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MEDIA ADVISORY



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PEPIN ACADEMIES TO UNVEIL NEW 'WILTON SIMPSON ENVIRONMENTAL LEARNING TRAIL'

Commissioner Simpson will join Pasco County education leaders to open the 5-acre woodland trail designed for students with learning disabilities

****GREAT PHOTO/VIDEO/INTERVIEW AVAILABILITY****

Tampa, FL, Monday January 22, 2024 —Florida's Commissioner of Agriculture and former Senate President, Wilton Simpson, will join Pasco education leaders to officially unveil a new outdoor learning trail at [Pepin Academies'](#) New Port Richey Campus on **Thursday, January 25th**. The Wilton Simpson Environmental Learning Trail provides a safe, sensory-appropriate, and enriching space for the Pepin Academies students with learning and learning-related disabilities to explore the great outdoors.

The learning trail was funded through a state appropriation sponsored by Senator Ed Hooper and championed by then-Senate President Simpson. Named in his honor for his commitment to supporting education, Pasco County, and Pepin Academies during his tenure in the Florida Legislature, the Wilton Simpson Educational Learning Trail is located on 5 acres of undeveloped flatwoods at the back of the school campus. It respects the native environment and offers a learning opportunity unique to the school for the students to explore Florida's flora and fauna outside of the classroom.

Pepin Academies leadership and Commissioner Simpson will be joined at the event by philanthropist Tom Pepin of the Pepin Family Foundation, who partnered on the construction of the trail.

What: **Unveiling Ceremony of the Wilton Simpson Outdoor Learning Trail at Pepin Academies**

When: Thursday, January 25th at 10:00am

Where: Pepin Academies New Port Richey Campus
7710 Osteen Road, NPR FL 34653

Who: **Wilton Simpson**, Commissioner of Agriculture, and former Senate President

Jeff Skowronek, Executive Director, Pepin Academies

Kathie Burns, Principal, Pepin Academies New Port Richey

Genesis Smith, Pepin Academies Foundation

Tom Pepin, Pepin Family Foundation

Tina Pepin, Pepin Family Foundation

*Speakers are available for interview during event

Event program to begin promptly at 10am. Media are invited to tour the walking trail upon ceremony conclusion.

To schedule interviews and tours in advance of the January 25th event, contact Krista Landers at (813) 468 3283 or Krista@Teamrsa.com



Contact Krista Landers
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, November 27, 2023

MEDIA ADVISORY

Hillsborough County Tax Collector to Host Grand Re-Opening, Building Dedication for North Tampa Branch Expansion

Building to be dedicated to late Mary Alice Dorsett, Tampa Citizen and Civil Rights Advocate

Tampa, FL— *Date* — Hillsborough County Tax Collector Nancy C. Millan is hosting a grand re-opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony to celebrate the 5000 Sq. ft expansion project at the Tax Collector's North Tampa branch. The building will be dedicated to the late Mary Alice Dorsett, a Tampa citizen who was passionate advocate for the African American community.

What: **Ribbon Cutting & Building Dedication Ceremony**

When: Wednesday, November 29 at 8:00am

Where: North Tampa Branch, 3011 University Center Dr, Tampa FL

Who: Tax Collector Nancy C. Millan
Hillsborough County Commissioner Gwen Myers
James Ransom, The Organization of Black Affairs (TOBA)
Members of Mary Alice Dorsett's family

Why: The grand re-opening ceremony celebrates the 5000 sq. ft service expansion. Hillsborough County Commissioner Gwen Myers and James

Ransom from The Organization of Black Affairs (TOBA) will join the Tax Collector in rededicating the building to the late Mary Alice Dorsett. Members of Mary Alice Dorsett's family will represent her at the rededication ceremony. The event will also include a tour of the new facility and a reception.

***Media are invited to attend the ceremony, interview guests
and tour new facility***

Contact Debra Bellanti at 813.612.6721 BellantiD@hillstax.org for more information.

The newly expanded North Tampa facility offers more lobby seating, customer service stations, and written driving test stations.

"The new and improved office offers more space for our customers and team to accommodate the growing population in Hillsborough County as well as new and innovative service features such as self-service and virtual agent stations launching early next year," said Tax Collector Nancy Millan.

"We are also honored to rededicate the building to the late Mary Alice Dorsett, a true champion for the people of Tampa. Dorsett was a civil rights advocate who worked tirelessly for the rights of African Americans, the poor, and the homeless. We are proud to dedicate this new and improved facility in her honor once again."

For more information on the Hillsborough County Tax Collector's office, please visit hillstax.org.

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NEW TRAFFIC STUDY REVEALS MAJOR SAFETY CONCERNS IN SARASOTA SCHOOL ZONES

Legislation filed this session seeks to curb speeding in school zones

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., Wednesday April 19, 2023 – An independent traffic study taken outside a Sarasota high school earlier this month has revealed that, on average, 96% of drivers speed through school zones at more than 10 mph above the posted speed limit.

The study recorded westbound traffic on Fruitville Road outside Cardinal Mooney Catholic High School in Sarasota. The results indicated that during the 40-minute school zone activation from 7:20am-8:00am, 96% of cars were speeding. The 5-day study found that Monday morning drivers were the most negligent, with 98.2% of cars travelling over 25mph through the 15mph school zone.

[Blue Line Solutions](#), a Tennessee-based traffic safety company founded by veteran law enforcement officers, conducted the study using radar speed detectors from April 3 – 7. The results highlight an alarming trend seen across the state. A [2021 study](#) conducted outside an east Hillsborough County high school recorded 98% of drivers speeding more than 10 mph through the school zone during the morning rush hour.

“The results of these studies are extremely concerning and highlight just how widespread of an issue school zone speeding is. It’s clear that drivers are purposefully ignoring school zone signs and flashing lights with a disregard for children’s safety.” said Representative Traci Koster, who sponsored legislation this year to increase school zone speeding enforcement.

“We’re not talking about drivers going 1 or 2 mph above the speed limit. This bill is geared towards intentional speeders going more than 10 mph above the speed limit. That’s at least 26 mph in a 15-mph school zone, during hours when young children are walking to school, crossing the street, and getting on and off school buses.”

HB 657 would allow municipalities to install school speed detection cameras in school zones to encourage drivers to slow down. The speed detection programs would only operate on regularly scheduled school days in established school zones within 30 minutes before, during the entirety of, and within 30 minutes after school.

Violators who drive through the school zone at more than 10mph above the posted speed limit could face a \$100 citation. The bill specifies how the fines would be used, with the bulk of the money remaining in the local school district to pay for increased school safety. For every \$100 citation, \$60 would be spent on public safety initiatives, including speed detection systems, \$12 for initiatives to make it safer to walk to school, and \$5 to recruit and retain school crossing guards.

The bill comes with stipulations to protect unknowing drivers from surprise tickets. It would mandate a 30-day public awareness campaign and grace period before citations are issued. Local governments would also have to place additional signage indicating that speed detection systems are in use.

HB 657 passed all three committees unanimously and awaits a first reading on the House floor. It's Senate companion, SB 588 by Senator Ana Maria Rodriguez, is waiting to be heard in its final committee.

BLUELINE BOILERPLATE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Donation Center to Provide Foster Kids with Free Clothes and Essentials at Children's Home Network in Tampa

Hillsborough County Commissioners joined Children's Home Network to cut the ribbon on the new donation center and campus improvement projects

***** Photos of the Ribbon Cutting Event Available Here*****

TAMPA, Fla., Wednesday, March 30, 2023 – [Children's Home Network](#) has opened a new Donation Center to provide foster youth living on their Kids Village campus in Tampa with free clothing and essentials. Arranged to look like a clothing store, children can 'shop' for their own styles and preferences at no cost and regain a sense of independence and normalcy.

"The State provides foster youth with a \$300 allowance per year to cover clothing and essentials. However, this isn't enough to provide them with everything they need, especially as many children arrive with little to no belongings, having been removed from their homes at short notice without having time to pack or say goodbye," said Irene Rickus, CEO at Children's Home Network.

"The new Donation Closet helps meet that need and gives the children some dignity and control back in their lives. They can 'shop' for everything they need, whether it's clothes, sneakers, a dress to wear to prom, a swimsuit, or a backpack for school. It doesn't cost them anything and significantly impacts their self-confidence and personal growth."

The Donation Center is one of three projects in Children's Home Network's recent campus development funded by grants from Hillsborough County. The local non-profit held a ribbon cutting Thursday at its Kids Village campus alongside Hillsborough County Commissioners Gwen Myers and Harry Cohen to formally open the Donation Center, a new maintenance building, and campus security upgrades.

The Donation Center is stocked with everything from clothes, shoes, self-care and hygiene items, school supplies, and room décor. The center is staffed by Children's Home Network staff and open to all children on campus to take whatever they want, whenever they need it.

Kids Village is home to more than 60 children, including young and expecting mothers living on campus in the Adolescents in Motherhood program. The Donation Center caters to all ages, from newborn to adult sizes, including diapers, toys, and infant essentials.

"Children's Home Network cares for some of the most vulnerable, at-risk children and provides them with a loving home and a place to heal from their trauma." said Hillsborough County Commissioner Harry Cohen. "Hillsborough County is proud to partner with Children's Home Network and fund these capital projects, which will help improve the lives of these children and make Kids Village an even more welcoming, resourceful home for the residents."

Hillsborough County provided \$1.6 million in community development block grants to fund the campus improvements.

The new maintenance building serves as headquarters for all repair work and storage to keep the 88-acre campus running, holding everything from lawnmowers and tools to spare furniture to keep the campus up and running. County funding also enabled Children's Home Network to install new security door readers. Many residents of Kids Village come from a history of abuse and human trafficking, and the safety upgrades help provide an extra layer of security for children and staff.

"Foster youth face uncertainty and stigma in their lives, and resources like the new donation center help bring back some joy. It allows kids to be kids." said Hillsborough County Commissioner Gwen Myers. "Thanks to this partnership between the County and Children's Home Network, these children can grow and thrive and feel like they belong."

The Donation Center is filled with essentials thanks to the support of donors and community partners. To find out more and how to get involved, visit www.childrenshomenetwork.org

About the Children's Home Network

Founded in 1892 in Tampa, Florida, the Children's Home Network is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that provides compassionate and effective integrated child welfare, behavioral health, early childhood intervention, and social service programs across the state. The Children's Home Network's residential campus in Tampa provides a safe, healing environment for over 60 children who have experienced abuse, trauma, and neglect. For more information, visit www.childrenshomenetwork.org

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PROJECTS FUNDED



DONATION CENTER

To provide the clothes, supplies and comforts for foster children to thrive.



MAINTENANCE BUILDING

To keep the campus up and running. It stores all the necessary equipment, tools, seasonal and spare items that help make a house a home.



CAMPUS SECURITY

Upgrades to safety locks provide an extra layer of security for the residents and staff.

ABOUT THE DONATION CENTER

The Donation Center helps foster youth living at Kids Village to regain a sense of normalcy, independence, and self-confidence. From clothes and shoes to self-care and hygiene items, school supplies, and room décor, the Donation Center provides residents with the belongings that every child needs to not only live but thrive.

The Donation Center is arranged to look like a store where children can 'shop' for their styles, sizes, and preferences. The shopping experience strives to spark joy and restore a sense of dignity. Clothes range from newborn sizes to 18+ to cater to the more than 60 children who live on campus at the Kids Village, including the teen mothers in the Adolescents in Motherhood program and their babies. Children can pick out their belongings to make their living environment warm, cozy, and personal.

The Donation Center also serves as the on-campus hub for receiving and organizing all donations of new items. It is open to all children on campus who are welcome to take whatever they need, whenever they need it.

THE IMPACT OF THE DONATION CENTER

The state of Florida provides a \$300 clothing allowance each year for children in foster care. However, \$300 is not enough to cover a child's needs, especially with increasing costs. Through the generosity of donors, Children's Home Network provides children with new and appropriate clothing, school supplies, hygiene items, and belongings to make them feel confident and integrated into Kids Village, their school, and their community.

When the boys and girls arrive at Kids Village, many of them have only the clothes they are wearing, having been removed from their previous homes at short notice without time to pack or say goodbye.

Peer relations and social connections are critical for a child's development and building interpersonal skills. All children want to 'fit in' with their peers, but this is even more difficult for foster children who are seen as 'different' by the other kids at school. Foster youth have to adapt to unfamiliar environments, trust strangers to take care of them, and make new friends all while dealing with their traumas.

The Donation Center helps remove the extra burdens that foster children face. Children should not have to worry about being teased for their shoes or making excuses to skip swim class because they don't own a swimsuit. They should not have to stop attending school because they are embarrassed about their clothes.

CHN encourages children to participate in extracurricular activities like football and cheerleading, but these require extra costs for uniforms and equipment. The Donation Center provides these supplies, ensuring the children can focus on being children.

For more information, visit www.childrenshomenetwork.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Local Social Worker Honored by Tampa Bay Lightning for More Than 20 Years of Service Helping Kinship Families Caring for At-Risk Children

Children's Home Network's Larry Cooper was named a Lightning Community Hero and awarded \$50,000 for the nationally recognized Kinship Navigator Program

TAMPA, Fla., DATE – Larry Cooper, Executive Vice President of Innovation at Children's Home Network, has been named a Lightning Community Hero in recognition of more than two decades of service helping kinship caregivers who take in at-risk children. Cooper, a long-time social worker, spearheaded the innovative Kinship Program at the Tampa Bay-based non-profit to prevent children from being separated from loved ones and placed in foster care.

Kinship care involves a child raised by relatives or other close adults with whom they have a family-like relationship. It can be coordinated both formally through the child welfare system, or more commonly through informal family agreements.

When Cooper joined Children's Home Network in 2001, he noticed that families often struggled with adapting to kinship care arrangements, an issue made worse by the absence of state support services that foster families typically receive.

"Every year, more and more grandparents, relatives, and family friends step up to care for children whose parents are no longer able to do so. Many of these kinship caregivers are often unprepared for the complex needs of being a primary caregiver, unaware of the resources available to them, and unfamiliar with the child welfare system." said Larry Cooper.

“That’s why we created the Kinship Program. To guide families through this major life transition and help them find the support they need to create a stable, loving family environment.”

In Florida, for every child placed in traditional foster care, there are seven children in kinship care. In 2020, this amounted to [165,000 children](#) in kinship care across the state, compared to only [23,000 children](#) in foster care placements. Child welfare agencies across the nation continue to prioritize placing children with adults whom they know instead of turning to non-relative foster parents. [U.S Census Data](#) estimates that over 2.5 million children are being raised in kinship care across the United States.

Children’s Home Network’s Kinship Program connects caregivers raising kinship children with services and resources to support family stability and self-sufficiency. It includes clothing and housing resources, public benefits, financial and legal aid, peer support groups, and referrals for medical and behavioral healthcare and tutoring.

The collaborative program focuses on not just the wellbeing of the child, but that of the whole family, ensuring that caregivers have the physical, emotional, and financial means to care for the child.

“The goal of the Kinship Program is to not only help the caregivers keep the child safe, but to enrich their lives. The integrated services help bring stability and joy to children who have experienced hardships and reduce stress on the caregiver.” said Irene Rickus, Chief Executive Officer at Children’s Home Network.

“Larry’s work on growing this program has had an incredible impact on the lives of so many families across the Tampa Bay region.”

Founded in 1892, Children’s Home Network provides integrated child welfare, behavioral health, early intervention and social service programs for at-risk children and families across Florida. When Cooper joined the organization in 2001, there was only one kinship staff coordinator. Today, with Larry’s leadership, there is a team of more than 50 employees and a dozen volunteers dedicated to the program, which has served over 10,000 kinship children. Cooper’s recognition from the Tampa Bay Lightning includes a \$50,000 donation to the Kinship Program, which helps the organization to meet the needs of the community’s most vulnerable families.

Cooper used his experience to develop an official KIN-TECH Navigation Model, and travels across the country to train organizations on how to implement the evidence-backed program.

Among the program’s integrated services is an online app for resource coordination, peer-to-peer navigation with experienced kinship caregivers, and interdisciplinary teams for high-risk families with multiple social support needs. The program also features Kin as Teachers 2.0, an early childhood development intervention for children aged up to 5 years, a ‘Time for Me’ self-care intervention for caregivers focusing on self-compassion, and an Intergenerational Advocacy Training Toolkit.

“We have taken the lessons learned over the past 20 years from working side-by-side with grandparents and other relatives to design and offer a highly effective Kinship Navigator Program.” Said Cooper. “The generous support from the Lightning Foundation helps shine a light on these amazing families and enables Children’s Home Network to be there for them during times of crisis.”

Kinship families in need assistance may learn more about the program at www.childrenshomenetwork.org/kinship

Founded in 1892 in Tampa, Children’s Home Network is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit organization that provides integrated child welfare, behavioral health, and social service programs for at-risk children and families across Florida. The compassionate support services promote child-wellbeing and family stability through both residential and at-home care options.

Through a network of compassionate support services in both residential care and at-home settings, Children’s Home Network promotes child wellbeing and family stability

About Children’s Home Network

Children’s Home Network provides compassionate support services to promote child-wellbeing and family stability through both residential and at-home care. Their network of services includes early intervention, behavioral health programs, and kinship, foster, and caregiver licensure and support programming. The residential campus in Tampa provides a safe, healing environment for over 60 children who have experienced trauma and neglect. For more information, visit www.childrenshomenetwork.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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New Life Village Opens Campus Expansion, Welcomes 16 Families Raising Kinship and Adoptive Children to its Unique Residential Community

70 residents move into the new townhomes this month, where they will receive on-site wraparound services designed for families raising foster-to-adoptive and kinship children who survived trauma, abuse and neglect

**** Photos of New Residents and Townhomes [Accessed Here](#) ****

TAMPA, Fla., Feb 16 2023 - [New Life Village](#), an intergenerational residential community for families of foster-to-permanence, kinship and adoptive children, opened its doors to 16 families this month moving into newly built townhomes on its 12-acre Tampa campus.

The unique village model, the only of its kind in Florida, is designed to support low-income families raising foster-to-permanence, kinship and adoptive children, many of whom survived trauma, abuse and neglect, and senior citizens, who live in the village as surrogate grandparents, tutors, and mentors.

“Tampa Bay is facing very challenging affordable housing and foster care crises. There are nearly 7,000 children in out of home care in the tri-county area. New Life Village offers stability for families in need of affordable housing who are positively affecting the foster care crisis by removing children from the system.” said Mariah Hayden, executive director of New Life Village. “This housing is foundational to their healthcare and healing. The expansion project has been several years in the making, and we are so excited to open our doors to 16 new families.”

Each family has their own 3 or 4 bed townhomes offered at below-market rental rates. Families have access to on-site wrap around services, including the Villages’ Trauma-Informed Wellness, Resilience and Character Development Program, which helps improve residents’ housing stability, wellbeing, access to health resources, educational attainment, and community connection.

The 16 new units adds to the existing 32 townhomes, plus a clubhouse, community garden, splash pad and pool, playground and football field.

Inspired by the proverb “*It takes a village to raise a child*”, New Life Village offers foster children and those who suffered abuse and trauma a sense of permanency and safety to heal and thrive.

“We moved to New Life Village to give our kids better opportunities. They don’t feel out of place or different here, just because they’re adopted. The other kids have been through the same experiences.” said Josie, a resident who moved into one of the new townhomes with her wife and their 6 kids, 5 of whom they adopted.

“There are so many activities to do here, from arts and crafts, movie nights, a huge playground, and they have a boatload of friends and a whole village looking out for them. It’s like paradise for the kids.”

Hillsborough County has the highest number of children in foster care in the state, and over 60,000 families in the County lack affordable housing options. New Life Village exists to reduce the number of children in foster care by encouraging more families to adopt or to prevent them from entering foster care at all.

Photos of residents moving into the new units can be found [HERE](#).

About New Life Village

Founded in 2012, New Life Village is an intergenerational community designed to support families raising foster to permanency and kinship children who have survived abuse, neglect and trauma, offering them program-rich, below-market housing and onsite wrap-around services. For more information, visit <https://newlifestvillage.org>



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TAMPA FAMILY HEALTH CENTERS TO PROVIDE FREE SAFE SLEEP CLASSES TO EDUCATE NEW AND EXPECTING PARENTS ON INFANT SLEEP SAFETY

Sleep-related infant deaths are the third leading cause of infant mortality among babies in the United States

TAMPA, Fla., March 1, 2023 - [Tampa Family Health Centers](#) is launching free Safe Sleep classes to educate parents on sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and how to reduce the risk through safe sleep practices for their child.

New and expecting parents who complete the hour-long Safe Sleep class at one of their health centers will receive a free pack 'n play, educational materials, and learn about proper sleep positioning for their child.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), there are around 3,500 sleep-related infant deaths each year in the United States. Research shows that implementing safe sleep practices, such as placing the infant on its back, using a firm sleep surface, and eliminating hazards such as blankets and pillows from the crib, can help lower the risk of sleep-related infant deaths.

“In the last several years, there has been an increase in infant sleep-related deaths. These events are preventable, and through awareness and education we know we can save lives.” said Dr. Ashley McPhie, Chief Medical Officer at Tampa Family Health Centers.

“Our new Safe Sleep class not only educates parents on the risks of unsafe sleep environments but gives them the necessary supplies to implement safe sleep routines at home. Participants receive a free pack n’ play, which is one of the safest places for infants to sleep.”

Tampa Family Health Centers is hosting a Program Launch Day to promote its Safe Sleep classes on Thursday, March 2nd from 8:30 am - 11:00 am at its health center on 7814 N. Dale Mabry Hwy, Tampa FL 33614. Attendees can learn about Safe Sleep, enter a raffle to win a pack 'n play, diaper bag, and breast pump, and can sign up for their first class.

Classes will be offered at various Tampa Family Health Center locations across Hillsborough County. Participants may register for their free Safe Sleep class by emailing TFHCSafeSleep@hcnetwork.org.

“At our Health Centers we encourage our parents to follow the ABCs of Safe Sleep which stands for Alone, Back, Crib.” said Dr. McPhie.

Tampa Family Health Centers recommends the following for safe sleep:

- 1) Place the infant Alone on the Back in a Crib, pack n’ play, or bassinet.
- 2) Share the room, not the space (beds, couches, chairs)
- 3) Set alarms for late night feedings to help the caregiver stay awake
- 4) Remove extra items from the sleeping space (stuffed animals, blankets, bumpers).

About Tampa Family Health Centers

As a not-for-profit, 501(c)3 organization, Tampa Family Health Centers (TFHC) provides high quality, accessible health care to Hillsborough County’s culturally diverse community. With 16 medical offices, telemedicine options, and mobile medical and dental units, TFHC provides a full range of comprehensive, integrated services to residents throughout the area. For more information, visit www.tampafamilyhc.com.

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RSA CONSULTING WELCOMES EXPERIENCED LEGISLATIVE STAFFER NATALIE BROWN

Natalie's addition marks the third new hire in a month as the firm continues to expand its footprint across the Tampa Bay region.

TAMPA, Fla., DATE - As part of its recent expansion, Tampa Bay-based lobbying firm, RSA Consulting, welcomes experienced legislative staffer Natalie Brown to the team. The new hire marks the third addition this month, as the firm charts a strong growth path, adding several more regional powerhouses to its client roster.

Natalie joins the firm as Government & Community Affairs Consultant after working for Tampa Bay-area legislators Senator Danny Burgess and Senator Tom Lee. She was honored as one of Influence Magazine's *Rising Stars in Florida Politics* earlier this year.

"Natalie's transition into RSA feels like both a natural step and the start of an exciting new chapter. She has been a close friend for several years, and her blend of professionalism and approachability adds an extra layer of synergy that we believe will greatly enhance our team's collaborative spirit" said Natalie King, Vice President and COO at RSA Consulting.

"Team RSA has long agreed that she is a perfect fit for our company culture and values, and we are thrilled to officially welcome her into our team."

While working in the Florida Senate, Natalie oversaw more than 90 bills signed into law across various policy areas. In her new position, Natalie's work will span mostly education, non-profit organizations, and economic development, areas that she is most passionate about.

“Having witnessed her can-do spirit, worth ethic, and thoughtfulness firsthand, I can confidently say that RSA is gaining a valuable asset in Natalie Brown. Their gain is our team’s loss, and her presence will undoubtedly be missed within our office. However, I am thrilled that she has chosen RSA for her next chapter” said Senator Danny Burgess.

“This is a great move for an outstanding person, and I look forward to all the great things she will achieve for the Tampa Bay community.”

The boutique firm, now a team of 10, maintains deep roots across the region. The firm’s President and CEO, Ron Pierce, also served as Chief Legislative Aide to Senator Tom Lee during his Senate Presidency before moving to work in-house at the Tampa Bay Lightning and then forming RSA in 2009.

With the Tampa Bay Lightning still on board as a client, along with more than 90 local and state organizations, RSA’s most recent additions include the Florida Aquarium, TECO, and BayCare Health System.

“The decision to bring Natalie Brown on board is underscored by our unwavering confidence in her capabilities, remarkable work ethic, and most importantly, her alignment with our company’s values” said Ron Pierce. “Natalie’s nuanced understanding of Tampa Bay’s dynamics and legislative experience position her as an excellent fit for the team, and we are truly excited about the bright future she has ahead of her.”

After graduating from Florida State University with a bachelor’s degree in economics and completing two legislative internships, Natalie worked for a national advocacy firm in Washington D.C before returning to state government. Natalie resides in Lakeland with her husband, Ethan, a Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Deputy, and their dog, Spock.

About RSA Consulting

Formed in 2009 by Ron Pierce, RSA Consulting is a ten-person, full-service government relations firm, with expertise in the areas of community affairs, strategic planning, and communications. RSA is based in Tampa with an additional office in Tallahassee. For more information, visit <https://www.rsaconsultingllc.com>

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Breaking Down Language Barriers: Hillsborough County Tax Collector Receives National Award for Pioneering Translation Devices for Non-English Speakers

Led by Tax Collector Nancy C. Millan, Hillsborough County Tax Collector's Office was the first in the state to implement the Pocketalk technology

**** [Link to video footage of Pocketalk devices in Hillsborough County](#) ****

TAMPA, Fla., December 18, 2023 - Six months after rolling out language translation devices in all its' offices, capable of translating speech and text into 82 languages, [Hillsborough County Tax Collector Nancy C. Millan](#) receives a [national award](#) recognizing her pioneering efforts in enhancing service accessibility for non-English speakers.

In a county of 1.5 million residents, which includes a substantial immigrant population, effective communication poses significant hurdles for non-English speakers accessing driver licenses, vehicle registrations, and other vital government services.

The Hillsborough County Tax Collector's office rolled out the [Pocketalk](#) handheld translation devices in all offices earlier this year, providing real-time, two-way speech and text translation. The technology empowers staff to bridge language gaps, making services more accessible and smoother for non-English speakers and reducing repeat office visits.

As the first Tax Collector in the state to adopt Pocketalk's technology, Hillsborough County's successful rollout has inspired **13** others across the state to implement it.

Recognizing her commitment to inclusion, Pocketalk awarded Tax Collector Millan with the esteemed Community Builder of the Year Award.

"Nancy Millan is truly deserving of our inaugural Community Builder of the Year award. As the first Tax Collector in Florida to implement Pocketalk devices, Nancy has transformed customer interactions, ensuring timely and compassionate service for all community members." said Joe Miller, Pocketalk's General Manager of North America.

"Through her leadership, Nancy and her team exemplify how technology can profoundly foster inclusivity and connectivity."

Since taking the helm in 2021, Tax Collector Nancy Millan has implemented a range of measures to cultivate an inclusive environment that embraces diversity at every level. The office employs more than 400 staff across its 8 locations, 70% of whom represent minority populations. In January 2024, the office will introduce a Skill-Based Incentives Pay Program supporting its diverse team with monthly stipends for language proficiency and certifications.

"Implementing Pocketalk technology directly addresses a vital community need," said Hillsborough County Tax Collector Nancy C. Millan. "The technology is not a substitute for human connection, but a tool to enhance it. The handheld devices foster greater connectivity between our staff and Hillsborough County residents, ensuring that language barriers do not hinder access to essential government services."

For video footage of the Pocketalk devices in action, including testimonials from Tax Collector Milan and Hillsborough County staff, [click here](#).

For further information regarding services, locations, and to book appointments, visit www.hillstax.org



COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS IMPACT MORE THAN JUST HEALTH CARE

As we celebrate National Health Center Week, Aug. 7-13, we recognize not only the positive health outcomes of the community, but the impact on public safety and security that community health centers have.

Last year's Super Bowl raised the conversation around public safety, especially the threat of human trafficking. But as the fanfare ended post-game, the risk did not. Our brave law enforcement did a tremendous job of shutting down trafficking rings. However, it's vital that the rest of us – the community – remain vigilant against what's often hidden in plain sight.

And that's how Suncoast Community Health Centers (Suncoast) helped save an 11-year-old victim from human traffickers. Yes, you read that right – eleven years old.

Suncoast offers primary care services to all patients, regardless of insurance status or ability to pay. We are uniquely positioned to care for people from all walks of life, especially underserved and at-risk populations.

It was during a routine medical appointment that we discovered the young patient was pregnant. The provider taking care of the patient heard her story, that she had consensual intercourse with an older boy she met at a park. Our staff undergo continuous training on how to spot a victim – and this provider immediately knew something was off.

Our team alerted Child Protective Services and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to investigate while we cared for the victim and her unborn child. The investigation and DNA test found that the adult male who claimed to be her father and brought her to the clinic was anything but that.

He was not the father of the young victim, as he claimed, but instead the father of her child. She had been held captive for several years.

The professionalism and integrity of law enforcement and CPS cannot be understated. They swiftly intercepted to arrest the perpetrator and his accomplice, who are now thankfully behind bars.

The young victim and her baby are now in the care of professionals, safe from the atrocities they had to endure. They have a long road of recovery ahead, but now they have a chance. It's a hard story to tell, but an important one. It shows the role we all must play in protecting one another.

At Suncoast, we have a risk management protocol to flag anything unusual. We see a lot of patients each year, and from time-to-time play a part in these major interceptions.

Our day-to-day impact may seem minor in comparison, but it remains critical for the well-being of the larger community. We provide medical, dental, and vision services at health centers across rural and suburban East Hillsborough and additional mobile units to give people in all corners of the county access to high-quality health care.

National Health Center Week features several focus days, including health center staff and stakeholder appreciation days. This week is an opportunity to thank the fantastic staff and providers, law enforcement, community partners, and elected leaders who work with community health centers to make Tampa Bay a better place.

Brad Herremans is the CEO of Suncoast Community Health Centers.



Dear CLIENT,

Going in to the 2021 Legislative Session, we expected the pandemic, election, and global social movements that defined 2020 to define the 2021 session. And they did. Legislative packages advanced through the chambers, prioritized by leadership, and carefully crafted over the course of the year.

What we did not expect, however, was the legislature working through this to then tackle a host of other issues. If it were not for the covid protocols and logistical changes, we could perhaps call it business as usual. 275 bills were passed this year, and the \$101.5 billion budget is the largest in the state's history. Legislation passed related to drinks-to-go, seatless bicycles, and farming operations, alongside larger reform packages for education and insurance. A new, historic, Compact with the Seminole Tribe has been signed and dates for Special Session have been set. This last Session proved just how resilient Florida is.

Despite the productivity, this Session was the strangest one we have experienced. The Capitol was closed to visitors, with a narrow exception for invite-only meetings and those testifying in some House committees.

We are not desk job people, and we certainly missed walking the halls of the Capitol like we used to. Our office was much quieter without clients joining us for advocacy days. But even as team meetings became Teams meetings and with Zoom and conference calls keeping us busy, we were able to not only meet our clients' expectations, but exceed them.

Advocacy does not end on *Sine Die*. We still have work to do. The planning has already begun for next Session, and we will work closely with our clients over the next few weeks and months to prepare. The good news is that the Capitol is now open, and we look forward to returning to Tallahassee for committee weeks in September and a sense of normalcy.

At the time of writing, the Governor has not yet finished signing legislation or distributing vetoes, so understand that some bills and budget numbers are subject to change. As always, we will keep you updated at every step of the way.

Thank you for allowing us to represent you and your interests for another Legislative Session. We look forward to seeing you in-person in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald W. Pierce".

A handwritten signature in black ink that appears to be "Mike".

Ron Pierce
President & CEO

Natalie King
Vice President & COO

CEO Statement

Letter from CEO

A Letter to our Partners

Dear Partners,

As part of the recent launch of Starpups, I am thrilled to announce that Starbucks will begin offering pet insurance coverage as part of our partner benefits package.

When I started Starbucks almost 50 years ago, I sought to create a company culture filled with respect, inclusion, and care for its employees, customers, and community. Almost half a century later, it fills me with great pride to know that these values still hold true.

Starbucks is one of the most well-respected brands across the world, and the reputation and growth of our company can be attributed to one thing: our partners.

It is our partners that bring Starbucks to life. Each and every day you bring your best, and it is your spirit and passion that drives us forward. We thank you for your continued hard work and dedication, particularly during the challenging times we have faced over the last few years.

At Starbucks we strive for success, and we believe that our success should always be shared. We want every partner to love working at Starbucks and to know that they are an important member of our community. We are proud to lead the way with an extensive benefits package to support our partners and their families.

Starbucks has long offered access to comprehensive healthcare benefits for both part-time and full-time employees. We continued to build on this with free college tuition in the Starbucks College Achievement Plan, paid parental leave, and equity pay.

At Starbucks we not only want our partners to feel appreciated, but their families supported too.



Our pets are not just pets, they are part of our family. Starbucks has always been a dog-friendly company, and we are excited to bring this to life through the Starpups initiative. As we recognize the importance pets have in our customers lives, we also recognize the joy, happiness and love that pets bring to our partners' lives.

Beginning February 1, 2023, Starbucks will offer pet insurance as part of our comprehensive benefits package. Both part-time and full-time partners will be able to enroll to give you and your families a piece of mind that the *whole* family has access to healthcare.

Thank you again for all that you do to help create a welcoming Third Place and Starbucks Experience. I am proud to be a partner in this journey.

Warmly,

Howard Schulz
CEO

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS

BLOG POST

VISIT FLORIDA

BEACHES

PLACES TO GO

THINGS TO DO

DEALS

MORE

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4 Common Mistakes Tampa Bay Visitors Make - and How to Make the Most of Your Trip

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Avoid the rain, traffic, and beach burn-out with these tips for first-time travelers to make the most of your trip

By Krista Landers, Chief Communications Officer at Visit Florida, Tampa Bay resident and beach enthusiast.



Have you ever planned out an epic vacation, and then had your trip ruined by bad weather, heavy traffic, or stress?

Tampa Bay is a vibrant, lively place with so much (seriously, so much) stuff to do. But for first-timers, sometimes the endless choices can get a little overwhelming and lead to some classic newbie errors. Consider this a cheat sheet for the insider knowledge that us locals know about.

Here are four common mistakes that visitors make when visiting Tampa Bay:

1. Spending Too Much Time Driving Across the Bay

While our sports teams might have you thinking that Tampa Bay is a city (thanks, Buccaneers, Lightning and Rays), it's actually a large region made up of several cities surrounding a body of water – *Tampa Bay*.

Unless you're a driving fanatic, make sure you know which area of the Bay you'll be staying in so you can plan activities accordingly and account for any travel time.

On one side of the bay you have the City of Tampa and its diverse neighborhoods: South Tampa, Ybor City, Seminole Heights, SOHO, Channelside. On the West side of Tampa bay, over by the beaches, you have Downtown St Petersburg, St Pete Beach, and Clearwater Beach, just to name a few. The drive from downtown Tampa to downtown St Petersburg is about 30-45 minutes. The drive from downtown St Petersburg (on the bay side, directly opposite Tampa) over to St Pete Beach is another 30 minutes.

For example, if you're headed to Tampa for a day at [Busch Gardens](#), then head over to the infamous [Columbia Restaurant](#) in Ybor City for dinner while you're in the area and wander along 7th Ave to get a feel for the culture in the Cuban City. Visiting the [Dali Museum](#) in St Petersburg? Wander a few blocks over to [Parks & Rec bar](#) afterwards for a fun sports-bar feel with hundreds of games, and even a life-sized beer pong court.

There are many wonderful things to do and see across both sides of the bay. But, remember to map out your plans so that you're not constantly zipping backwards and forwards across the bridge and eating up precious vacation time!



Source: Tampa Bay Welcome Guide

2. Believing the Sunshine State is always Sunny

Imagine this, you're packed for your trip, armed with all the SPF, sun hats, sunglasses, bug spray, and shorts and tees and bathing suits you could squeeze into the suitcase. You think

you're ready to take on the Florida heat. And then you get here, and realize you left one of the most important things at home.

An umbrella.

Yes... it rains in Florida. Perhaps calling us the Sunshine State is misleading. Consider it the *mostly* Sunshine State.

While we have beautiful blue skies and warm weather *most* of the year round, the summer season is not all you would expect. Summer in Florida is the rainy season. Hurricane season lasts from June 1 – November 30.

During the summer months, expect a short rain shower and maybe a gnarly thunderstorm in the late afternoon. Tampa Bay is known as the lightning capital of the U.S (that explains our hockey team's name), and intense thunderstorms are pretty standard here. It usually clears up within 30 minutes, and then soon after the blue skies are back. They come and go daily like clockwork, so check your weather app.

What does this mean for your trip? If you're having a day at the beach or on a boat, head inside for an hour or two for some early evening cocktails, check out the shopping, visit one of the many museums or aquariums, or get a bite to eat at a beach-front restaurant (indoor seating!!)

There are plenty of indoor activities to keep you busy. So, bring an umbrella with you. And if the sky suddenly turns dark and it looks like it's going to rain – it's time to head inside.

[10 Indoor Activities in Tampa Bay You Should Check Out](#)

3. Not Having a Transportation Plan

Tampa Bay has two main airports: Tampa International, and St Petersburg-Clearwater. Both have a huge list of domestic and international flights, and are located fairly central in the region, making it easy to access your hotel or accommodation.

Public transportation options across the region are limited. So, if you arrived by plane, renting a car will be your best bet. Both airports have rental car facilities at their arrivals terminals, but these can get busy at peak times. Make rental car reservations online prior to arriving.

However – there are a few super fun transportation options that you *have* to try out!

The [Tampa Pirate Water Taxi](#) is a bright yellow boat that stops at various museums and attractions throughout Downtown Tampa. It runs parallel to the Riverwalk pathway, which we highly recommend you also check out. Buy tickets online or at one of the docks.



Source: Tampa Bay Times

The [Tampa Historic Streetcar](#) is a FREE streetcar that runs from along a 3-mile track from downtown Tampa, through Channelside and into Ybor City. It runs every 15 minutes and guests can hop on and off at any of the 11 stops on the way.



Source: TECO StreetCar

4. Not Doing Your Research on All the Things to Do

Yes, we have some of the best beaches in the country – but there is so much more to do in our vibrant region than just spend your days in the sand. There truly is [something to do for everyone](#), so plan ahead to get the most out of your Tampa Bay trip.

For example, did you know that Tampa Bay is the state’s craft beer capital, with more than 30 local breweries and counting? Some of the most notable are [Cigar City Brewing](#) in West Tampa, [Tampa Bay Brewing Company](#) in Ybor City, the former cigar capital of the world, [3 Daughter’s Brewing](#) in St Petersburg. If wine is more your thing, check out local winery [Keel and Curley](#) in Plant City for some delicious blueberry wines.



Source: TripSavvy

Looking for fun for the whole family? The [Tampa Bay CityPass](#) gives you admission to 5 of the region's top attractions: Busch Gardens, the Florida Aquarium, [ZooTampa](#), Clearwater Marine Aquarium, and Tropics Boat Tour and Sunset Cruise, or the Museum of Science and Industry.

Want something fun and unique to do with your friends and family? Check out the [Totally Tiki Tour](#), a floating tiki boat where you can enjoy beautiful views and dolphin sightings while you sip and sail. Decorate cakes and chocolate at the boutique [Cake Drip](#), or create your own custom candle at [The Candle Pour](#).



Source: Totally Tiki Tour

Check out [Visit Tampa Bay](#) for more trip ideas.

[17 Can't Miss Restaurants in Tampa Bay](#)

Tampa Bay is an awesome place for every type of traveler, whether it's a bachelorette trip, romantic getaway, family vacation or quick weekend getaway, there is something for everyone to do.

Visit Florida makes planning your vacation seamless with our online Trip Planner. Explore thousands of hotels, activities, and restaurants and then book directly through the online app, including transportation. Plan your trip for free at www.visitflorida/triplanner

Social Media Posts - Twitter



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@VISITFLORIDA



🙋 Raise your hand if your New Years' Resolution is to travel

Well... we know a place 🌴

Get a head start on your vacay planning 📌
visitflorida.com/tripplanner.com

📍 Clearwater Beach



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Dreaming of #SpringBreak?

Yeah, us too 🌴

Our group trip planner has got you sorted 📌
visitflorida.com/tripplanner.com

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👋 Ahoy, Matey

Jose Gaspar and his Krewe are headed for #TampaBay 🇺🇸

Make ye' voyage plans visitflorida.com/tripplanner.com

🏰 CityofTampa #Gasparilla





CONTENT SAMPLES

Hub Theme 1 - 'How to'

Content Bucket:

Educational + Typographical Image + Descriptions of Best Practice

Frequency: Every other Tuesday

#LaundryHacks

#CandleCare

TYLER
CANDLE CO.

LAUNDRY CARE
Tips for washing denim

- Turn garment inside out to prevent abrasion
- Pre-treat any stains
- Use cool water for blue or dark denim
- Use mesh garment bag for delicate denim with special detailing, distressing, or embellishment




Is your denim fading? Your favorite Jeans shrunk? Check out these #LaundryHacks to keep your denim in tip top condition 🍀

TYLER
CANDLE CO.

CANDLE CARE

Trim the wick to at least 1/4 inch to ensure a clean burn.




PSA: Trim. The. Wick!
#CandleCare 🕯️

TYLER
CANDLE CO.

CANDLE CARE

Cherish the first burn!

Burn your candle for at least two hours on the first burn so that the wax melts across the entire jar.



This will prevent it from tunnelling.



Burn baby Burn! 🕯️
To prevent tunnelling, make sure to burn the candle for atleast two hours until the wax melts across the top.
#CandleCare



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TYLER CANDLE CO.

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Trim the wick to at least 1/4 inch to ensure a clean burn.




PSA: Trim. The. Wick! #CandleCare 🕯️

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CANDLE CARE

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Burn baby Burn! 🕯️ To prevent tunnelling, make sure to burn the candle for atleast two hours until the wax melts across the top. #CandleCare

Brand Style Guidelines

Tyler Candle Company



CONTENT SAMPLES

Hub Theme 3 - Fragrance Friday

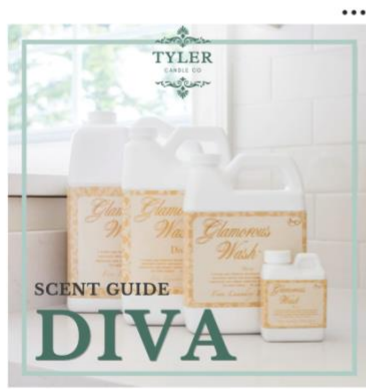
Content Bucket:

Promotional + Image Carousel + Product Placement Images

Frequency: Every Friday

#FragranceFriday

Image Carousel 1



Meet Diva, our signature scent! 🍷
A warm and complex fragrance, this iconic smell will have people's heads turning. #FragranceFriday



Meet Diva, our signature scent! 🍷
A warm and complex fragrance, this iconic smell will have people's heads turning. #FragranceFriday

Brand Style Guidelines

Tyler Candle Company



CONTENT SAMPLES

Hygiene Posts



On the first day of Christmas, my true love said to me...
One Glamorous Candle 🕯️

Happy December 1st! We have our advent candle burning.



It's World Sleep Day! 🌙

Here's our top tip: wash your sheets in our Glamorous Wash detergent for the BEST night sleep you've ever had 🤪
#SelfCare



Happy International Women's Day!

We are SO proud to have a team of amazing, strong, confident women. Who run the world? Girls!
#WomensDay 💕

Session Overview



2022 LEGISLATIVE SESSION REPORT

PUBLISHED MARCH 21, 2022

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30	BILLS THAT DIDN'T PASS

The Legislature adjourned Sine Die on March 14, 2022, after 63 days in Session. Out of the 285 bills passed, Florida tackled numerous controversial issues that drew national attention and scrutiny – even enticing comments from President Biden - including a 15-week abortion ban and the Parental Rights in Education Bill, referred to by opponents as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill.

Each year lawmakers convene at the Capitol for their one constitutional requirement: to pass a balanced budget. Due to the 72 hour cooling off period, they extended session by three days, returning to the Capitol on Monday to vote on the budget. Budget negotiations were bumped up to the full Appropriations Chairs, with conference committees set to meet over the weekend of March 5th and 6th. Negotiations, however, were delayed slightly due to wildfires in Bay County, the home district of House Appropriations Chair Jay Trumbull.

Following the decennial census, lawmakers had a second requirement this year – draw the new district boundaries. While state legislative maps are approved and implemented, Congressional maps are still at play because the Governor is expected to veto the maps passed by the legislature. The maps must be approved by June, so we expect to see action on this over the coming weeks.

At a press conference after the Legislature adjourned, Governor DeSantis referred to Florida as the “best law and order state in the entire country,” pointing to issues such as bonuses for first responders and incentives to attract more law-enforcement officers from other states. He also described the Session as the “year of the parent in the state of Florida.”, referring to changes to classroom instruction, such as new regulations on how race, sexual orientation, and gender identity should be discussed in grades K-3, increased oversight on which classroom materials students can access, and a ban on teaching Critical Race Theory.

Unlike last year, this Session passed without Covid restrictions, and the Capitol was once again open to visitors. Team RSA’s favorite part of the legislative session is bringing our clients to Tallahassee to meet with legislators, and it was our pleasure to once again host clients at our office.

Please note that at the time of publication the Governor has yet to sign the majority of bills passed by the legislature, including the budget. We expect some vetoes to occur and will update you accordingly.

GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT

The Budget

“ We responsibly invested nonrecurring federal pandemic funds in key infrastructure priorities that will create jobs and further bolster Florida’s economy. Floridians can be very proud of the fact that our state government lives within its means and set aside historic reserves, while at the same time cutting taxes on the goods Florida families need – like diapers and school clothes. The free state of Florida has come out of the pandemic strong and growing, and I am confident our best days are ahead.” ”

- Senate President Wilton Simpson

RSA 2022 Legislative Report Page 05

Session Stats

\$112.1
BILLION
BUDGET
FY 2022-2023

10.4 %
HIGHER THAN
LAST YEAR

PREVIOUS BUDGETS
2021 - \$101.5 bn
2020 - \$92.3 bn
2019 - \$91 bn

285
Bills
Passed

249
Bills Passed In Only
One Chamber

4324
Votes Taken

3735
Bills Filed

1896
Amendments

RSA 2022 Legislative Report Page 04

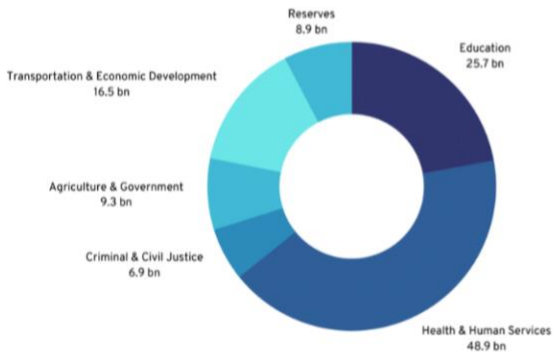
Budget

FY 2022-2023 This year's record \$112.1 billion budget came in at 10.4% higher than last year's. Following the Legislature passing the *General Appropriations Act*, it will now be sent to the Governor for his signature, where he has the power of line-item veto. Last year he cut \$1.5 billion from the budget. The budget takes effect July 1, and he has until then to issue his vetoes and signature.

Total
\$112.1 bn

Included in the budget is \$1 billion to raise state workers' pay by at least 5.38%. These across-the-board raises will ensure that all state workers are paid a minimum of \$15 an hour. This will particularly impact school district staff, such as bus drivers and custodial workers, who were not included in the teacher and instructional personnel pay raises that have happened over the last few years. Notably, it also raises nursing home workers to this new pay threshold.

\$1 billion is set aside for an Inflation Fund reserved for budget adjustments necessary to counter increased costs because of inflation. The House originally proposed \$2 billion for this fund, called the 'Budgeting for Inflation that Drives Elevation Needs fun', or 'BIDEN'. Ultimately the budget conference committees settled on \$1 billion and a more neutral name for the pot of money.



Budget

HIGHLIGHTS

The budget was bolstered by \$3.5 Billion in Covid Relief Funds that they did not spend last year. Included in this is \$1.47 billion for construction and maintenance projects at schools and colleges. \$400 million to install broadband internet infrastructure in rural areas, and \$200 million to the Resilient Florida grant program to protect against the impact of climate change. It also funds the Job Growth Grant Fund at \$50 million. \$115 million will fund upgrades to the state capitol, and \$80 million will build a new state emergency operations center. Included is \$200 million to make up for the revenue the state will lose as part of a one-month moratorium on the gas tax starting Oct. 1 — one-fifth of the \$1 billion five-month gas tax moratorium requested by the Governor.

The tax package is estimated to save Floridians \$658 million. In addition to the one-month moratorium on the state's 25-cent gas tax, it features several sales tax holidays. Included are tax breaks on back-to-school items (July 25 to Aug.7) and hurricane preparedness items (May 28 – Jun. 10) The Legislature approved a 2nd annual Freedom Week (July 1-7), which exempts sales taxes on certain recreational events and cultural activities. They added a new tax holiday this year to waive sales taxes on tools for skilled trades like mechanics, carpenters, plumbers, and electricians (Sept. 3-9) Legislation passed will make children's diapers exempt from sales tax for one year.

The Legislature established a 'rainy day fund' for the Governor to tap into after a declared emergency to help with the response. \$500 million was sent to this funding pool, the Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund.

In addition to federal Covid funds, lawmakers had extra general revenue to work with. State economists in January announced better-than-expected tax returns, estimating that lawmakers had an additional \$4 billion in general revenue to allocate, mostly due to a rise in sales tax, which came in over \$2 billion more than previously estimated in August.

Note - The facts and figures listed in the budget breakdown below are valid as of March 21st, prior to the budget being signed by the Governor, and are therefore subject to change.