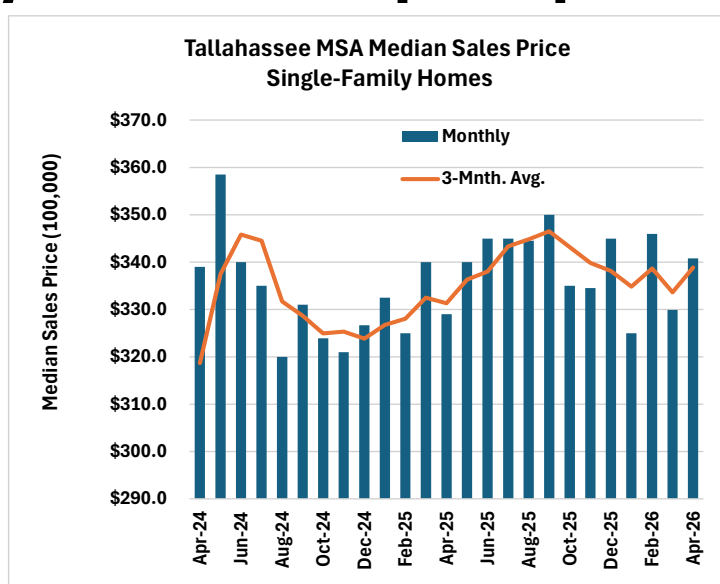
Total transactions increased from 329 homes sold in April 2025 to 340 in April 2026, an increase of 11 sales or 3.3%.

The rise in transactions indicates that buyer demand remained strong enough to support increased market activity despite higher mortgage rates and elevated home prices.

Year-to-date figures present a somewhat different picture. While overall sales volume is stronger, median prices have softened slightly. Through the first four months of 2026, the median sales price stood at \$330,000, compared with \$335,000 during the same period in 2025, a decline of \$5,000 or 1.5%. The decrease suggests that while April was a strong pricing month, lower-priced sales earlier in the year may have pulled down the cumulative median.

Meanwhile, year-to-date transactions rose significantly from 1,043 sales in 2025 to 1,109 sales in 2026, an increase of 66 homes or 6.3%.

This stronger growth in sales volume indicates a healthier level of market participation and suggests that buyers remain active in the Tallahassee



market despite economic uncertainties.

Overall, April's data show a housing market characterized by modest price appreciation and increasing sales activity, while year-to-date figures point to stronger demand but slightly lower average pricing than a year ago.

April Airport Traffic Down 8.5%

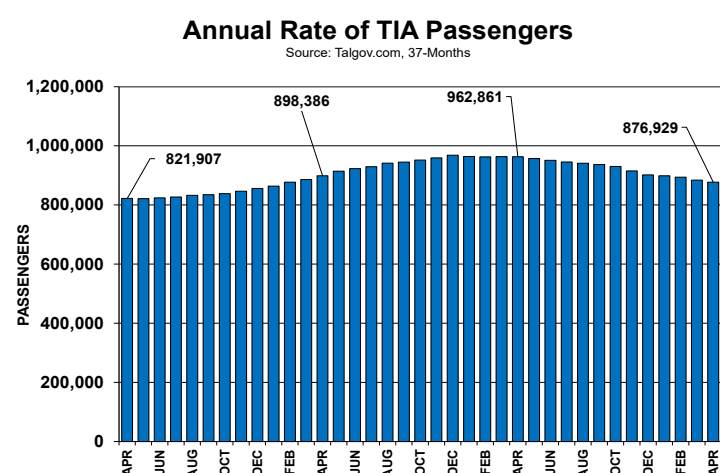
The latest information from the Tallahassee International Airport shows the April 2026 passenger traffic decreased 8.5% when compared to traffic one year ago. The number of passengers was down 6,793 from the 79,895 reported during April 2025 to 73,102 in April 2026.

Relative to 2025, the Passenger Traffic Report

April Passenger Traffic Report			
	Apr-25	Apr-26	%Chg
Delta Group	36,207	37,110	2.5%
American	37,207	35,992	-3.3%
Silver Airways	6,481	-	-
Totals	79,895	73,102	-8.5%

shows year-over-year passenger counts in April were down 3.3% for American Airlines and up 2.5% 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 April over the last four years. The annual rate of passengers at TIA in April 2026 – 876,929 – is down 8.92% when compared to one year ago (962,861). The annualized number of passengers is calculated by summing the previous 12 months of traffic.



The Latest on Jobs, Wages & Housing

By Staff

Provided below are the latest numbers on the local economy.

Employment & Labor Market

- Employment in the Tallahassee metro area: 203,700 jobs in Q1 2026, down 0.1% from the prior quarter, but up 0.1% from a year earlier (about 200 more jobs than Q1 2025). Private sector employment increased by 800 jobs compared to Q1 2025, while public sector employment decreased by 600 jobs, resulting in a net increase of approximately 200 jobs year-over-year.

- Unemployment claims: 500 initial claims in Q1 2026, up 11.9% from the prior quarter and up 4.2% from a year ago. Claims were also far below the long-run local norm (about 74% below the 10-year Q1 average).

- Unemployment rate: 4.9% average for January-March 2026, down 0.1 percentage points from Q4 2025 and up 1.2 points from a year earlier; the quarterly average was lower than the prior quarter for the first time since

Q4 2024.

- Labor force (people working or looking for work): 208,985 for Q1 2026, up 0.3% from the prior quarter (+727), and up 0.3% from a year earlier (+677).

Wages & Housing Market

- Average weekly wage: \$1,172 in Q3 2025, down 0.6% quarter-to-quarter (-\$7), but up 2.6% from a year earlier (+\$30). This series has shown frequent quarter-to-quarter increases over the past several years.

- Single-family home prices: median sales price was \$335,000 in Q4 2025, down 2.9% from the prior quarter and up 3.1% from a year earlier.

- New single-family permits: 123 permits in Q1 2026, up 19.4% from the prior quarter and down 14.0% from a year earlier; also below the 10-year Q1 average (171).

- Mortgage foreclosures: 82 in Q1 2026, 10 fewer than in the prior quarter but 28 more than a year earlier.

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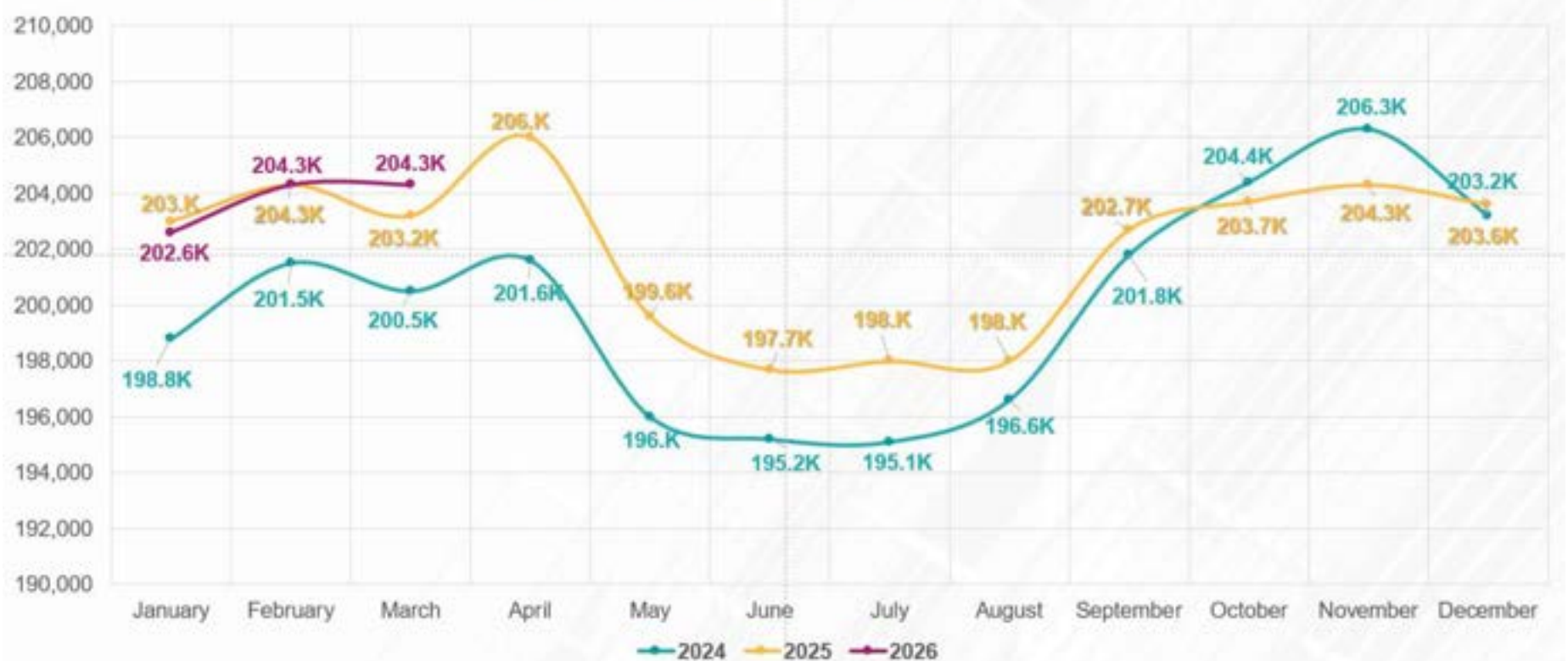
June 2026 Edition

Quarterly Economic Dashboard (QED)



Indicator* – Most Recent Quarter	Since Prior Quarter	Year Ago Quarter	What Else?
EMPLOYMENT 203,700 Q1 2026	-0.1% Down 200 from Q4 2025	+0.1% Up 200 from Q1 2025	Private sector employment in Q1 2026 increased by 800 compared to Q1 2025, while public sector employment decreased by 600.
UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS 500 Q1 2026	+11.9% 53 more than in Q4 2025	+4.2% 20 more than in Q1 2025	Initial Claims for Unemployment Compensation were 74% less than the 10-year Q1 average of 1,894 during 2016-2025.
NEW SINGLE-FAMILY CONSTRUCTION PERMITS 123 Q1 2026	+19.4% 20 more than in Q4 2025	-14.0% 20 fewer than in Q1 2025	Permits totaled 123 in Leon County (City of Tallahassee, 73; Unincorporated Leon Co., 50), 28% lower than the 10-year Q1 average of 171 permits during 2016-2025.
MEDIAN SINGLE-FAMILY HOME SALES PRICE \$335,000 Q4 2025	-2.9% Down \$10K from Q3 2025	+3.1% Up \$10K from Q4 2024	Median Sales Price decreased from the prior quarter for the first time since Q4 2024, though the 842 closed sales in Q4 2025 were 3.2% more than the 826 closed sales in Q4 2024.
TOURIST TAX RECEIPTS \$2.62 M Q4 2025	+7.4% Up \$180K from Q3 2025	-11.4% Down \$337K from Q4 2024	Receipts for Q4 were higher than Q3 in 20 of the past 21 years. Receipts in Q4 were 13% higher than the 5-year Q4 average of \$2.30M during 2020-2024.
TALLAHASSEE PASSENGERS 201,466 Q1 2026	-9.6% 21,328 fewer than in Q4 2025	-8.0% 17,631 fewer than in Q1 2025	TLH Passengers were 11% higher than the 10-year Q1 average of 181,359 during 2016-2025.
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE 4.9% Q1 2026	-0.1 pts. Down from 5.0% in Q4 2025	+1.2 pts. Up from 3.7% in Q1 2025	Q1 2026 was the first time since Q4 2024 that the quarterly average Unemployment Rate decreased from the prior quarter.
AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE \$1,172 Q3 2025	-0.6% \$7 less than in Q2 2025	+2.6% \$30 more than in Q3 2024	Average Weekly Wage had quarter-to-quarter increases in 12 of the past 20 quarters.
MORTGAGE FORECLOSURES 82 Q1 2026	-10.9% 10 fewer than in Q4 2025	+51.9% 28 more than in Q1 2025	Foreclosures in Leon Co. in Q1 2026 were 4% lower than the 10-year Q1 average of 86 during 2016-2025.
OFFICE VACANCY RATE 5.1% Q1 2026	-0.1 pts. Down from 5.2% in Q4 2025	+0.3 pts. Up from 4.8% in Q1 2025	Office Vacancy has been under 6% every quarter since Q3 2021.
INDUSTRIAL VACANCY RATE 4.2% Q1 2026	+0.4 pts. Up from 3.8% in Q4 2025	+1.3 pts. Up from 2.5% in Q1 2025	Q1 2026 was the first time since Q4 2017 that Industrial Vacancy exceeded 4%.
LABOR FORCE 208,985 Q1 2026	+0.3% Up 727 from Q4 2025	+0.3% Up 677 from Q1 2025	Q1 2026 was the third consecutive quarter with quarter-to-quarter growth in the Labor Force. Statewide Labor Force year-over-year growth was just 0.1% in Q1 2026.
TAXABLE SALES \$1.58 B Q4 2025	-4.2% Down \$69.9M from Q3 2025	-9.1% Down \$159M from Q4 2024	Consumer nondurables accounted for 32% of taxable sales in Q4; tourism and recreation, 24%; autos & accessories, 20%; business investment, 12%; and other items, 12%.

Tallahassee MSA Employment: 2024, 2025, 2026



Tallahassee-Leon County MSA Gross Domestic Product

According to the BEA, Real (inflation-adjusted) Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the Tallahassee-Leon County MSA reached \$21.3 billion in 2024, an increase of 4.3 percent from \$20.4 billion in 2023. By comparison, Florida's Real GDP grew by 3.3 percent, while U.S. Real GDP increased by 2.8 percent over the same period. This marks the first time since 2007 that the Tallahassee-Leon County region's GDP rate exceeded both state and national growth in the same year.

GDP is one of the clearest indicators of overall economic activity and measures the total value of goods and services produced within a region. Real GDP adjusts for inflation, providing a more accurate measure of economic expansion and long-term growth trends. Beyond year-over-year gains, the region's economic growth has remained strong in recent years, with Real GDP increasing 9.3 percent from 2022 to 2024 and 15.9 percent since 2021, reflecting sustained post-pandemic recovery and economic expansion.

The newly released GDP data further reinforces the region's continued economic momentum and competitiveness. In Area Development's 2025 Leading Metro Locations report, Tallahassee-Leon County ranked 16th overall nationally, second in the South Atlantic Region, and fifth among medium-sized metros with populations between 200,000 and 500,000. Additionally, the region ranked 19th out of 411 metro areas for Prime Workforce performance, a measure evaluating workforce competitiveness, growth, and wage gains. In 2025, the Tallahassee-Leon County metropolitan area added approximately 2,100 jobs, with approximately one-third of workers employed in the region commuting from surrounding counties, underscoring Tallahassee-Leon County's role as a major regional employment hub.

Local Sports

FSU Comeback Falls Short in Regional Final

By FSU News

The No. 10-seed Florida State baseball team's season came to an end with a 5-4 loss to St. John's in the regional final of the 2026 NCAA Tallahassee Regional on Monday afternoon at Dick Howser Stadium.

FSU scored two runs in the ninth inning but could not complete the rally and force a winner-take-all final game of the regional.

The Seminoles conclude the 2026 season with a 40-19 record, including 29-6 at home. Florida State reached the 40-win mark for the third consecutive year under fourth-year head coach Link Jarrett after a four-year gap without 40 wins from 2020-23. Finishing third in the ACC, the team was 19-11 with eight series wins, both the best totals since 2014 outside of the extended 2021 season. FSU's eight ACC series wins included three sweeps, while four of the 10 series came against top-12 nationally-ranked opponents, three of them on the road.

Florida State made its 62nd NCAA appearance, second-most all-time, and hosted an NCAA Regional for the 38th time, the most in the country. FSU was one of three teams to host a regional each of the last three years. The Seminoles are 213-138 all-time in NCAA play, with a 160-65 record in regionals. The 213 postseason wins are No. 2 nationally.

Senior first baseman Ben Barrett, junior left-hander Trey Beard, junior third baseman Cal Fisher, junior right-hander Brodie Purcell and sophomore right fielder Brody DeLamielleure all

were named to the Tallahassee Region All-Regional Team.

In the four-game regional, Fisher hit .538 with seven hits, three home runs and four RBI, all team-high totals. Barrett hit .353 with six hits, two doubles and a 10th-inning home run in Sunday night's win. DeLamielleure also had six hits with two RBI and a .333 average. Beard threw 4.0 innings in relief on Sunday morning in an elimination-game win, allowing no runs on one hit with nine strikeouts and a walk. Purcell earned both wins on the mound in his two relief appearances and did not allow a run in 4.1 innings on one hit with eight strikeouts and one walk.

Monday afternoon against the Red Storm (36-24), FSU took a 1-0 lead in the third inning and led 2-0 in the top of the fifth, but SJU answered with four in the fifth and one in the sixth to take a 5-2 lead. A two-run home run in the ninth cut the deficit to one, but it was not enough.

Fisher hit two home runs, in the third and ninth innings. He had three RBI and two runs scored on two hits. DeLamielleure had a game-high three hits with an RBI and Barrett notched a pair of hits.

Redshirt sophomore left-hander Payton Manca got the start and did not allow a run in a season-high-tying 3.0 innings. He struck out three with two walks and one hit while throwing 56 pitches, three shy of tying his career high. Junior righty John Abraham suffered the loss to fall to 1-3 in 2026.

FSU scored its four runs on nine hits with eight runners left on base. Saint John's five runs came on three hits with



six runners stranded. Both teams committed an error.

A pick-off caught stealing help Manca to a scoreless first inning, and he followed with a trio of flyouts in the second.

Fisher gave Florida State a 1-0 lead in the third inning with his solo home run to right field. Manca had a 1-2-3 bottom half with two strikeouts.

Abraham relieved Manca with a runner on in the fourth. A walk put two aboard, but Abraham got the next three outs to keep the 1-0 advantage.

The Seminoles made it 2-0 in the fifth with a two-out single by DeLamielleure. The base hit to center scored freshman left fielder John Stuetzer, who reached on a fielder's choice, stole second and took third on an error.

St. John's took the lead in the fifth on a grand slam to make it 4-2. The Red Storm made it 5-2 in the sixth with an unearned run.

Two reached for FSU in the seventh, but a groundout ended the threat. Senior right-hander Gabe Nard entered the game in the seventh with two on and two out and got a flyout to end the inning. He retired the side in order in the eighth with two strikeouts.

In the ninth, Fisher's two-run home run to right field made it a 5-4 ballgame, scoring sophomore shortstop Gabe Fraser. A walk put the tying run on with two outs, but a strikeout ended the game.

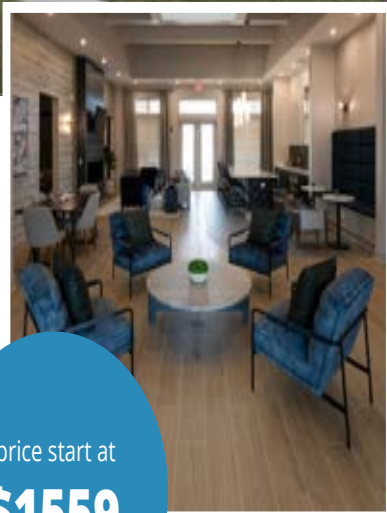
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Local Sports

Leon County High School Final Baseball Rankings

By Robert Stewart

As the high school baseball season came to an end on May 20th, Tallahassee Reports is highlighting the final ranking of the ten Leon County teams that competed this year. Below is a list of all ten teams with stats found off of MaxPreps as well as an overview of the top three best ranked teams in Leon County at the end of the season.

Lincoln

Lincoln's 2026 baseball season was defined by early inconsistency, steady growth, and a FHSAA 5A state title that ultimately overshadowed everything that came before it.

The team opened with a dominant 14-0 win over Wakulla but quickly hit a rough stretch, dropping several close games to Arnold, Bishop Snyder, and Clay. Throughout February and early March, Lincoln showed flashes of potential but struggled with consistency, especially against strong programs like South Walton, St. Johns Country Day, and Trinity Christian Academy.

Even during that uneven start, Lincoln showed resilience. Wins over Leon, Bishop Kenny (5-2), St. Augustine (7-2), and North Marion (5-0) proved the team could respond quickly after setbacks. That pattern—bouncing back after losses—became a defining trait of their season.

By late March and April, Lincoln began to stabilize, picking up key wins over Pensacola Catholic, Gulf Breeze, and Bartram Trail while also battling through tight losses, including an extra-inning 8-7 defeat to Buchholz.

Those close games helped prepare them for the pressure of postseason baseball.

As the playoffs arrived, Lincoln elevated its play at the right time. A hard-fought postseason stretch included series wins and splits against top competition, with the team showing improved execution in tight situations. Key victories over Mater Academy Charter (7-4) and Winter Springs (5-4) highlighted their ability to perform under pressure. Lincoln also upset in-town rival Chiles in the state tournament series, winning 2-1. They took Game 1 8-3 and Game 3 8-4 after dropping Game 2 1-0.

In the end, Lincoln finished the season as FHSAA 5A state champions, turning an up-and-down regular season into a memorable title run.

Chiles

Chiles finished the 2026 season with a strong regular-season run and a deep playoff push in the FHSAA 5A state tournament highlighted by multiple dominant wins and consistent offense. They picked up key victories over teams like Buchholz (4-3), Oakleaf (4-1), Leon (11-1), and FSUHS (7-4), while also posting several double-digit scoring performances including 16-2 over Choctawhatchee and 17-2 over North Florida Christian.

Against top competition, Chiles had mixed results, dropping close games to Venice (2-0), Sarasota (9-4), and Pace (5-4), but proving competitive throughout the year. In their postseason series against Lincoln in the 5A state tournament, Chiles split the

three-game set, winning Game 2 1-0 after dropping Game 1 8-3 and Game 3 8-4.

Overall, Chiles finished with a season defined by offensive firepower, but inconsistency against elite pitching in key matchups.

St. John Paul II

St. John Paul II finished the 2026 season with a strong overall showing built on dominant wins, high offensive output, and inconsistent results against top-tier competition. They opened the year with a 5-0 win over Maclay and followed with several lopsided victories, including 10-0 over Wewahitchka, 8-2 over Valdosta, and 10-1 in the rematch against Maclay. Throughout the season, St. John Paul II consistently produced big scoring games, highlighted by wins such as 12-2 over North Florida Christian, 11-1 over Rickards, 19-3 over FAMU DRS, and 10-0 over Branford. However, they struggled in several key matchups against stronger opponents, including losses to Florida State University High School (5-1), Port St. Joe (2-0), Valwood (4-0), and Suwannee (16-2).

In late-season series play, St. John Paul II showed some resilience but inconsistency, splitting early postseason series wins over Covenant School of Jacksonville before dropping a series to St. Johns Country Day in the regional final of the FHSAA 1A state tournament, losing Game 1 (5-1) and Game 2 (10-5).

Rank	School	Record	FL Rank
1	Lincoln	20-16	19
2	Chiles	23-7	20
3	JPII	18-10	133
4	FSUHS	15-12	143
5	Maclay	15-8	181
6	NFC	11-15	247
7	Leon	12-14	352
8	Rickards	6-19	499
9	Godby	2-13	600
10	FAMU DRS	3-11	620

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Leon County High School Baseball Leading Hitters

By Robert Stewart

Listed below are the top 10 hitters in Leon County based on batting average. To qualify for the rankings, players were required to have at least 3.1 plate appearances per team games played. All stats were provided by MaxPreps.

Nicky Fiore - Maclay

Nicky Fiore finished the 2026 season as a highly productive hitter, posting 26 hits in 55 at-bats for a .473 batting average across the full schedule.

He got off to a slow start, going hitless in three of his first four games, but quickly broke out with a 2-for-2 performance against Godby that included a double and 3 RBIs. From there, Fiore settled into a consistent offensive rhythm, stacking multiple multi-hit games through February and March while driving in runs throughout the lineup.

His strongest stretch came in mid-to-late March, when he regularly produced extra-

base hits and key run support in wins over teams like Rickards, JCHS, FSUHS, and Rockledge. He also contributed in several high-scoring games, helping power blowout wins where the offense exploded.

While he had occasional quiet outings, Fiore consistently responded quickly after hitless games and avoided extended slumps.

Tucker Poppell - Maclay

Tucker Poppell finished the 2026 season as one of the most productive and consistent hitters in the lineup, posting a .446 batting average (37 hits in 83 at-bats) across 99 plate appearances.

He started the season with steady, modest production before breaking out in mid-March with a dominant stretch of multi-hit games. His biggest offensive surge came in games like TCHS (3/11), Munroe (3/21), and JCHS (3/24), where he combined for a large share of his season production and drove

in key runs during lopsided wins.

Poppell showed strong extra-base ability throughout the year, finishing with 7 doubles and 1 triple, while also consistently driving in runs with 27 RBIs total. He had several standout performances in blowout wins, including a 6-RBI game against TCHS and a 4-RBI effort against Munroe.

While he had a few quieter stretches, Poppell regularly responded after hitless games and maintained a strong overall rhythm at the plate.

Saunders Dinkelman - Chiles

He showed immediate impact early in the season, collecting hits in several of the team's first games, including a key performance against Buchholz (1-for-3 with a double). After a couple of early quiet games, he settled in and became a steady run producer, highlighted by a breakout 4-RBI, 3-hit performance against Choctawhatchee that included a

Rank	Player	School	Hitting %
1	Nicky Fiore	Maclay	0.489
2	Tucker Poppell	Maclay	0.446
3	Saunders Dinkelman	Chiles	0.412
4	Jason Cantella	JPII	0.402
5	Evans Franco	Leon	0.390
6	Preston Ritchie	Chiles	0.388
7	Landon Barineau	Maclay	0.386
8	Wyatt Cantella	JPII	0.379
9	Beau Beshears	Maclay	0.372
10	Wyatt Visnovske	JPII	0.364

home run and a triple.

Dinkelman's production stayed strong throughout March, where he regularly delivered multi-hit games and extra-base power, including home runs against Choctawhatchee, Suwannee, Lakeside School, Wakulla, and Ponte Vedra. He also had multiple three-hit games and several multi-RBI performances in wins over top regional opponents.

One of his most dominant

stretches came in mid-March through early April, where he consistently drove in runs and provided power in big wins like 15-0 against Lakeside School and 17-2 against North Florida Christian.

While he had a few hitless games scattered throughout the season, he repeatedly bounced back quickly and remained a reliable offensive threat.



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