TALLAHASSEE REPORTS

Vol. 14 No. 21 | November 7, 2026 | TallahasseeReports.com

The Reports

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Progressives Secure Tallahassee City Commission Majority

By Steve Stewart



Progressive candidates scored two victories in Tuesday's city elections, giving the progressive bloc a 3-2 majority on the Tallahassee City Commission and potentially shifting the direction of city government on issues ranging from development and affordable housing to utility rates and city spending.

Mayor Jeremy Matlow defeated former state Sen. Loranne Ausley in a close contest, receiving 37,063 votes (50.94%) to Ausley's 35,698 votes (49.06%). Matlow's margin of victory was 1,365 votes out of 72,761 cast.

In the City Commission Seat 3 race, progressive candidate P.J. Perez defeated Tom Derzypolski by a substantial margin, receiving 44,427 votes (64.21%) compared to Derzypolski's 24,764 votes (35.79%).

However, progressive candidate Dot Inman-Johnson was unsuccessful in her attempt to unseat incumbent Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox in Seat 5. Williams-Cox received 35,638 votes (51.70%) compared to Inman-Johnson's 33,292 votes (48.30%), a margin of 2,346 votes.

With all 80 precincts reporting, the results establish a progressive majority consisting of Matlow, Perez and Commissioner Jack Porter. Williams-Cox and Commissioner Curtis Richardson will represent the minority bloc.

The new alignment could have significant implications for city policies and spending priorities.

During the campaign, progressive candidates emphasized affordable housing,

PROGRESSIVES, Page A3

Donalds Fends Off Jolly to Take Governor's Race

By Gray Rohrer
The News Service of Florida



Byron Donalds, a three-term Republican congressman from Naples, held off a challenge from Democratic nominee David Jolly to take the Florida governor's race, results from the state Division of Elections showed late Tuesday evening.

In doing so he is slated to become the first Black governor of Florida.

According to state election returns late Tuesday evening, Donalds had 50.1 percent of the vote, to Jolly's 48.7 percent.

"As your Governor, I will give you everything I have," Donalds posted on X. "We are going to make life in Florida more affordable. We are going to keep our streets safe. We are going to invest in our young people so that they can attain the Florida Dream that all of us love so dearly."

Jolly is a former U.S. House member who was a Republican when he served in Congress from 2014-2017. He left the party when President Donald Trump rose to prominence in the GOP, and later became a Democrat.

Campaigning on economic issues and linking Trump's policies and the higher cost of living to Donalds, whom Trump endorsed, Jolly also tried to reach out to disaffected Republican voters.

But his push was unable to overcome Donalds' massive financial advantage, where he spent $165.9 million to Jolly's $24.7 million, according to campaign finance records showing spending through Oct 29. The Republican Party of Florida's turnout machine also helped put Donalds on top, with Republicans swarming the polls on Election Day, after Democrats had outperformed early vote totals from the 2024 elections.

Donalds in his victory speech said he had spoken to Jolly, who had conceded.

During the campaign, Donalds pushed back on Jolly's message to voters, claiming his plans for Florida's property insurance market, which entailed the state taking on the windstorm risk portion of a homeowner policy, would amount to a "hurricane tax" that would push premiums higher.

Donalds also attacked Jolly, seen as a moderate Democrat, as a "Trojan horse," for progressive and socialist policies, citing his support for the

DONALDS, Page A6

Leon Voters Approve Four of Five County Charter Amendments

By Steve Stewart

Leon County voters approved four of five proposed charter amendments in Tuesday's general election, rejecting a measure that would have given county ordinances precedence over conflicting municipal ordinances in certain circumstances. The approved amendments address street naming, human dignity, outdated statutory references and the county's commitment to historically underserved populations.

Ordinance Amendment Rejected by Voters

Leon County voters rejected a proposed charter amendment that would have allowed county ordinances to prevail over conflicting municipal ordinances in certain circumstances. The measure was opposed by 59,753 voters (53.61%), while 51,713 (46.39%) supported it.

The proposal would have taken effect January 1, 2027, and permitted county ordinances to override conflicting city ordinances when allowed by state law. It also would have authorized the county to establish regulations and standards affecting residents in both incorporated and unincorporated areas.

The defeat preserves the existing relationship between county and municipal ordinances and limits the county's ability to establish uniform regulations within city boundaries.

Street Naming Amendment Wins Approval

AMENDMENTS, Page A5

Leon County Voters Approve Two School Tax Referendums

By Steve Stewart

Leon County voters approved two school funding referendums Tuesday, November 3, extending an existing half-cent sales tax and authorizing a new property tax levy to support teacher compensation, school safety and educational programs.

According to unofficial results from the Leon County Supervisor of Elections, both measures received more than 66% support, with all 134 precincts reporting.

Election Night Reporting

The first referendum, which extends the existing half-cent sales surtax for another 15 years, passed with 79,834 votes (67.79%)

LCS, Page A5

Leon County Voters Reject Consolidation Plan

Leon County voters rejected a proposal Tuesday to pursue consolidation of Tallahassee and Leon County governments, marking the fifth time voters have opposed efforts to merge the two governments.

The nonbinding straw ballot failed with 68,627 voters (60.51%) opposed and 44,792 (39.49%) in favor.

The proposal asked whether the county should develop a plan to combine city and county governments under Leon County's governmental structure and leadership.

Any consolidation would require approval by the Florida Legislature and a subsequent voter referendum.

Voters previously rejected consolidation proposals in 1971, 1973, 1976 and 1992. The 1992 proposal failed by a 60% to 40% margin, nearly identical to Tuesday's result. Historical opposition has centered on concerns about rural representation, taxation, law enforcement and the distribution of government services.

Supporters have argued consolidation could reduce duplication and improve government efficiency.

The latest rejection comes despite existing cooperation between city and county governments through shared planning, economic development, emergency dispatch and Blueprint programs. Unlike previous binding consolidation referendums, Tuesday's advisory vote did not propose a specific consolidation charter.

INSIDE



Maclay's girls team secured its state tournament berth with a second-place finish at the Class 1A Region. B3

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Local News

FSU Opens $137.5 Million Health Research Building, Projects $217 Million Annual Economic Impact

By FSUNews

Florida State University officially unveiled its new $137.5 million Health Research and Collaboration Building on October 30, marking a major step in the university's effort to expand medical research, healthcare services and economic development in Tallahassee.

The four-story, 137,000-square-foot facility, located on the Tallahassee Memorial Hospital campus, is expected to accommodate more than 150 researchers, attract $40 million annually in research grants and support more than 350 permanent jobs.

FSU officials project the facility will generate more than $217 million in annual economic impact.

During Friday's ribbon-cutting ceremony, university officials announced the building would be named the Wilton Simpson FSU Health Research and Collaboration Building, honoring Florida's agriculture commissioner.

Simpson, who served as Florida Senate president in 2022, helped secure $125 million in construction funding and an additional $20 million in recurring funding for FSU's expanding healthcare initiative.

The building combines patient care, medical education and advanced research.

The first floor houses the FSU Family Medicine Residency practice, which serves more than 12,000 patients annually. The second floor features medical simulation facilities, including operating rooms, hospital rooms and residential settings where healthcare professionals can practice clinical procedures.

The third and fourth floors contain research laboratories equipped for tissue culture, gene editing, biobanking and other biomedical investigations.

FSU President Richard McCullough said the investment will help expand specialized healthcare services that currently require North Florida residents to travel outside the region.

"What I appreciate most about Wilton Simpson is that he saw what this could mean for the people of Florida," McCullough said.

The opening follows the September 30 announcement that FSU and Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare had finalized agreements establishing a long-term academic health system partnership.

Earlier this year, the City of Tallahassee transferred hospital property and assets to FSU as part of the broader initiative. The transfer generated opposition from some residents and elected officials.



Under the partnership, TMH will continue managing hospital operations while FSU expands research, medical education and specialized services.

The university's healthcare expansion also includes a planned hospital in Panama City Beach, scheduled to open in 2028.

The Tallahassee facility represents a significant investment in the region's healthcare infrastructure, with its projected economic benefits dependent on attracting researchers, securing grants and expanding medical services.

Keith Lawson Services Offering Free HVAC System to Local Homeowner

By Staff

The Tallahassee-based company announced its "KLS Gives Back" initiative to assist a homeowner facing financial hardship and the expense of replacing an HVAC system.

"Replacing an air conditioning and heating system can be a difficult expense for a family already trying to make ends meet," said Keith Lawson II of Keith Lawson Services. "We work in our neighbors' homes every day, and we want to help take that worry off one family's shoulders."

Eligible homeowners must reside in Leon, Gadsden, Jefferson or Wakulla counties in Florida, or Thomas, Grady or Decatur counties in Georgia.

Residents, churches, neighborhood associations and community organizations can submit nominations explaining why a homeowner needs assistance.

Company representatives will review the submissions and select three finalists for home visits. The recipient will be chosen based on the merits of the nomination and whether the home can accommodate the available equipment.

The giveaway includes a new HVAC unit ranging from 1.5 to 5 tons, along with the company's standard installation warranty.

The recipient is expected to be announced during Thanksgiving week, with installation scheduled afterward.

Nominees must own their homes, authorize installation and agree to an inspection. The selected homeowner must also consent to photographs and videos of the installation for promotional purposes.

Founded in 1980, Keith Lawson Services is a family-owned business providing heating, cooling and plumbing services throughout North Florida and South Georgia.

There is no purchase necessary to participate.

Nominations can be submitted through November 9 at www.keithlawson.com/giveaway, where complete eligibility requirements are available.

Ghazvini Family Launches $500,000 Foundation to Help Victims of Violence and Abuse

By Staff

The Ghazvini Family Foundation announced on Friday, October 23, they will partner with nonprofit organizations, victim advocates, and service providers throughout North Florida to help victims overcome financial insecurity, housing challenges, and other barriers to recovery.

The new charitable initiative will focus on assisting women and children across North Florida.The Ghazvini family, which has been involved in the Tallahassee community for more than four decades, has announced the creation of a charitable foundation backed by an initial $500,000 commitment to support women and children affected by violence, abuse, and trauma.

"The Ghazvini Family Foundation reflects our family's belief that every person deserves to feel safe, supported, and empowered to build a better future," said Mina Ghazvini, the 90-year-old matriarch of the Ghazvini family.

"We believe we have a responsibility to stand alongside those who need support, invest in organizations doing this important work, and help create pathways toward healing, stability, and hope."

A major focus of the initiative will be addressing domestic violence, which often leaves victims facing difficult financial and personal circumstances.

According to statistics cited in the announcement from the National Domestic Violence Hotline, nearly five people die from domestic violence each day in the United States, most of them women.

The organization also reports that approximately 1.2 million people contact its hotline annually seeking assistance. An estimated 25% of women and 17% of men experience some form of domestic violence during their lifetimes.

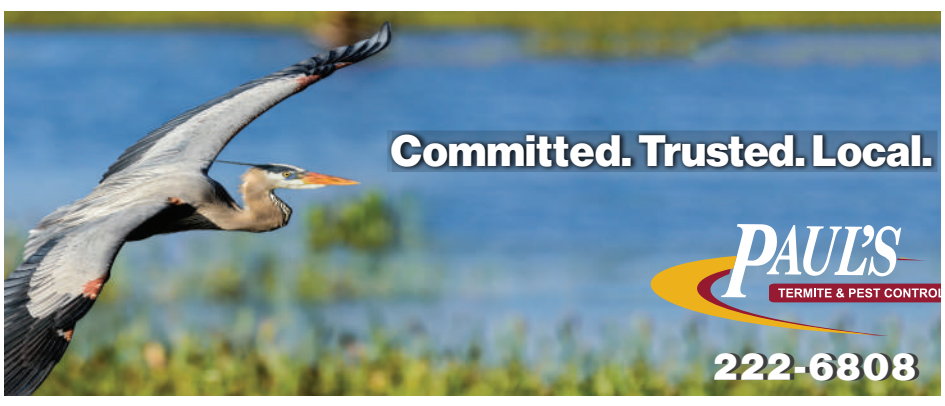
Elizabeth Ellis, board chair of Tallahassee-based Refuge House, emphasized that victims frequently face obstacles beyond the immediate threat of violence.

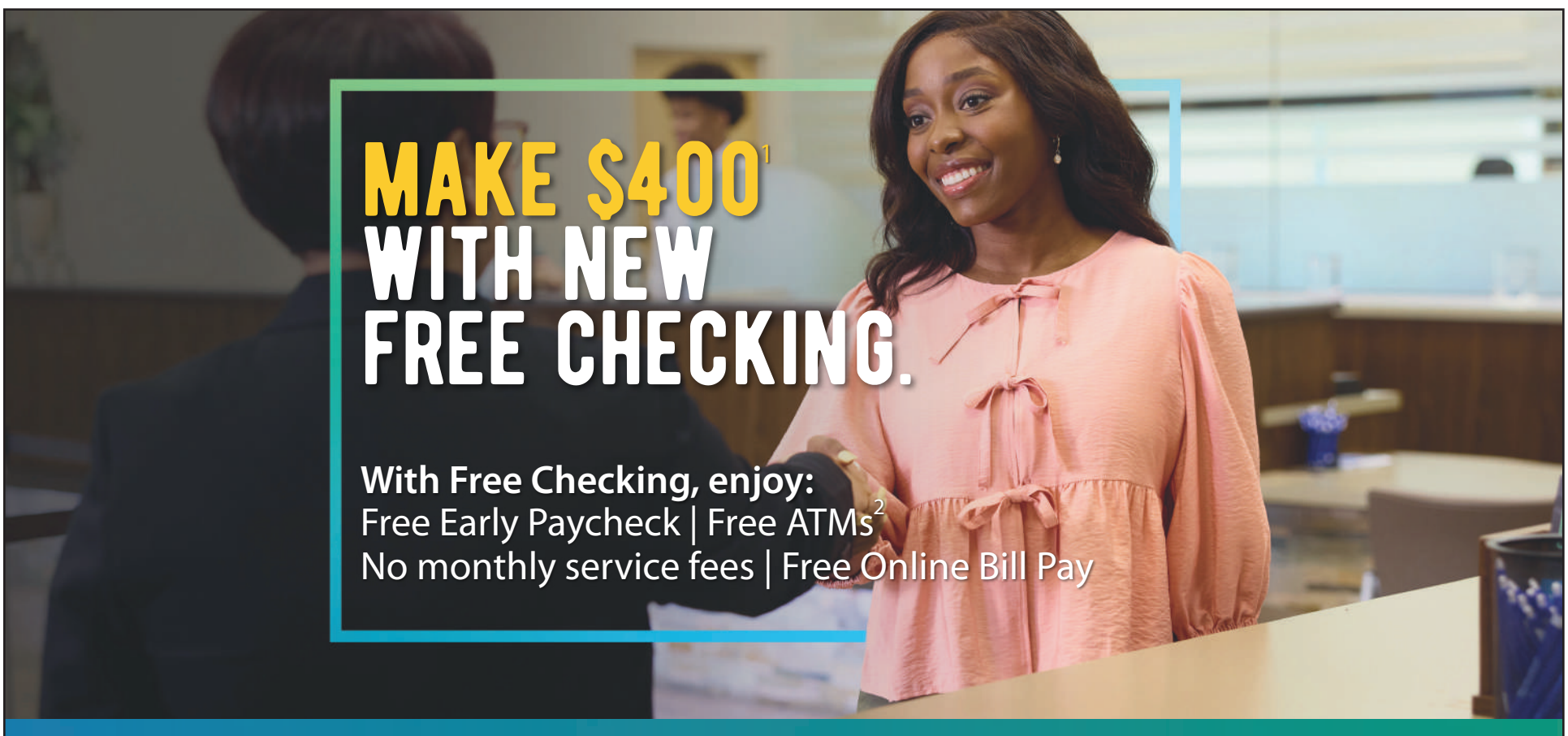
"Domestic violence is not simply a private issue. It is a community issue that requires all of us to be part of the solution," Ellis said.

"Too often, survivors face difficult choices between their personal safety and their financial security, housing, or family stability."

The announcement did not identify specific grant recipients, funding allocations, or a timetable for distributing the initial $500,000 commitment.

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Local News

Blueprint Secures $23.5 Million Federal Grant for Tharpe Street Improvements

By Steve Stewart

Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency has secured a $23.5 million federal grant to fund major improvements along Tharpe Street, including new sidewalks, turn lanes, drainage upgrades and technology designed to improve traffic safety.

The funding, recently announced by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), comes through the federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program. The award will allow Blueprint to move forward with improvements approximately seven years earlier than originally scheduled.

The grant builds on an initial $9 million local investment, bringing the combined funding commitment to $32.5 million.

"This project delivers what our residents have asked for – a safer Tharpe Street," said Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency Board Chair and Tallahassee Mayor Pro Tem Curtis Richardson. "With an initial investment of $9 million, Blueprint staff leveraged an additional $23.5 million in federal funding to deliver this critical project for our community."

The federal funding will support design and construction of the first segment of the Northwest Connector Corridor project, extending from Ocala Road to Mission Road.

Planned improvements include sidewalks along portions of Tharpe Street that currently lack pedestrian facilities, additional turn lanes to reduce traffic backups and replacement of existing open drainage ditches with an underground piped system.

The full Northwest Connector Corridor project covers approximately 2.6 miles of Tharpe Street, from Ocala Road to Capital Circle Northwest. The improvements are also intended to enhance access to Tower Road Park and Stoneler Road County Park.

An important component of the grant application was the inclusion of a Real-Time Automated Incident Detection, Notification and Rapid Response System.

The proposed technology will use sensors along Tharpe Street and at selected nearby intersections to automatically detect crashes and send alerts to the City of Tallahassee's Regional Traffic Management Center.

The system is intended to improve emergency response times and traffic management following accidents. The City of Tallahassee will implement the intersection safety component of the project.

The $23.5 million award is the third major federal safety grant secured for local transportation improvements in recent years.

In December 2025, the same federal program awarded $16.8 million for improvements along North Monroe Street. In 2024, the program provided $9.6 million for the Jake Gaither pedestrian safety project.

Together, the three awards total approximately $49.9 million in federal transportation safety funding for the Tallahassee area.

Blueprint officials said the agency's strategy of leveraging federal funding has allowed major infrastructure projects to advance without changing the project priorities previously approved by the Intergovernmental Agency Board.

Blueprint will work with USDOT over the coming months to finalize the grant agreement.

Construction on the Tharpe Street improvements is currently anticipated to begin in 2030.

Blueprint is a joint City of Tallahassee-Leon County agency responsible for implementing infrastructure projects funded through the local infrastructure sales tax and other funding sources.

California Climate Group Gives Matlow PAC $200,000 Days Before Election

By Steve Stewart

Tallahassee mayoral candidate Jeremy Matlow's political committee, Friends of Jeremy Matlow, has received a $200,000 contribution from the California-based Green Advocacy Project, according to newly reported campaign finance information.

The contribution, disclosed less than a week before the November 3 election, brings renewed attention to the role of out-of-state environmental organizations in Tallahassee politics and their interest in influencing the future of the city's electric utility.

With only days remaining before voters go to the polls, the late disclosure leaves limited opportunity for news organizations to investigate the contribution and for voters to evaluate the donor's policy objectives.

However, without evidence of the donor's or campaign's intentions, it cannot be established that the contribution was deliberately timed to avoid press coverage.

Who Is the Green Advocacy Project?

The Green Advocacy Project, based in Palo Alto, California, was founded in 2017 by progressive political activist Michael Kieschnick, who also founded CREDO Mobile.

The organization supports political efforts aimed at reducing dependence on fossil fuels and accelerating the transition to renewable energy. Its leadership includes political operatives associated with national progressive campaigns, including Bernie Sanders' 2016 presidential campaign.

This is not the organization's first involvement in Tallahassee elections.

In 2024, the Green Advocacy Project contributed $150,000 to Matlow's One Tallahassee political committee, which supported progressive candidates for City Commission. The organization has also contributed $200,000 to Lead Locally PAC between 2024 and 2026.

Why Is California Interested in Tallahassee?

One explanation involves Tallahassee's city-owned electric utility.

Unlike communities served by investor-owned utilities, Tallahassee's elected City Commission has significant authority over electricity generation, energy investments and utility policies.

The city's electric generation system relies heavily on natural gas, making Tallahassee an attractive target for environmental organizations seeking to accelerate the transition to renewable energy.

In September, California-based Lead Locally endorsed Matlow and City Commission candidates Dot Inman-Johnson and P.J. Perez. The organization has specifically advocated a rapid transition to clean energy in Tallahassee.

Matlow has also received the endorsement of the Jane Fonda Climate PAC, another national organization supporting candidates committed to reducing fossil fuel use.

Matlow's own voting record reflects his willingness to challenge existing natural gas commitments.

In February 2024, Matlow and Commissioner Jack Porter opposed extending a natural gas pipeline capacity agreement after utility officials warned that the capacity would be needed to meet customer demand.

Matlow instead sought a review of alternatives to natural gas. The proposed alternative failed, and the contract extension passed 3-2.

The disagreement highlights a potentially significant financial issue for Tallahassee residents.

Matlow has argued that transitioning to renewable energy could lower utility bills. Supporters of renewable energy also point to reduced fuel expenses and the potential for long-term savings.

However, accelerating that transition could require substantial investments in generation, battery storage and backup capacity. The impact on customer rates would depend on the cost and timing of those investments.

Progressives Secure Majority on Tallahassee City Commission

PROGRESSIVES, From Front Page

government accountability, environmental protection and changes to the city's approach to growth and development.

With three votes, the progressive majority could advance policies that previously faced resistance, including additional development regulations, changes to utility policies and greater scrutiny of city spending and economic development incentives.

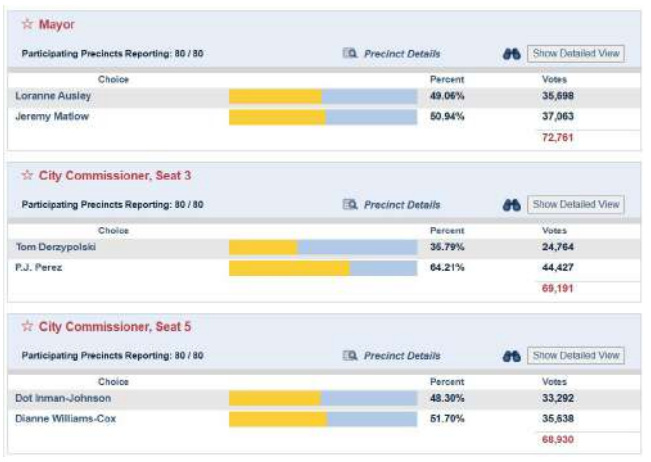
The majority could also influence appointments to city advisory boards and the selection of leadership positions, while potentially revisiting decisions made by previous commissions.

One area to watch will be the city's relationship with developers. Matlow and Porter have frequently challenged development proposals and policies they contend favor developers over existing neighborhoods. Perez's election provides another potential vote for that approach.

Utility rates and the city's electric utility investments could also become contentious as commissioners consider future energy projects and their financial impact on customers.

However, campaign promises will now face the practical challenges of governing, including budget limitations, existing contractual obligations and competing demands for city services.

For Matlow, Porter and Perez, the challenge will be translating their campaign positions into governing decisions while demonstrating that their policies can deliver measurable results for city residents.



Local News Briefs

Tallahassee Housing Authority Employee Pleads Guilty in $378,000 Fraud Case

A Tallahassee woman has pleaded guilty to defrauding the Tallahassee Housing Authority of approximately $378,927, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Federal investigators determined that the woman, identified as Huggins, embezzled funds through 40 separate payments. The guilty plea was reported Monday, November 2.

The case involves a substantial amount of money associated with an agency responsible for providing housing assistance to eligible low-income residents in the Tallahassee area.

The Tallahassee Housing Authority administers federally supported housing programs, making the handling and oversight of agency funds an important issue for taxpayers and residents who depend on housing assistance.

The case raises questions about the financial controls and procedures used to prevent unauthorized payments and identify irregularities.

Federal prosecutors have not yet announced a sentencing outcome in the reporting reviewed. The guilty plea establishes criminal responsibility, while the sentencing process will determine the punishment.

FSU Fires Football Coach Mike Norvell Following 3-5 Start

Florida State University announced Sunday, November 1, that Mike Norvell had been relieved of his duties as head football coach following a disappointing start to the 2026 season.

The decision came after a Halloween home loss to Clemson dropped the Seminoles to 3-5.

FSU President Richard McCullough said the university had decided to change the leadership of the football program and thanked Norvell for his service.

Rick Stockstill, who had been serving as the Seminoles' director of scouting on offense, was named interim head coach for the final four games of the season.

The coaching change creates significant financial questions for the university because of the contract extension Norvell signed following the successful 2023 season.

University officials acknowledged the importance of maintaining stability during the transition while beginning the process of identifying the program's next permanent head coach.

Family Identifies Victim in Fatal Magnolia Drive Shooting

The family of a Tallahassee man who was shot at an apartment complex on Magnolia Drive has confirmed that he died from his injuries.

Zale Baker Jr. was shot Wednesday, October 28, at Magnolia Terrace Apartments in the 500 block of Magnolia Drive. Family members confirmed his death to WCTV on Monday, November 2.

According to the Tallahassee Police Department, officers responding to the incident found Baker suffering from multiple gunshot wounds. He was transported to a local hospital with life-threatening injuries.

Baker died Thursday, October 29, according to his family.

As of the November 2 report, police had not publicly provided additional information about a suspect or the circumstances surrounding the shooting.

The investigation remains an important public safety matter for residents of the surrounding neighborhood.

Chiles High School Teacher Receives $1,500 Classroom Grant

A Chiles High School teacher is among nine educators in North Florida and South Georgia receiving $1,500 classroom grants from Addition Financial Credit Union.

Jennifer Dickerson was recognized Monday or Tuesday as part of the credit union's Addition in Action Grant Program, according to a November 3 report from WCTV.

Dickerson plans to use the funding to purchase scientific calculators and additional instructional materials for hands-on statistics activities.

The grant is intended to help teachers obtain classroom resources that support instruction and student learning.

Other recipients include two teachers at Thomas County Middle School in Georgia, where the funding will support a digital microbiology laboratory and a reading incentive program.

The awards highlight the role of private organizations in supplementing classroom resources at public schools.

For Dickerson's students at Chiles, the additional equipment will provide opportunities to work directly with statistical concepts and classroom exercises.

Tallahassee Police Department Make Quick Arrest in Fatal Shooting

On October 31, at approximately 1:39 a.m., the Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) responded to the Jackson Masonic Lodge in reference to a shooting. When officers arrived on scene, they located one adult male with multiple gunshot wounds. Life-saving measures were immediately attempted, and the victim was transported to a local hospital, but sadly, he succumbed to his injuries.

Through the course of the investigation, detectives with TPD's Violent Crime Unit developed information identifying Deronco V. Parker as the suspect in the shooting. Evidence indicated the shooting occurred after the suspect and victim encountered one another and became involved in a verbal altercation, during which the suspected produced a handgun and shot the victim.

On October 31, 2026, at approximately 10:44 a.m. the suspect was located and taken into custody with the assistance of the United States Marshals Service, TPD's Violent Crime Unit and Career Criminal Unit. He was charged with second degree murder.

Local News

LCS Deputy Superintendent Michelle Gayle Arrested on Charges Related to School Foundation

By Steve Stewart

The Leon County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) arrested Leon County Schools Deputy Superintendent Michelle Gayle, 64, on Thursday, October 29, following an investigation into suspected financial theft involving the Foundation for Leon County Schools.

According to an LCSO press release, investigators determined that Gayle allegedly used her position to obtain improper reimbursements from the nonprofit organization, which raises funds to support Leon County public schools.

The investigation began after Leon County Schools personnel reported suspected financial discrepancies involving the Foundation.

Detectives subsequently identified inconsistencies between information Gayle submitted to the Foundation and the reimbursement payments she received. Investigators confirmed more than $1,200 in allegedly fraudulent reimbursements.

Gayle was charged with grand theft and booked into the Leon County Detention Facility.

The arrest follows an investigation that became public in August when Gayle and Foundation Executive Director Margaret Farris were placed on administrative leave.

Gayle, one of Superintendent Rocky Hanna's highest-ranking administrators, oversees the district's Office of Professional, Intervention and Community Services. Her responsibilities include oversight of the Foundation for Leon County Schools, school choice, community partnerships and several other district functions.

Previous Audit Identified Financial Weaknesses

On August 26, Tallahassee Reports published a follow-up investigation revealing that the Foundation's 2023 independent audit had identified two material weaknesses in its financial controls.

One finding involved inadequate separation of financial responsibilities. Auditors reported that individual employees were responsible for multiple steps in handling financial transactions, including collecting payments, recording deposits and making bank deposits.

Auditors also identified insufficient review procedures for journal entries and credit card transactions.

The second material weakness involved significant accounting adjustments required to bring the Foundation's financial statements into compliance with generally accepted accounting principles.

The auditors warned that the weaknesses increased the risk of financial misstatements or misappropriation of assets. However, the audit did not establish that money had been stolen, and the auditors ultimately issued an unmodified opinion on the corrected financial statements.

At the time of that report, the Foundation's 2024 and 2025 independent audits were not publicly posted. Both are now listed on the Foundation's financial information website.

Foundation Operations Suspended

In September, Superintendent Hanna confirmed that the district had suspended Foundation operations and hired an outside firm to examine spending practices.

The suspension affected fundraising events and the review of teacher grants. Hanna said the district needed a complete accounting of the Foundation's financial activities before operations could resume.

The Foundation, established in 1986, raises money to support Leon County public school students, teachers and educational programs.

Its financial activity has grown significantly in recent years. According to financial records previously reviewed by Tallahassee Reports, the organization reported approximately $1.5 million in revenue during fiscal year 2024.

The arrest raises additional questions about the Foundation's financial oversight, whether the weaknesses identified in earlier audits were corrected, and what steps district leadership and the Foundation's board took to monitor financial transactions.

Gayle is presumed innocent unless proven guilty in court.

Election News Briefs: Williams-Cox, O'Keefe and Minor Win Reelection; Perez Claims City Commission Seat

Williams-Cox Defeats Inman-Johnson, Wins Third Term

Williams-Cox, first elected in 2018 and reelected in 2022, campaigned on her record of supporting economic development, affordable housing initiatives and improvements to city services.

Following her victory, Williams-Cox told WFSU she was grateful for the support of voters.

"I'm feeling honored, I'm feeling blessed that the people have spoken and decided that they want me to continue to serve the community," Williams-Cox said.

The election featured two candidates with significant experience in Tallahassee government. Inman-Johnson previously served as Tallahassee's mayor and returned to local politics advocating changes in city priorities, including greater attention to affordability and economic inequality.

Williams-Cox emphasized expanding the city's housing supply, workforce training and attracting higher-paying jobs.

Despite winning reelection, Williams-Cox will return to a significantly different City Commission. The election of Jeremy Matlow as mayor and PJ Perez to Seat 3 gives the progressive coalition of Matlow, Perez and Commissioner Jack Porter a 3-2 majority.

Williams-Cox previously aligned with Mayor John Dailey and Commissioner Curtis Richardson on numerous policy decisions.

"I'm focused on serving the people, I'm not focused on serving commissioners," Williams-Cox told WFSU.

Her victory preserves an experienced voice on the commission's new minority.

O'Keefe Wins Reelection to County Commission District 5

Leon County Commissioner David O'Keefe won a second term Tuesday, defeating challenger David Hawkins in the District 5 race with approximately 69% of the vote.

O'Keefe, a certified public accountant first elected in 2022, won by approximately 10,000 votes in a district that includes portions of central Tallahassee.

The incumbent campaigned on government accountability, transparency, affordable housing and improvements to neighborhood infrastructure.

Following the election, O'Keefe told WFSU that he believed voters rewarded him for fulfilling commitments made during his first campaign.

"Four years ago, I promised to be the same person, to not be changed by the system, to stick to my values," O'Keefe said.

He pointed to constituent services, sidewalks and neighborhood improvements as examples of his work during his first term.

Campaign finances reflected a significant advantage for the incumbent. According to WFSU, O'Keefe's campaign spent approximately $40,000, compared with about $4,000 spent by Hawkins, a 10-to-1 difference.

O'Keefe's 69% support represented one of the largest margins among competitive local races, trailing only County Commissioner Rick Minor's victory.

Minor Wins Third Term, Cites Infrastructure Priorities

Leon County Commissioner Rick Minor secured a third term Tuesday, defeating challenger C.B. Lorch in the District 3 election with approximately 73% of the vote.

Minor, first elected in 2018, has represented the northwest Leon County district for eight years. His background includes serving as CEO of Second Harvest of the Big Bend and chief of staff in the Tallahassee mayor's office.

During his tenure, Minor has focused on economic development, public safety, environmental protection and infrastructure improvements.

Following his victory, Minor identified ongoing transportation projects as important priorities for his next term.

"We still have work to do on North Monroe," Minor told WFSU, emphasizing the importance of completing improvements already awarded funding.

Two major transportation initiatives will receive continued attention.

In December 2025, the North Monroe Street project received $16.8 million in federal funding. More recently, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced a $23.5 million award for improvements to Tharpe Street between Ocala Road and Mission Road.

The Tharpe Street funding is expected to accelerate improvements involving pedestrian safety, drainage and traffic operations.

Perez Wins Seat 3, Helps Establish New City Commission Majority

PJ Perez defeated business executive Tom Derzypolski Tuesday to win Tallahassee City Commission Seat 3, receiving approximately 64% of the vote.

Perez, a high school teacher and first-time candidate, won by nearly 20,000 votes and will replace Jeremy Matlow, who vacated the seat to run successfully for mayor.

The victory carries significant political implications for Tallahassee government.



Leon County Commissioner David O'Keefe won a second term Tuesday.

Perez campaigned alongside Matlow and Commissioner Jack Porter as part of a progressive coalition advocating changes to city spending, affordability policies, public safety and environmental protection.

With Matlow's mayoral victory, the three commissioners will establish a new 3-2 majority, replacing the governing coalition previously led by Mayor John Dailey.

Perez told WFSU that voters were seeking a different approach to local government.

"People are looking for a change, something different, something more honest and authentic," Perez said.

He identified affordability, public safety, environmental protection and greater attention to neighborhoods in the city's urban core as priorities.

The new majority could affect decisions involving utility rates, development policies, city management and budget priorities.

Perez is scheduled to be sworn into office on November 16 during the City Commission's reorganization meeting.

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Local News

Leon Voters Approve Four of Five County Charter Amendments

AMENDMENTS, From Front Page

Leon County voters approved a charter amendment establishing uniform countywide standards for street naming, renaming and property numbering. The proposal received 71,898 votes (62.94%) in favor and 42,333 (37.06%) against.

The amendment authorizes the county to establish street naming and property numbering standards through county ordinance. Those standards would prevail over conflicting municipal ordinances when permitted by state law.

The stated purpose is to support emergency response needs throughout Leon County by creating consistent addressing standards. The change could affect street naming and addressing decisions within Tallahassee as well as unincorporated areas, reducing potential inconsistencies that could complicate emergency response operations.

Human Dignity Amendment Approved

Leon County voters approved a charter amendment adding language affirming human dignity to the preamble of the county's Home Rule Charter. The proposal received 73,583 votes (65.44%) in favor and 38,863 (34.56%) against.

The amendment recognizes the shared dignity inherent in all residents as an expression of the county's commitment to public affairs. According to the ballot language, the change is intended to preserve the charter's existing framework for local self-governance and citizen empowerment.

Unlike amendments establishing new regulatory authority or administrative procedures, the human dignity amendment primarily changes the charter's introductory statement of principles. It does not expressly establish new enforcement powers, programs or legal remedies.

Outdated References Amendment Receives Strongest Support

Leon County voters overwhelmingly approved a charter amendment addressing outdated statutory references and procedures for future charter amendments. The proposal received 78,807 votes (72.20%) in favor and 30,348 (27.80%) against.

The amendment removes obsolete statutory references related to the establishment of the county charter and establishes additional requirements for considering future charter changes. Under the revised provisions, proposed charter amendments will require public hearings and notice. The Citizen Charter Review Committee must also submit its recommendations at least 150 days before a general election.

The changes provide additional time for county commissioners and residents to review proposed amendments before they appear on the ballot.

Commitment to Underserved Populations Approved

Leon County voters approved a charter amendment establishing a process to examine the effects of historical county policies on underserved and vulnerable populations. The measure received 72,422 votes (64.76%) in favor and 39,405 (35.24%) against.

The amendment requires the county charter to provide for a periodic Community Impact Assessment process, public reporting and Board of County Commissioners review. The assessments will examine adverse community conditions associated with the county's historical laws, policies and practices.

The amendment establishes a formal process for identifying and evaluating those conditions but does not specifically mandate financial compensation, policy changes or other remedies. County commissioners will be responsible for reviewing the assessments and considering whether additional government action is warranted.

Leon County Voters Approve Two School Tax Referendums

LCS, From Front Page

in favor and 37,941 votes (32.21%) opposed.

The sales tax extension will continue funding improvements to school facilities, technology, transportation and safety infrastructure. The ballot language specifies that revenues will be used for expanding, constructing and improving school facilities, upgrading transportation and technology, and strengthening security.

The tax will also continue to benefit eligible charter schools, with revenues distributed according to their proportionate share of total school district enrollment.

The second referendum, establishing a one-mill property tax levy, passed with 77,542 votes (66.24%) supporting the measure and 39,525 votes (33.76%) opposing it.

Unlike the sales tax extension, the property tax measure represents an additional tax on property owners. The levy will begin July 1, 2027, and continue through June 30, 2031.

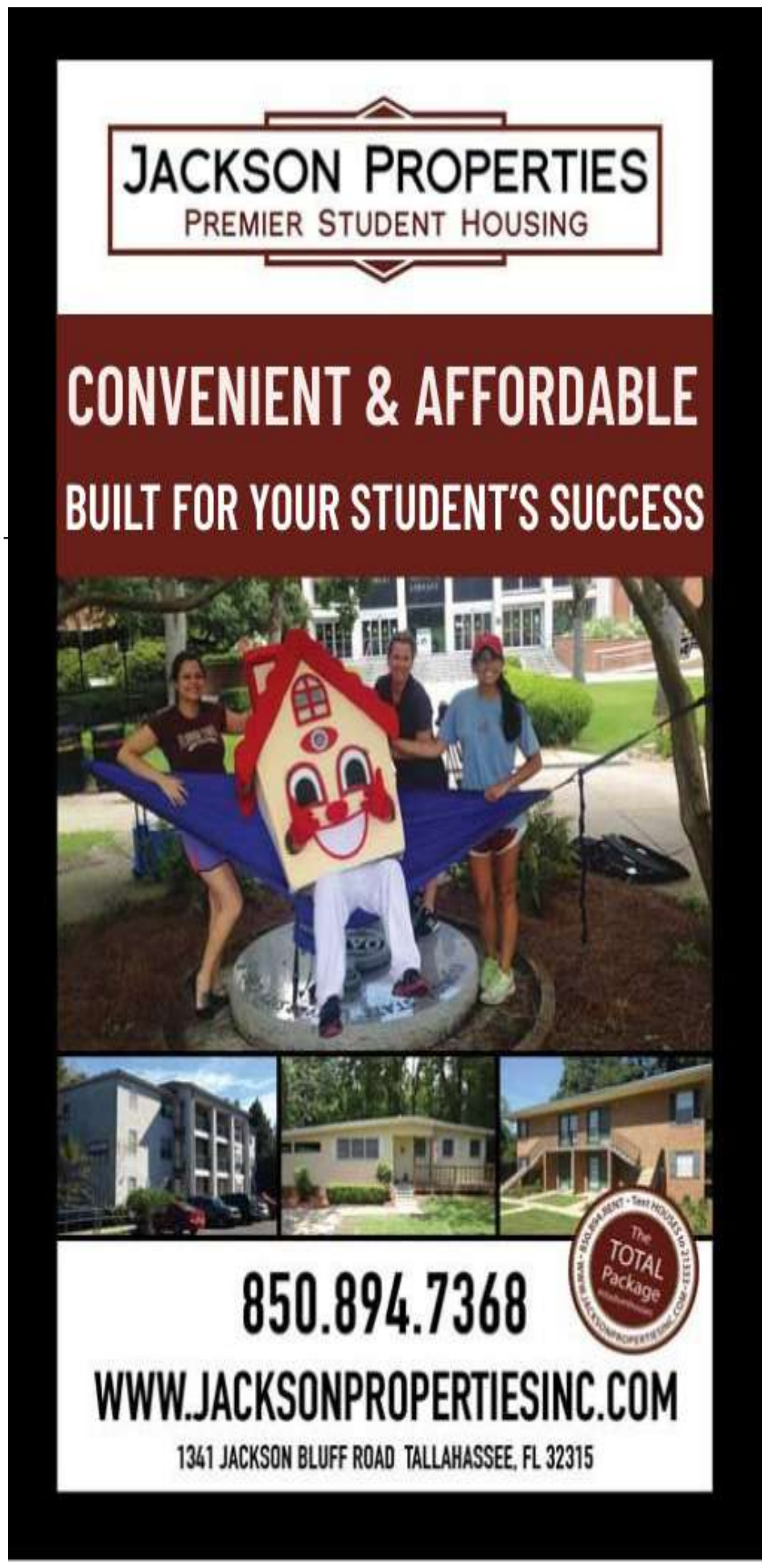
Under the ballot language, the additional revenue will support increased compensation for teachers and school employees, enhanced school security operations and educational programs, including arts education and athletics.

A one-mill property tax equals $1 for every $1,000 of taxable property value. For a homeowner with a taxable property value of $200,000, the levy would amount to approximately $200 annually. The total revenues raised in the first year is estimated to be $30 million.

The measure also requires revenues to be shared with eligible charter schools under Florida law.

Both referendums include provisions for oversight by citizen advisory committees responsible for reviewing expenditures.

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State News

Hurricane Isaias Claims Top $580 Million

By Jim Turner
The News Service of Florida

Insured losses in Florida from Hurricane Isaias so far approach $582 million as claims start to roll in from the Oct. 9 storm, according to the Office of Insurance Regulation.

As of Tuesday, early 55,000 claims linked to the storm have been filed across the state, with the majority from the western Panhandle. More than 26,000 claims have been filed in Santa Rosa County, nearly 17,000 in Escambia County, about 5,200 in Okaloosa County, more than 2,000 in Walton County and almost 2,000 in Bay County.

About 47,000 claims are tied to residential property, but they also cover auto and commercial properties, along with business interruptions and other business lines.

Risk analytics from Moody's RMS estimated the losses across multiple states will be between $2.5 billion to $4.5 billion from the Category 2 storm that made landfall near Destin. Boston-based Karen Clark & Company, a prominent risk-management and catastrophe modeling software firm, estimated privately insured losses nationally at $3 billion.

"The most severe impacts were concentrated in the coastal cities and towns of the Florida Panhandle, like Destin, Pensacola Beach, and Navarre," the flash estimate from Karen Clark & Company stated Oct. 15. "Major damage has also been observed in towns around Pensacola Bay, such as Milton and Pace."

Moody's called the damages "manageable."

"Thankfully, the storm encountered strong wind shear as it approached landfall, which disrupted its structure and weakened the wind field considerably," Jeff Waters, Director of North Atlantic hurricane models for Moody's, stated.

Karen Clark & Company didn't include National Flood Insurance Program claims, which Moody's RMS estimated at $250 million.

Moody's RMS put most of the losses on wind damage.

Last Friday, Gov. Ron DeSantis announced that the Florida Division of Emergency Management submitted a request to President Donald Trump for a major disaster declaration following Isaias.

The request seeks roughly $237 million in federal resources to support affected communities across northwest Florida, including public assistance for 15 counties and individual assistance for eligible residents in eight designated counties.

Six deaths in Florida have been linked to the storm.

Of the claims filed, just over 3,500 have been closed with some payment and nearly 8,500 have already been closed without any payment. Of the claims that remain open, 1,454 had already resulted in some level of payment.

By comparison, losses in Florida attributed to Hurricane Milton in October 2024 were $5.6 billion, with 385,146 claims filed. The 155,182 claims submitted after Hurricane Helene came ashore in the Big Bend Region in last September 2024 resulted in $2.58 billion in losses.

Milton made landfall near Siesta Key in Sarasota County and Helene landed west-southwest of Perry in Taylor County.

Hurricane Michael, which made landfall on the Panhandle at Mexico Beach as a Category 5 storm with 160 mph sustained winds on Oct. 10, 2018, resulted in $9.1 billion in losses in Florida. Nearly 159,000 claims were filed after Michael, of which almost 130,000 resulted in some payment.

Florida Voters Approve Amendment 3, Setting Stage for Major Property Tax Cuts

Florida voters approved Amendment 3 on Tuesday, establishing significant property tax reductions for homeowners while creating substantial financial challenges for local governments.

The amendment received 61.98% support, narrowly exceeding the 60% required for constitutional amendments. Approximately 4.92 million voters supported the measure, compared with 3.02 million opposed.

The amendment increases the homestead exemption for non-school property taxes from $50,000 to $150,000 in 2027 and $250,000 in 2028. Beginning in 2029, the exemption will increase with inflation.

The measure also reduces the annual assessment increase cap on non-homestead properties, including commercial and rental properties, from 10% to 5%.

School property taxes remain unchanged. New Florida residents face a five-year waiting period before receiving the expanded exemption, subject to constitutional limitations.

Florida Chamber of Commerce+1

The financial implications for Leon County are substantial.

According to the Leon County Property Appraiser's analysis, the changes are projected to reduce county property tax revenue by approximately $70.7 million annually when fully implemented.

County officials estimate that approximately $161 million of the remaining $165 million in property tax collections would be committed to state mandates and constitutional officers, leaving approximately $3.5 million for other county services.

Potential consequences include reduced services, delayed infrastructure projects, increased fees and changes to emergency medical services funding.

Leon County CMS

The amendment takes effect January 1, 2027, with the initial revenue impact appearing in local governments' fiscal year 2028 budgets. The Legislature must establish procedures allowing counties and municipalities to increase exemptions further, potentially eliminating non-school property taxes on qualifying homesteads. The amendment provides no dedicated state funding to replace lost local revenue.

Local officials must now evaluate spending priorities, alternative revenues and potential service reductions. Leon County and Tallahassee officials will face significant budget decisions during 2027 as they prepare for the first reductions in property tax collections.

Republican Austin Rogers Wins Congressional District 2, Despite Loss in Leon County

Republican Austin Rogers defeated Democrat Amanda Marie Green Tuesday to win Florida's 2nd Congressional District, overcoming a substantial deficit in Leon County with strong support from voters across the Florida Panhandle.

According to unofficial results from the Florida Division of Elections, Rogers received 160,968 votes (52.13%) compared to Green's 147,791 votes (47.87%). The margin of victory was 13,177 votes.

In Leon County, Green won decisively, receiving 84,273 votes (68.01%) compared to Rogers' 39,646 votes (31.99%). However, Rogers offset the Leon County results with significant victories in surrounding counties.

In Bay County, Rogers received 47,721 votes compared to Green's 22,164. Rogers also carried Wakulla County by 9,737 to 5,298 votes and Jackson County by 10,627 to 5,015 votes.

Green carried Gadsden County with 12,415 votes compared to Rogers' 5,169.

Rogers will replace retiring Republican Congressman Neal Dunn, who served five terms representing the district, which stretches from Tallahassee west through much of the Panhandle.

During his victory speech Tuesday in Panama City, Rogers thanked God, his family and campaign supporters while expressing an interest in working with Democrats.

Addressing Green, Rogers said he wanted to meet with his former opponent to discuss issues facing the district.

"I'd love to sit face to face and hear about how I can best represent this district, how I can learn from you and hear your thoughts," Rogers said.

Rogers also emphasized his North Florida roots and religious faith.

"I think I represent the values of this district well, and that I was born and raised in the Panhandle," he said.

Looking ahead, Rogers said his first 100 days in Congress will focus on limiting federal spending and addressing the rising cost of living.

Donalds Fends Off Jolly to Take Governor's Race

DONALDS, From Front Page

Democratic U.S. Senate nominee Angie Nixon, who joined the Democratic Socialists of America in June.

Jolly also hit Donalds for not supporting a moratorium on large-scale data centers used to power burgeoning artificial intelligence technology. Many voters soured on the facilities, which often require large amounts of energy, placing more pressure and greater costs on the grid.

Donalds was able to blunt that criticism by saying he supported the law passed by the Legislature this year at Gov. Ron DeSantis' request, which places new requirements on data centers, including making AI companies pay for the new energy costs of the facilities.

Stay informed on **LOCAL** NEWS





Single-Family Construction Permits Up in September

According to the latest filings with Leon County and the City of Tallahassee, the number of single-family construction permits issued in 2026 continue to outpace the permits issued in 2024 and 2025.

Permits

For the month of September, the number of single-family residential construction permits were up

New SFR Permit Report

	Sep-25	Sep-26	Chg	%Chg
Permits	31	68	37	119.4%
Value (millions)	$ 7.9	$ 14.4	$ 6.5	82.3%
3-Mnth Avg.	36.3	63.3	27.0	74.4%
Value (millions)	$ 10.9	$ 13.3	$ 2.4	22.0%

Source: Leon County, Office of Econ. Vitality

119.4% when compared to September 2025. There were 68 permits issued in September 2026, compared to 31 permits issued one year ago. There were 47 permits issued last month, August 2026.

The 3-Mnth Avg. data (Jul. – Sep.), which smooths out the month-to-month volatility, shows a 74.4% increase in the number of permits issued over the same 3-month period one year ago.

Permit Value

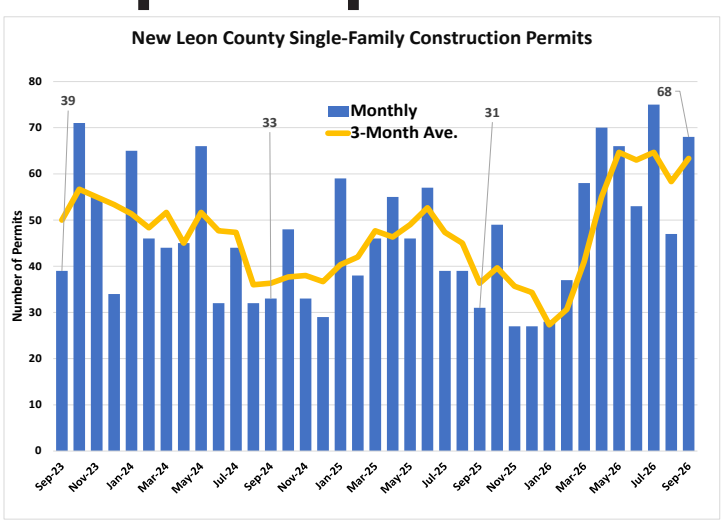
The September permit value was up 82.3%, from $7.9 million in September 2025 to $14.4 million in 2026.

The 3-Mnth Avg. data show a 22.0% increase in monthly average permit value during this period. The 3-month average permit values increased from $10.9 million in September 2025 to $13.3 million in September 2026.

Long Term Trend

The chart below shows the number of permits issued each month for the last 37-month period. A 3-month average line is also included. The highlighted numbers relate to permits issued in the month of September back to 2023.

The chart shows that the 3-month average declining trend that began in June 2025 has been reversed.



The year-to-date (YTD) numbers through September show 2026 permits (502) are ahead of the number of permits issued during the first nine months of 2025 (410) and 2024 (407).

September Airport Traffic Up 6.4%

The latest information from the Tallahassee International Airport shows the September 2026 passenger traffic increased 6.4% when compared to traffic one year ago. The number of passengers was up 4,551 from the 71,262 reported during September 2025 to 75,813 in September 2026.

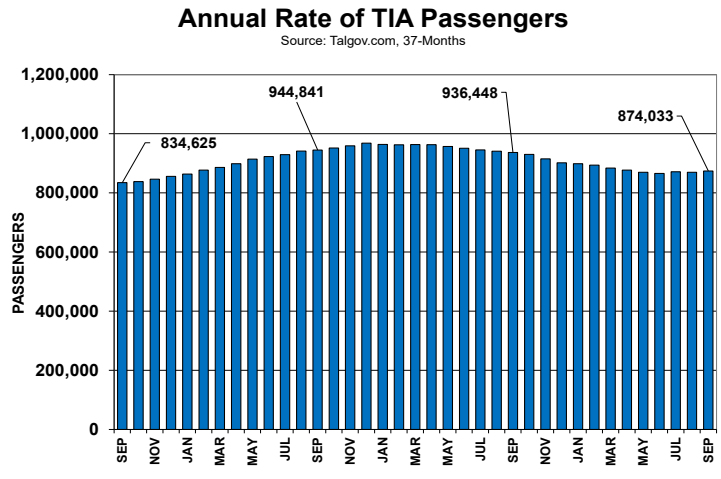
Relative to 2025, the Passenger Traffic Report shows year-over-year passenger counts in September were down 6.1% for American Airlines and up 8.0% for the Delta Group. Breeze Airways added 3,957 passengers.

September Passenger Traffic Report

	Sep-25	Sep-26	%Chg
Delta Group	35,078	37,870	8.0%
American	36,184	33,986	-6.1%
Breeze	-	3,957	
Totals	**71,262**	**75,813**	**6.4%**

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 September over the last four years. The annual rate of passengers at TIA in September 2026 – 874,033 – is down 6.67% when compared to one year ago (936,448).

The annualized level of passenger traffic in September (874,033) was up 0.52% when compared to August (869,482). The annualized number of passengers is calculated by summing the previous 12 months of traffic.



FSU's Jim Moran College Wins International Entrepreneurship Award

Florida State University's Jim Moran College of Entrepreneurship received an international award recognizing its leadership in entrepreneurship education after hosting approximately 500 educators, business leaders and innovators from around the world at a three-day conference in Tallahassee.

The college received the Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers (GCEC) Center of Entrepreneurial Leadership Award during the organization's annual conference, held Oct. 15-17.

The event attracted representatives from 14 countries and nearly 250 universities, organizations and entrepreneurship programs, providing an opportunity to showcase FSU's entrepreneurship initiatives and Tallahassee's business community.

The award recognized the college's leadership and its work organizing the international conference.

"Hosting the GCEC Conference at Florida State University during such a momentous year represents an extraordinary opportunity to bring together the leaders shaping the future of entrepreneurship education," said Mike Brady, interim dean of the Jim Moran College.

Brady said the recognition reflected the contributions of faculty, staff and community partners involved in advancing entrepreneurship education.

The conference focused on the theme of "momentum," examining how universities can help students and entrepreneurs transform ideas into businesses, strengthen partnerships and contribute to economic development.

Participants attended keynote presentations, panel discussions and more than 90 breakout sessions addressing entrepreneurship education, business development and innovation.

Among the topics were expanding hands-on learning opportunities, supporting student-created businesses and connecting university entrepreneurship programs with local economic development efforts.

The conference also highlighted several institutional milestones. FSU is celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2026, while the GCEC and FSU's Jim Moran Institute for Global Entrepreneurship are marking 30 years.

The Jim Moran College will celebrate its 10th anniversary in 2027. Established as the nation's first stand-alone college of entrepreneurship at a public university, the college offers programs designed to prepare students to launch businesses and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities.

Conference activities extended beyond campus, bringing visitors to several Tallahassee businesses and regional attractions.

A reception at Doak Campbell Stadium featured FSU's Marching Chiefs, while another event took place at Proof Brewing Company in the Railroad Square Arts District. The conference concluded with an awards gala at the Donald L. Tucker Civic Center.

Visitors also participated in regional excursions, including trips to Thomasville, Georgia, Wakulla Springs and Florida's Forgotten Coast.

The activities introduced international visitors to local businesses, tourism destinations and economic development opportunities throughout North Florida.

The Global Consortium of Entrepreneurship Centers connects university-based entrepreneurship programs worldwide to exchange ideas and improve educational practices.

For FSU, hosting the conference and receiving the international recognition provided an opportunity to strengthen relationships with other institutions while promoting Tallahassee as a center for entrepreneurship, innovation and business development.



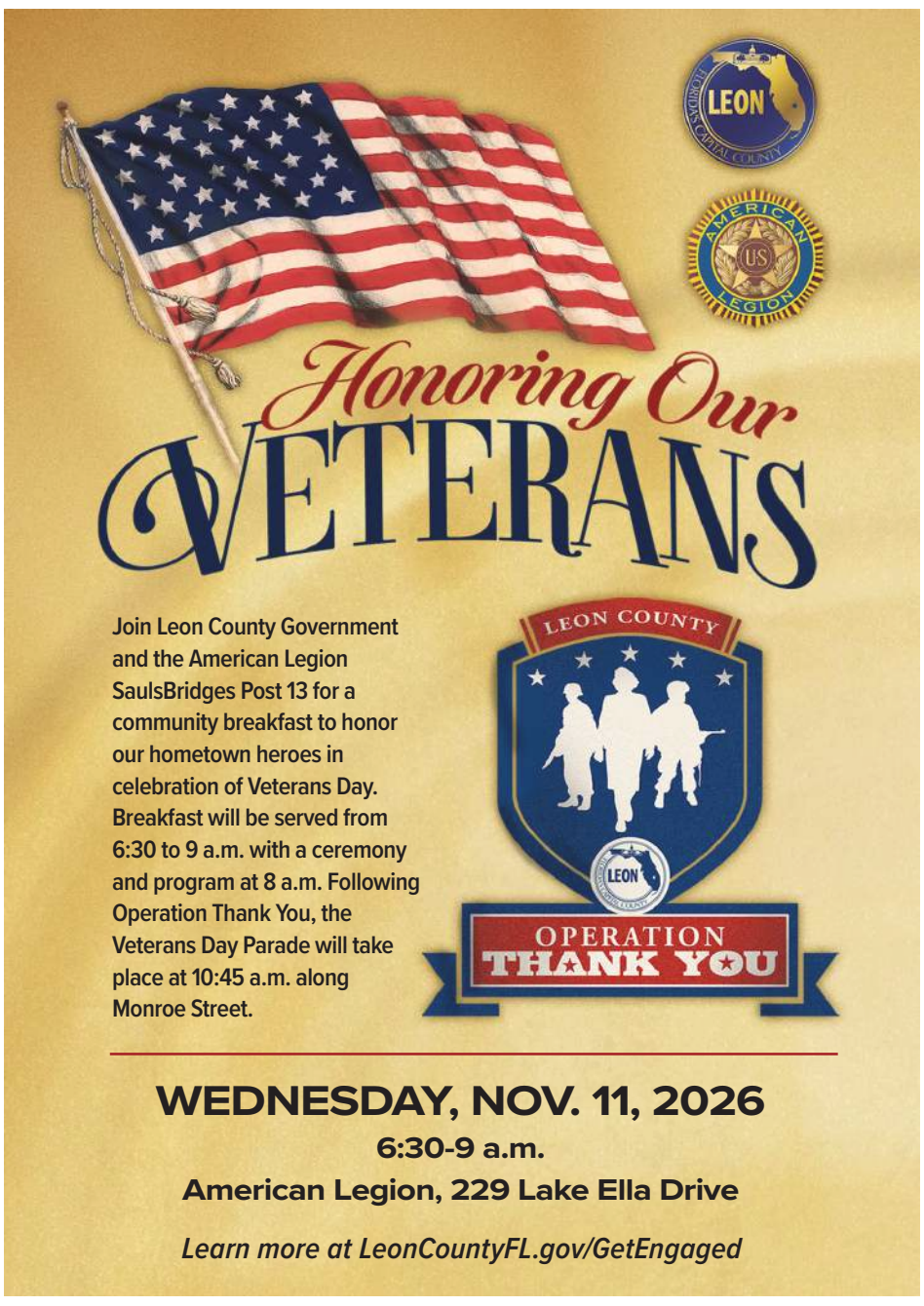
The Leon County LINK

LeonCountyFL.gov

For Leon County news and information, please visit: **LeonCountyFL.gov/News**

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Join Leon County Government and the American Legion SaulsBridges Post 13 for a community breakfast to honor our hometown heroes in celebration of Veterans Day. Breakfast will be served from 6:30 to 9 a.m. with a ceremony and program at 8 a.m. Following Operation Thank You, the Veterans Day Parade will take place at 10:45 a.m. along Monroe Street.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 11, 2026

6:30-9 a.m.

American Legion, 229 Lake Ella Drive

Learn more at LeonCountyFL.gov/GetEngaged

Vision to Venture

Inspiring Entrepreneurs, Supporting Success

Saturday, Nov. 7, 2026
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Leon County Main Library
200 W. Park Ave.

LEROY COLLINS LEON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Celebrate National Entrepreneurship Month with local entrepreneurs and business educators sharing real-world experience, hard-earned lessons and practical strategies for starting and growing a business. Whether you're shaping an idea or growing an existing venture, you'll leave with practical next steps to move forward.

Find details at LeonCountyLibrary.org/Careers

An Indigenous History of Tallahassee

TUESDAY, NOV. 10 • 6-7 P.M.
LEON COUNTY MAIN LIBRARY, 200 WEST PARK AVENUE

Discover the deep history of the Apalachee people and their ties to the Tallahassee area. Florida State University professor Aubrey Lauersdorf will share research from her book "Apalachee Coast: Indigenous Power in the Colonial Gulf South."

LEROY COLLINS LEON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

LEARN MORE AT
LeonCountyFL.gov/NativeAmericanHeritageMonth

100 Years

FROM LEARNING TO LIVING:

Celebrating 100 Years of Fort Braden's School & Community Center

Saturday, Nov. 7 · 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
16387 BLOUNTSTOWN HWY.

Celebrate 100 years of learning, connection, and community with this special anniversary celebration of the Old Fort Braden School and Fort Braden Community Center. Honor the rich history and lasting legacy of the space with a new historical display and enjoy a day of fun activities and connection with neighbors, local organizations, and community partners.

Learn more at LeonCountyFL.gov/FBCC100

TREE SPECIES
- Eastern Redbud
- Sweetbay Magnolia
- Live Oak

For more than 30 years, Leon County Government has proudly supported our native ecosystem through the Adopt-A-Tree Program, which provides unincorporated County residents the opportunity to have a tree planted on their property for free.



Learn more and apply now at LeonCountyFL.gov/AdoptATree



LEON COUNTY NEWS & EVENTS

Farm Share Food Distribution in Woodville

Carter's Corner, with support from Leon County, is hosting a free food distribution to support Leon County families and residents on Saturday, Nov. 14, at 9 a.m. at the Leon County J. Lewis Hall Sr. Woodville Park, 1492 J. Lewis Hall Sr. Lane. Food will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis while supplies last. No registration required. To accommodate traffic, organizers ask attendees to enter Woodville Park from the north side of Old Woodville Road.

Eighth Annual Gingerbread House Competition

Sugar and spice and all things nice are in store during the Leon County Public Library's eighth annual Community Gingerbread House Competition! Put your design skills to the test in this family-friendly competition for a chance to win prizes. The competition will take place on Saturday, December 5, from 1-4 p.m. at the downtown Main Library, 200 W. Park Ave., where one winner from each division will be selected.

Visit LeonCountyLibrary.org/Gingerbread for more information.

Go Green this Election Cycle

In 2026, Leon County Government, Leon County Supervisor of Elections, Marpan Recycling, the City of Tallahassee, and the League of Women Voters of Tallahassee are partnering to keep corrugated plastic campaign and business yard signs out of the landfill by offering recycling drop-off at a variety of locations during the fall election season. Drop-off collection will run from Wednesday, Nov. 4, until Friday, Dec. 4. Drop your campaign and business yard signs along with their wire frames into the yellow bins at one of the following locations:

- The Leon County Elections Center, 2990-1 Apalachee Parkway
- Leon County Household Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Site, 1800 N. Blair Stone Road
- City of Tallahassee Beautification & Waste Management Facility, 2727 Major James Morgan Jr. Way
- Marpan Recycling, 323 Marpan Lane

Learn more at www.LeonVotes.gov/Candidates/Campaign-Signs.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SCHEDULE
NOVEMBER 2026

TUESDAY 17	3:00 p.m.	**Board of County Commissioners Installation, Reorganization & Regular Meeting** 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 LeonCountyFL.gov.

For meeting and location updates, visit LeonCountyFL.gov

Watch LIVE



Local Sports

Leon County Golfers Earn State Tournament Berths Following Regional Championships

By Robert Stewart

Leon County will be represented by several golfers at the upcoming FHSAA state golf tournaments after the conclusion of the Class 1A and 3A regional championships on November 2 and 3.

Maclay's girls team qualified for the Class 1A state tournament, while Florida High's Hunter Glantz and Maclay's Brody Mitchell earned individual berths on the boys side. In Class 3A, Leon sophomore Liam Minton was the lone Leon County qualifier, advancing individually in the boys tournament. The four regional tournaments were held at courses across Florida, with the 1A girls competing at Eagle Harbor Golf Club in Orange Park, the 1A boys at World Golf Village in St. Augustine, the 3A boys at The Golf Club at Cypress Head in Port Orange and the 3A girls at Hawkstone Country Club in Gainesville.

The state championships will be held at Mission Resort + Club in Howey-in-the-Hills, with Class 1A competition scheduled for Nov. 17-18 and Class 3A competition set for Nov. 13-14.

Class 1A regional results

Maclay's girls team secured its state tournament berth with a second-place finish at the Class 1A Region 1 tournament at Eagle Harbor Golf Club. The Marauders posted a team score of 330 (+42), finishing behind regional champion Bolles, which shot 311 (+23). Providence finished third at 332 (+44), followed by Episcopal at 338 (+50).

Maclay was led by Mollie Sprague, who tied for 12th individually with an 81 (+9). Trisha Patel finished tied for 18th with an 82 (+10), while Emma Holt Upton placed 20th with an 83 (+11). Reece Erwin tied for 23rd with an 84 (+12), and Addie Sprague tied for 26th with an 87 (+15).

Florida High finished sixth in the team standings with a 349 (+61). Peyton Johnson led the Seminoles, tying for 13th with an 82 (+10). Kamryn Montgomery tied for 19th with an 83 (+11), followed by Samaira Patel with a 90 (+18), Eva Castillo with a 94 (+22) and Leah Lowe with a 96 (+24).

On the boys side, Maclay finished fifth at the Class 1A Region 1 tournament at World Golf Village with a team score of 321 (+33). Bolles won the regional championship with a 303 (+15), followed by Providence at 312 (+24), Episcopal at 314 (+26) and St. Johns Country Day at 317 (+29).

Despite the fifth-place team finish, Maclay's Brody Mitchell earned an individual state tournament berth after tying for second with a 73 (+1). He shared the position with Providence's Ethan Gossman.

Florida High finished seventh with a 327 (+39), led by Hunter Glantz, who won the individual regional championship with a 70 (-2). Glantz finished three strokes ahead of the second-place finishers to secure his state tournament berth.

Other local boys results included Robbie Vos, who tied for 42nd with an 83 (+11), and Donovan Daniell, who tied for 47th with an 85 (+13), for Florida High. Maclay's Downing Jordan tied for 25th with an 80 (+8), while Cameron Kise tied for 36th with an 82 (+10). St. John Paul II's Jack Collins tied for 45th with an 84 (+12).

Class 3A regional results

Leon County's lone Class 3A state qualifier came from the boys tournament at The Golf Club at Cypress Head in Port Orange. Leon sophomore Liam Minton earned an individual berth after shooting a 71 (-1), placing among the top finishers in the regional field.

Leon finished 12th in the team standings with a score of 335 (+47). Solomon Hardy tied for 40th with a 79 (+7), Hudson Gardner tied for 63rd with an 87 (+15), Aubrey Turner placed 70th with a 98 (+26), and Andrew Suber finished 71st with a 100 (+28).

Chiles tied for ninth in the team standings with a 325 (+37). Rhys Cochran led the Wolves, tying for 17th with a 75 (+3). Asher Hall tied for 45th with an 81 (+9), Parker Ritchie tied for 53rd with an 84 (+12), Mason Githens tied for 57th with an 85 (+13), and Jackson Kukla tied for 65th with a 91 (+19).

Tate also finished tied for ninth at 325 (+37). Brycen Massey led the Aggies with a 73 (+1), tying for eighth individually, while Cooper Davidson tied for 17th with a 75 (+3).

Lake Mary won the boys team regional championship with a 294 (+6), followed by Ponte Vedra at 295 (+7). Tocoi Creek and Spruce Creek tied for third at 298 (+10).



Florida High's Hunter Glantz earned an individual regional berth.

On the girls side, no Leon County team or individual golfer earned a state tournament berth at Hawkstone Country Club in Gainesville.

Chiles' Liza Baker Wright tied for 21st with an 80 (+8), while teammate Kate Mathis tied for 33rd with an 84 (+12). Beachside's Lily Wachter won the individual regional championship with a 67 (-5), and Beachside also captured the team title with a 299 (+11). Ponte Vedra finished second at 301 (+13).

Maclay Cheerleaders Selected to Perform in 100th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade

By Robert Stewart



Two members of Maclay School's varsity cheerleading squad will represent their school on a national stage this Thanksgiving after being selected to perform in the 100th Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City.

Chloe Kerr and Chanley Marks auditioned in February and were selected to join the Spirit of America performance group, which brings together cheerleaders and dancers from across the country for the nationally televised holiday tradition.

The selection gives the two Maclay cheerleaders an opportunity to represent their school and community during this year's historic parade, marking the 100th anniversary of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

According to Spirit of America Productions, 2026 also marks the organization's 40th consecutive year providing cheerleaders and dancers for the parade. The organization gives hundreds of performers, ages 14 to 18, the opportunity to participate each year, representing their schools, dance studios or all-star programs.

In addition to performing in two nationally televised productions airing live on NBC, the participants will spend a week in New York City. Their schedule includes rehearsals and opportunities to visit some of the city's well-known attractions, including the Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, 9/11 Memorial and Radio City Music Hall, as well as attending a Broadway show and the Radio City Christmas Spectacular.

Spirit of America Productions said approximately 1,000 cheerleaders and dancers will participate in this year's program.

For Kerr and Marks, the opportunity provides a chance to represent Maclay School and Tallahassee as part of one of the country's most recognizable Thanksgiving traditions.

Lincoln Boys Advanced to State Bowling Bracket, Rickards Bowlers Competed Individually

By Robert Stewart

Leon County was represented by Lincoln High School's boys bowling team and three individual bowlers from Rickards High School at the 2026 FHSAA Bowling state tournament, held Oct. 27–29 at Boardwalk Entertainment Center.

Lincoln earned a place in the boys team bracket after finishing 15th in the state qualifying round, while Rickards bowlers Jayden Peterson, John Nance and Grace Lee competed in the individual qualifying rounds. Although none of the three Rickards bowlers advanced to the final 16 in their respective divisions, all three recorded finishes among the competitors at the state finals.

Lincoln Reaches the Team Bracket

Lincoln finished 15th among 32 teams in the boys team qualifying round, recording a four-game total of 3,918 pins to secure one of the 16 places in the team bracket.

The Trojans' qualifying lineup included Dylan Fell, who led Lincoln with 832 pins to finish 56th overall among 207 bowlers. Caleb Moore placed 77th with 811 pins, followed by Kale Hurd in 90th with 782 pins, Devin Mortham in 92nd with 780 pins and Hunter Mortham in 135th with 713 pins.

Lincoln opened bracket play against Leesburg High School in the winners' bracket on Wednesday. The Trojans recorded a team total of 590 pins but lost the match, 3–0, moving them into the consolation bracket.

Lincoln then faced Dr. Joaquin Garcia High School in its first consolation-bracket match. The Trojans fell 3–2, ending their run in the team tournament.

Rickards Bowlers Compete in Individual Qualifying

Three Rickards bowlers represented Leon County in the individual competitions, with two competing in the boys division and one in the girls division.

Peterson posted the highest local finish in the boys individual qualifying round, placing 42nd among 207 bowlers with a four-game total of 856 pins. He opened with a 215, followed with a 239 and 224, and finished with a 178.

Nance finished 100th with 763 pins across four games. After opening with 165 and 182, he recorded a 212 in the third game and closed with a 204.



Lincoln finished 15th among 32 teams in the boys team qualifying round.

In the girls division, Lee placed 42nd among 231 bowlers with 711 pins. She began with a 203, followed with a 173 and 163, and finished with a 172.

The individual qualifying round determined which bowlers advanced to the final 16 in each division. Peterson, Nance and Lee did not reach that cutoff, but each represented Rickards and Leon County at the state tournament.



Rickards bowlers competed in individual events.

Montford Baseball Improves to 2-0 in Win Over RAA

By Aaron Soskin

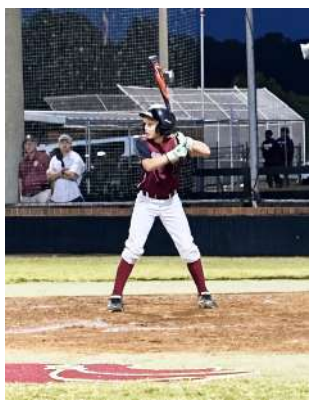
The RAA Rams and Montford Mustangs met up at Chiles High School for an early season matchup in baseball, which is played as a part of winter season 1 by Leon County middle schools. RAA won a close 4-3 game with Fairview the week before, and Montford shut out Cobb 5-0.

The pitching matchup was the Rams' Hunter Dittmar vs the Mustangs' Gabe Harper. Harper, coming off a summer as the leading inning-eater for Tallahassee's 13U Babe Ruth League World Series semifinalists. Harper struck out the side in the top of the first mixing in mostly fastballs and a few breaking balls. The Mustangs' bats got hot early in the evening, with CJ Usina starting the huge rally. Usina had a base hit to right field and was followed by two walks. An infield single scored Montford's first run of the ballgame off of new pitcher Tycen Evans for the Rams.

Then catcher Cole Miller came up to bat with a chance to put a crooked number on the board for the Mustangs. He delivered with a sharp base hit to extend Montford's lead to 2-0. Lefty center fielder John Savoy battled for six pitches; he then connected on the seventh and crushed it into the right center gap. The ball bounced to the base of the fence for a bases clearing triple. Evans got the first out of the inning on a curveball in the dirt in the next at bat. However, the inning continued on as the Mustangs played small ball with two infield singles and three wild pitches to hit the 9 run per inning limit.

In the top of the second, the Rams put together a brief rally against Harper. Two lead off walks and a wild pitch set up an rbi single to left field. Harper escaped the jam only allowing one run. Meanwhile, after the rocky first inning; Rams pitchers Tyrece Evans and Liam Runk did not give up another run over the next three innings. The Rams drew one run closer off lefty reliever Evan House, but ultimately, the Mustangs ended the game with a comfortable lead.

Montford plays Swift Creek on Monday, November 2 at Lincoln High School. Then later in the week, they play Deerlake on Thursday, November 5 at Chiles High School. RAA has a two game week as well playing Deerlake on November 2 at Chiles, and Swift Creek on November 5 at Lincoln. All middle school baseball games are at 6:30 pm.



Local Sports

Multiple Leon County Swim Teams Compete in District Championships

By Robert Stewart

The 2026 high school swimming and diving postseason is moving toward its final stages, with Tallahassee-area teams competing across FHSAA classifications. The Class 1A District 1 meet was held October 26, while the Class 3A District 2 championship took place October 21. The 3A teams have already completed regional competition and will head to the state championships November 6-7. The 1A teams, meanwhile, will compete at regionals November 3, with the state championships scheduled for November 13-14. Both district meets featured strong performances from local swimmers and divers as they continue their postseason runs.

FHSAA 1A District 1

Maclay captured both the boys' and girls' team championships at the 2026 FHSAA Class 1A District 1 Swimming and Diving Championships, while Florida High and Community Christian School also turned in several standout performances.

Maclay's individual swimmers combined for 18 medals, including 10 first-place finishes, six runner-up finishes and two third-place finishes. The Marauders also won all five relay events contested by the team, including the girls' 200-yard medley relay, 200-yard freestyle relay and 400-yard freestyle relay, along with the boys' 200-yard and 400-yard freestyle relays.

Olivia Holt led the girls' individual performances, winning both the 200-yard individual medley in 2:18.13 and the 100-yard butterfly in 1:00.59. Emerson Sutton also claimed two individual district titles, winning the 200-yard freestyle in 2:10.84 and the 100-yard backstroke in 1:09.18.

On the boys' side, William Chen won the 50-yard freestyle in 21.75 seconds and the 100-yard freestyle in 48.30. David Paquette captured the 200-yard freestyle in 1:46.90 and the 500-yard freestyle in 5:02.82. Peter Dunkerley added a victory in the 100-yard butterfly with a time of 58.06.

Other individual district champions for Maclay included Eliza Horton in the girls' 100-yard breaststroke in 1:16.91. Katherine Johnson finished second in both the 200-yard individual medley and 100-yard butterfly, while Brennan Abatecola placed second behind Chen in both the boys' 50- and 100-yard freestyle.

Community Christian School also had a strong showing, led by Ivy Holloway, who won the girls' 500-yard freestyle in 6:09.16. The Chargers collected several other top finishes, including Blake Wheeler's runner-up finish in the girls' 200-yard freestyle in 2:12.14 and Sarah-Jane Holloway's second-place finish in the 50-yard freestyle in 26.08. Sarah-Jane Holloway also placed second in the 100-yard freestyle in 57.67.

Raleigh Grantham added a third-place finish in the girls' 100-yard butterfly in 1:05.64, while Wheeler finished fourth in the same event in 1:05.86. Grantham also placed fifth in the 200-yard individual medley.

The CCS girls' relay teams were also among the meet's top performers. The Chargers finished second behind Maclay in both the 200-yard freestyle relay, with a time of 1:49.51, and the 400-yard freestyle relay, finishing in 4:12.96. CCS also placed second in the 200-yard medley relay in 2:08.52.

On the boys' side, Landon Stephens finished third in the 100-yard breaststroke in 1:11.47 and fifth in the 100-yard butterfly in 1:06.45. John Elias added a fourth-place finish in the 200-yard freestyle in 2:08.62.

Florida High was led by Sadie Campbell, who won the girls' one-meter diving competition with a score of 383.30. In the swimming events, Tiana Rosbough placed second in the girls' 500-yard freestyle with a time of 6:22.25. Colin Mudd finished third in the boys' 100-yard freestyle in 53.32 and fourth in the 500-yard freestyle in 6:00.01. Levi Taylor added a third-place finish in the boys' 100-yard butterfly in 1:04.27.

Florida High also had several strong relay finishes. The girls' 200-yard freestyle relay team placed third in 1:56.72, while the boys' 200-yard medley relay team finished third in 1:57.45. The Seminoles' boys' 400-yard freestyle relay team also placed third in 3:56.84.

Maclay's district performance was supported by improvements across the roster. The coach highlighted nine swimmers who improved their times in both individual events: Katherine Johnson, Kaylee Hanselman, Lydian Allen, Austin Thieme, Brennan Abatecola, Musa Faruqui, Rajveer Bansal, Ryan Randell and Savva Istomin.

Among the most notable time improvements were Hanselman dropping her 100-yard freestyle from 1:09.72 to 1:06.17, Parker Locasto improving his 100-yard breaststroke from 1:26.76 to 1:23.46, Abatecola cutting his 50-yard freestyle from 23.06 to 22.23, and Johnson lowering her 100-yard butterfly time from 1:07.92 to 1:05.58.

With the district meet complete, Maclay, Florida High and Community Christian will turn their attention to the next stage of postseason competition.



(Front row) Ryan Randell (Back row, left to right) Lucas Perdue, David Paquette, William Chen, Brennan Abatecola, Musa Faruqui, Savva Istomin, Rajveer Bansal, Parker Locasto, Milo Kaiser

FHSAA 3A District 2

On its home deck, Lawton Chiles could not quite close the gap on a deep Duncan Fletcher squad, but the Timberwolves still turned the FHSAA 3A District 2 meet into a celebration of Leon County swimming.

Fletcher, from Neptune Beach, captured the team championship with 581 points, while Chiles finished as runner-up with 417. Three other Tallahassee public schools rounded out the local contingent: Leon placed fourth (241), Lincoln sixth (104) and Rickards eighth (53).

The afternoon belonged to Chiles senior Owen Ekk, who shared meet high-point honors behind a pair of individual titles. Ekk swept the 200-yard individual medley in 1:47.91 and the 100 freestyle in 45.15, then helped the Timberwolves win the boys' 200 free relay (1:28.16) and place second in the 400 free relay.

Chiles' strength was its depth. Sophomore Tyler Wang won the 100 butterfly (53.42) and took second in the 100 breaststroke (1:01.06). Kipton Fenniman was the runner-up in both the 200 free (1:46.45) and 500 free (4:45.06), Dalton Von Hertsenberg claimed bronze in the 500 free (4:48.82), and Manny Squitier was third in the 100 fly (53.62).

The Timberwolves' girls were every bit as dominant in the water, sweeping both freestyle relays. Amelia McGlynn, Yiyan Wu, Sofia Kharchenko and McKay Yearty won the 200 free relay (1:41.77), while McGlynn, Wu, Teresa Castano and Yearty took the 400 free relay (3:51.11). The girls also finished second in the 200 medley relay.

Individually, McGlynn won the 50 free (24.74) and was second in the 100 free (55.03). Freshman Wu took the 100 back (1:00.62) and was the 50 free runner-up. Kharchenko captured the 100 fly (1:02.11), and Yearty placed second in both the 200 free (2:00.45) and 500 free (5:25.13).

Across town, Leon rode a breakout performance from junior Jake Askey, who swept the 200 free (1:45.08) and 500 free (4:44.63) to share the individual high-point lead. Conner Smith added a victory on the 1-meter diving board, and the Lions' boys picked up bronze in the 400 free relay while the girls' 200 medley relay placed third.

Rickards got a bronze-medal swim from Alexander Li, and Lincoln leaned on scoring depth across events to finish sixth.

Fletcher's title was built on its own relay strength — the Senators won both medley relays and the boys' 400 free relay — but the district meet made clear that the path to regionals runs through Leon County, led by Ekk, Askey and a Chiles relay corps that medaled in all six events.







