

Remember This Veteran?



When you mention the word senior or veteran or oldest birthday I think of Howard Mautner. He has been our newspaper many times while at the military celebrations honoring veterans and our country. This time he was visiting

the Parade of Senior Services. I caught him during a short break. As you can see he is wearing his veterans hat proudly. I thanked him for his service. Marion County has many seasoned warriors that are up in years. Thank Them all.

AI and Religion

By TomL

I was listening to the Glen Beck radio on 97.3 and they were discussing belief in God and how AI could or might try to take over the way we process thoughts. AI will not understand religious beliefs. AI processes information that you feed into it. It will process things that it was taught. So we need to teach AI about religion and GOD in a logical sense. It is always dangerous to talk about religion and especially writing about it but here I go! Now remember I'm not a religious scholar. I am trying to get people to think about the future and AI.

Our belief in God is taught to us as history of our creator through the Bible. Without Adam and Eve taking a bite of an apple man kind would not exist. Reverse psychology has worked for years, "Don't bite that Apple". Remember man and woman have to eat to survive. There was no fire to cook

with. It was a hard life to be born into.

God gave his son to die on the cross for for our sins. He was born to a virgin mother. What is AI going to do with that one? So we have to remember AI is only what we feed into it, it is a machine that will do logical processes! It will ask the questions of itself, who is he? Where did he come from? Where is he now. The answer is he is in our hearts and minds! We believe in the creator because we would not be here if not for him.

I think AI will be great for medical cures. It can put together the thought process of thousands of doctor, scientist, medical students that have a curious side to come up with cures, instead of the Fauci of this world.

Some people are afraid of AI, the young are curious about it and can see advantages. How it will turn out will be told in the future.

Disclaimer when I use the words man kind I

Continued page 3



Ocala Fire and rescue / Representative Ashley Lopez attends the Parade of Senior

Services. Great booth giving out plastic fire helmets.

Space X Comes to Florida

Governor Ron DeSantis Welcomes SpaceX's Starship Operations to Florida

Ron DeSantis welcomed SpaceX's decision to bring Starship launch capacities and processing operations to Florida. Starship will be the first rapidly and fully reusable launch vehicle in history, designed to carry both crew and cargo to Earth orbit, the Moon, Mars, and beyond.

In support of these missions, SpaceX will construct new launch and landing infrastructure for Starship at multiple pads within NASA's Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, pending environmental approval, as well as a new integration facility, called Gigabay, which will have more than 40 million cubic feet of vehicle processing space. The project includes at least \$1.8 billion of SpaceX capital investment and will bring an estimated 600 new full-time jobs in the Space Coast by 2030.

"Florida is the present and future of the space industry with leading space companies—like SpaceX—investing in the Free State of Florida," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "We welcome SpaceX's Starship to our state."

Kiko Dontchev, SpaceX's Vice President of Launch said, "SpaceX was founded with the ultimate mission of making humanity

multi-planetary, and Starship is the vehicle that will enable us to become a spacefaring civilization. Through this significant expansion of Starship production and launch capabilities in Florida, we're taking a big step toward achieving this goal, and we are grateful to our partners across the State for their ongoing support."

"Under Governor DeSantis' bold and unwavering leadership, Florida continues to generate wins across the aerospace and aviation industry," said Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly. "SpaceX's investment in Florida is the direct result of strategic, critical investments made by the Governor in aerospace and aviation infrastructure and workforce development that will have long-term, positive impacts on the lives of Florida's families and communities, building economic success that will be continue impact the lives of Floridians for many generations to come."

"SpaceX's investment in Florida is a major victory for our state and the future of the space industry," said Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Jared W. Perdue, P.E. "Florida continues to set the pace for space innovation, breaking records with 93 launches in 2024—up from 74 in 2023—and the state is on track to continue this record-breaking momentum into the future as a national leader in space manufacturing, launches, and business development. A special thank you to Governor Ron DeSantis, the Florida Department of

Continued page 3

Chair Chat

The Marion County Republican Executive Committee is directly engaging at the local and state level regarding many local road & building policies and proposed state legislation that affects our farmland preservation areas and so much more. This goes hand and hand with working to get Republicans elected and creating those relationships with these elected representatives along the way.

As we look at this year's current legislative session, we are noticing that many proposed bills may possibly override local zoning and our county's Comprehensive Plan. The public's perception to these bills, such as HB 1209/SB 1118 seems to be a climate of frustration, bewilderment and a sense of perplexity.

As republicans, a key valued principle is “home rule,” and while these bills are complex in their reach, do they seek to reduce home rule provisions....Understanding the Comprehensive Plan which is designed to ensure responsible growth, starts with we the people engaging with our elected leaders, attending Board of County Commissioners meetings and workshops, Planning & Zoning meetings and simply asking questions!

As we are undergoing explosive growth in Marion county and exhibiting the growing pains of traffic and lagging in infrastructure development, the public consensus is that we do not need an accelerant type of bill or one that will approve high density housing in rural/agricultural areas.

So the question remains, do these current bills circumvent the authority of our local government and remove public input from the process and do they infringe into the FPA? All this to say, to find the answers, we must continue to engage, listen, and learn to make our own informed decisions. If you would like to join our efforts with the Marion County Republican Executive Committee, we meet the third Monday of each month. Our next meeting is April 21st, at 6:30 pm; location OPD Ocala Police Department (402 S Pine ave) in their community room. More information www.marioncountyrec.com

Respectfully,
Brigitte Smith

America is a Democracy

The Republicans believe in:
Democracy | Definition “THE PEOPLE RULE”

Democracy is a system of government in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or through freely elected representatives.

Republicans
Democrats
Liberals

Bureaucracy | Definition “THE GOVERNMENT RULE”

A system of government in which most of the important decisions are made by state officials rather than by elected representatives.

Continued page 3

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CEP News

Ocala, FL — The stage is set for the 11th Annual Youth Business Plan Competition, an event that celebrates the innovative spirit of Marion County's high school students. Aspiring young entrepreneurs will gather on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at 5:00 PM at the Power Plant Business Incubator (405 SE Osceola Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471) to present their big ideas and turn them into reality.

Hosted by the Ocala Metro Chamber & Economic Partnership (CEP), this event has become a cornerstone for youth development and entrepreneurship in the region. Each year, high school students compete to pitch their business plans to a panel of local business leaders and mentors, vying for support, guidance, and potential investment to bring their concepts to life.

"This competition isn't just about winning prizes; it's about creating opportunities for young people to dream big and develop real-world skills," said Heather Shubirg, Chief Growth Officer at Ocala Metro CEP. "We're proud to provide a platform where students can connect with mentors and leaders in our business community."

Turning Dreams into Reality

The competition aims to inspire creativity, problem-solving, and leadership among the next generation of business innovators. Participants will present detailed business plans that address market needs, showcase innovative solutions, and demonstrate the entrepreneurial mindset critical for success in today's economy.

Sponsors, including Raney's, Campus

USA Credit Union, and Colen Built Development, play a pivotal role in supporting this initiative.

Why It Matters

In addition to encouraging innovation, the event creates opportunities for networking and mentorship. Students gain access to industry leaders, feedback on their business strategies, and insight into what it takes to succeed in the competitive world of entrepreneurship. Past participants have gone on to launch thriving businesses, attributing much of their early success to the experience gained during the competition.

Join the Event

Community members are encouraged to attend and support these bright young minds as they pitch their ideas. The event is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Freddie@OcalaCEP.com.

This annual celebration of youth entrepreneurship underscores Ocala's commitment to cultivating a vibrant local economy and preparing the next generation of business leaders.

AI and Religion

Continued from page 1)
mean "men and women".

They are each different and should remain that way, just two genders! HAVE A RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR GOD!

What say
YOU?

Appointed Judge Stops Investigation

Commerce, and Space Florida for their leadership in solidifying Florida's position as the epicenter of the space economy."

"SpaceX's Gigabay project helps advance Florida's mission to solidify our state as the world's hub for aerospace commerce. It builds on the foundation we've laid over the past decade and accelerates our vision for the future—one where Florida is the choice for the best minds, the boldest innovators, and the most forward-thinking investments. Success in space requires a holistic approach to infrastructure, strategy, and talent, and Florida is leading the way," said Rob Long, President and CEO, Space Florida.

Congressman Mike Haridopolos said, "This transformative \$1.8 billion investment by SpaceX cements Florida's Space Coast as the launchpad for the future of American spaceflight. With 600 new full-time jobs and the historic addition of Starship launches from Florida, this expansion strengthens our economy, grows our aerospace workforce, and solidifies our leadership in the next generation of space exploration. Governor DeSantis' steadfast support for the space industry has reinforced Florida's position as the nation's space capital, attracting major investments like this and securing our leadership in the future of space exploration. This investment is a testament to SpaceX's confidence in Florida's central role in spaceflight, and we are proud to support the

groundbreaking missions that will lift off from our shores."

This project is a significant win for Florida's aerospace and aviation industry and is the direct result of years of work and collaboration between SpaceX, FloridaCommerce, the Florida Department of Transportation and Space Florida.

Democracy

Continued from page 2

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plural noun: bureaucracies

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Tom Loury *Tom Loury Long time member of CEP/Ocala Chamber of Commerce, Past President of the Ocala Business Leaders and current member, Co-Founder and past President of Select Business Associates, Past President of the Lady Lake Chamber and current member. If you want to make contact with the newspaper / Tom Loury email tloury@att.net*

PUBLISHER'S NOTES



TomL

I would rather that Trump not use the term "You better do this or else!" I believe in what he is doing. I think he can say, "you need follow the Federal Law," meaning female sport are for women

only and no males in the woman's locker room or women's sports. I know some men can't compete with other men and they want a place to participate but professional sports is not it! Go to another country or play shuffle board.

You men professional athletes out there should protect women's sports.

Maine should say no men in women sports also go along with deportation of what is describe in the Constitution as illegals. You can't start out with Citizenship by breaking the law.

THE ENEMY!

The enemy has done wrong, they come at us through some of our leaders greed and things like Jeffery Epstein! Once they made that trip the second time, they knew what was going on and they are probably there to participate then they have compromised themselves and our country. But they have come at us through our food shortages, E G G S, t h r o u g h o u r W A T E R (Contamination?), setting fires? How much one match cost? There is a army of illegals in our country thanks to the Democrats. When I was a kid a hundred years ago my grandmother and us three kids built a chicken coop with sticks, crap one by twos, a handful of roofing nails and cardboard. Once we built the coop we painted it with outdoor paint. It lasted two years. We had eggs and chicken.

I wonder what is going to happen to the people who are addicted? We are lucky we have small ranchers and farmers. That is a great strength. We are all armed another great strength. We have to watch out for

cattle decease or any kind of animal decease. With cattle they can effect the supply of meat, milk, cheese, etc. It is possible for the enemy to introduce decease. We need to protect our food sources and our water sources. China is already over fishing our seas. If you look at our country we have to many weak spot. Trump is closing them but how much can he do and how fast can he do it. It looks to me like we are in a bad way as far as peace through strength. But Trump is making deals and some country's agree to it or live under China's / Russia's iron fist.

Speaking of the enemy. When I was a mere 14 year's old. I was in the Optimist International speaking tour. I had won the local speaking contest. I was the youngest to go to Cuba. Castro was fighting in the hills. There were machine nest guns set up all through Havana. I stayed in the Hotel National. I gave a speech "Freedom our most precise heritage."

The dictator of Cuba Batista was in the audience. I stuck out my hand in meeting him and he patted me on the head and said something I did not under stand. When it was over they had to make sure the Cuban boy won something so he got a third place award so we could get out of the country safe. I was told by the judges that was my spot buuuuut! I did not mind after what I went through that happened in the home town where I live. Two of the boys composed a nasty letter to the local Optimist leader Hank that was not nice about me, they were older and thought they should have won the trip. It always come back to bite you!

I am a patriot! During the Vietnam war I tried to volunteer and was turned down

because I had complete fusion on both side of my lower Lumbar back, so once in a while I would have extreme Sciatic pain. They said I could not go. I really felt bad because my brother was shipping out and I wanted to go also. My wife and I were sitting at a table at the Oceans Buffet and sitting next us was a guy sitting by himself. I struck up a conversation. I ask do you live in Ocala. He said no I live in Jacksonville. I ask what profession are you in. He said I work for the VA, he ask me did you serve? I had a twinge of embarrassment. I said thank you for your service and I explained I was a patriot, because the Military Medical Doctor examining me said NO. At that second I was embarrassed like a flash back because I wanted to go, but people don't always believe you. I lost a lot of friends in that war. Thank the lord my brother made it through. YOU VETS OUT THERE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!

Was reading job description's on the internet and then I saw it. DOG FOOD TASTERS WANTED! These dog food company's hires people to taste dog food. I will have nightmares tonight thinking about this, but they give reports on taste, aroma, texture, visual in writing. I'm thinking what happens when they taste something really bad? They said they could make up to \$100,000 per year WOW!

Newspaper Deadlines

Editorial & Ad Copy for May

Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown

Noon, April 23rd

Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator

12am, March 30th

Seniors Voice of Ocala/Ocala Downtown Products of TomL Publishing, LLC

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FROM THE DESK OF
CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK



Rep. Cammack & Colleagues Reintroduce Bipartisan Legislation To Improve Agriculture Disaster Assistance

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Rep. Kat Cammack and her colleagues

reintroduced the bipartisan Fair Access to Agriculture Disaster Programs Act, aimed at removing barriers to agriculture disaster assistance for producers. This bill would provide farmers, ranchers, and other agriculture producers with improved access to federal disaster assistance following natural disasters, ensuring that basic safety net programs are available when they are needed most. Reps. Jimmy Panetta (CA-19), Zoe Lofgren (CA-18), and Austin Scott (GA-08) co-led this legislation. A companion bill has been introduced in the Senate by Senators Alex Padilla (D-CA) and Thom Tillis (R-NC).

The Fair Access to Agriculture Disaster Programs Act would address outdated adjusted gross income (AGI) limitations that prevent many full-time farmers from accessing crucial USDA disaster programs. These limitations have not kept pace with inflation, and specialty crop producers, particularly those affected by disasters like flooding in California, have faced significant barriers to receiving aid.

"Our farmers, ranchers, and producers work hard every day to feed and clothe our nation. When disaster strikes, they should be able to access the important programs designed to protect them," said Rep. Cammack. "The AGI limitations set years ago have denied access for producers who truly need it, and the exemption for farms making 75 percent of their income from farming and farming-related practices is much-needed to bolster resilience. I'm glad to join my House and Senate colleagues in leading this effort to ensure fair access to these critical disaster programs."

"Barriers to assistance programs for our farmers and ranchers can hold back the

recovery of rural economies after natural disasters," said Rep. Panetta. "This bipartisan legislation would ensure that producers who depend on agriculture for their livelihoods can access the resources they need to not only get by during times crisis but also to rebuild stronger. This is a commonsense solution that will strengthen our agricultural safety net and the agriculture of our country."

Specifically, the Fair Access to Agriculture Disaster Programs Act would:

- Exempt the AGI limitation for farms that get 75% of their income from farming or related farming practices (agri-tourism, direct-to-consumer marketing of agricultural products, sale of agricultural equipment owned by person or entity, and other agriculture-related activities, as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture).
- This would apply to the following disaster programs:

- Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybees, and Farm-Raised Fish Program (ELAP)
- Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP)
- Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP)
- Tree Assistance Program (TAP)
- Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP)

The Fair Access to Agriculture Disaster Programs Act is endorsed by the Almond Alliance, American Honey Producers Association, Blue Diamond, California Aquaculture Association, California Farm Bureau, California Strawberry Commission, East Coast Shellfish Growers Association, Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, International Fresh Produce Association, National Aquaculture Association, North Carolina Farm Bureau, Northwest Aquaculture Alliance, Specialty Crop Farm Bill Alliance, and Western Growers.

Reps. Cammack, Castor, Carter, DeGette, Kelly & Mackenzie Introduce Bill To Prevent Maternal Deaths and Improve Health Outcomes For Mothers

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Reps. Kat Cammack (R-FL), Kathy Castor (D-FL), Earl L. "Buddy" Carter (R-GA), Diana DeGette (D-CO), Robin Kelly (D-IL), and Ryan Mackenzie (R-PA) introduced the Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act of 2025.

This bill would assist states in preserving maternal health throughout pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum, addressing disparities in maternal health and finding solutions to enhance health care quality and outcomes for mothers.

"The maternal health crisis demands urgent action, and the Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act is a necessary step toward protecting mothers and babies across the country," said Rep. Kat Cammack (R-FL). "This bipartisan legislation renews our commitment to addressing maternal mortality by supporting Maternal Mortality Review Committees, fostering better data collection, and equipping healthcare providers with evidence-based best practices. Every mother deserves access to safe, high-quality care throughout her pregnancy and beyond. I'm proud to join my colleagues in reintroducing this bill in the 119th Congress, and I urge swift passage to make meaningful progress in saving lives and strengthening families."

"The maternal health crisis demands action, and Congress must do its part to ensure that every mom has access to the care they need before, during and after pregnancy, keeping families healthy and whole," said Rep. Kathy Castor. "The Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act is a bipartisan product that passed through the Energy & Commerce Committee and the full House with near unanimous support in the 118th Congress, and should have already been signed into law. This legislation will help more moms have safe pregnancies and assist local community organizations in Florida to improve the quality of care for new and expecting mothers. This reauthorization will strengthen lifesaving initiatives that use research, prevention, and evidence-based best practices to meet the needs of pregnant and postpartum women in America."

"I'm proud to work with my bipartisan congressional colleagues on the Preventing Maternal Deaths Reauthorization Act, which would improve health care outcomes for mothers at all stages of pregnancy. Georgians are severely impacted by our nation's alarming and preventable maternal mortality crisis, and this bill will help ensure that all families have access to lifesaving health care resources," said Rep. Buddy Carter.

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41st Parade of Senior Services

41st Parade of Senior Services was held at the Ewers Century Center at Central Florida Community College. Hundreds attended there were approx 40 vendor. The Parade is put on by the City of Ocala Recreation and parks. Weather was good, people were friendly, lots of free goodies on the tables. Lots of good information shared.



41st Parade of Senior Services



FAIRtax



You may remember the IRS contractor Charles Littlejohn who stole and leaked federal income tax

returns and was sentenced to 5 years in prison. Some thought that five years was too lenient while others thought he should not have been prosecuted at all since they believe that Mr. Littlejohn performed a valuable public service by showing how much the wealthiest Americans pay in taxes. The IRS said that 70,000 taxpayer returns were leaked but recently the IRS sent a letter to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jim Jordan, admitted that the true number was not 70,000 but actually 405,427 taxpayers, 89 percent were business entities.

So how can we prevent this from happening again? There is only one way - Repeal the income tax and abolish the IRS. If the government doesn't HAVE your confidential data, they can't LEAK your confidential data. Like an old car, there comes a point when it costs more to repair it than it is worth. Unfortunately, the system is so badly broken that no matter how much we spend to "fix" the IRS and income tax, it will remain a corrupt and broken system.

Of course, reasonable Americans realize that some form of taxation is necessary if the government is going to keep running and providing the services that people need and demand. The real question is what that

system of taxation should look like.

We could keep the present income tax system.

* The IRS remains as a political weapon to be used against anyone who dares to defy or question the ruling elites.

*The government continues to collect your personal financial data even though they are unable to safeguard it from being stolen and leaked.

* The Treasury continues to lose over one trillion dollars a year to cheaters and evaders.

Or, we can go with a well researched replacement plan that is ready to be implemented - the FAIRtax. The FAIRtax is a national retail sales tax on new retail goods and retail services.

* FAIRtax replaces the government revenue now being collected by the income & payroll tax

* FAIRtax gives you a paycheck without federal tax and FICA deductions allowing you to purchase items with pre-taxed dollars.

* The FAIRtax provides a family allowance (the Prebate) that exempts purchases up to the poverty level from taxation making it a progressive sales tax.

* The FAIRtax is administered by the states and eliminates the need for the IRS. * The FAIRtax brings jobs and manufacturing back to the United States.

* The FAIRtax ensures the solvency of Social Security and Medicare. For more information please go to FAIRtax.org

DIGITAL Applications Act

Reps. Kat Cammack & Doris Matsui Introduce The DIGITAL Applications Act

WASHINGTON, D.C. —Reps. Kat Cammack and Doris Matsui introduced the Deploying Infrastructure with Greater Internet Transactions and Legacy Applications Act (DIGITAL Applications Act).

The bill establishes online portals for the acceptance, processing, and disposal of a Form 299 for communications use authorizations at the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture. Form 299s are used for permitting related to communications technology.

"The permitting process has long been challenging across the federal landscape," said Rep. Cammack. "Improving online access to the federal permitting process for Interior and Agriculture will help close the digital divide and provide vital broadband resources across the United States. I'm grateful to my colleague, Rep. Matsui, for her leadership on this legislation with me."

"As we work to close the digital divide, it is imperative that the federal government plays a key role in deploying broadband to communities across the nation," said Rep. Matsui. "This bill will introduce needed transparency and accountability to the federal permitting process. By establishing a one-stop online portal, we're ensuring companies deploying broadband on federal lands have the information they need to bring connectivity to communities that lack it."

Improving Teens Reading

(NAPSI)—If you can read this, thank a teacher. And while you're at it you may be interested to learn that teachers, principals, curriculum and instruction leaders, chief academic officers, senior literacy leaders, and school supervisors hope to improve the effectiveness of their current adolescent literacy programs.

The Problem

School district leaders are generally committed to integrating the science of reading principles into instruction. However, according to a recent survey from Lexia—a thought leader in literacy education—60% are dissatisfied and believe schools lack the professional development, age-appropriate reading materials, and data needed to impact adolescent literacy outcomes.

What The Survey Showed

More than half of survey respondents report that teacher training, time, and staffing are top concerns. Fifty-seven percent of district leaders say they need more professional development in the science of reading for middle- and high-school teachers, and 57% need more time in their schedule to focus on literacy improvement because so many students are reading below or far below grade level. In addition, 55% report that attracting and retaining literacy educators is one of their greatest challenges.

The school leaders also state that, based on feedback from teachers and students, several other aspects of their adolescent literacy programs need improvement as well. Thirty-six percent of respondents say they need

Continued page 12

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Love is just a leash away!!

The HSMC is here for you and the animals who depend on us. We wanted to share that we will continue to be here to help unwanted pets during this pandemic while following all Marion County and Florida state guidelines.

As this situation is constantly changing, we ask that you continue to visit our Shelter using the safety guidelines in place.

How can you help?

Pet Food Bank: Help stock our Pet Food Bank with pet food and supplies for people who cannot afford them due to job loss or other reasons. You can also bring donations to our Shelter daily from 10-6. Masks required please! If you need help keeping your pet with you during this time, our Happy Paws food program is here for you.

Volunteer: A small number of volunteers have returned to help in various departments. We are accepting volunteer applications but do not yet know when we will schedule orientations for new volunteers. Please contact us for more information about volunteering. We are currently working on a digital orientation.

Opt to adopt: According to the Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization, there is no evidence that companion animals such as cats and dogs can spread the virus that causes COVID-19.

Donate: We know there is a lot of uncertainty right now but homeless and unwanted animals still need us. Donate to help the Humane Society of Marion County so we continue our lifesaving work and make them feel safe and loved.



Bilbie

Bilbie is a 14 weeks old male brought to the HSMC with her brother Wombat! We believe they could be Xoloitzcuintli, or Xolo, which is Mexican hairless dog breed.



Fuchsia is a 15 week old paralyzed kitten full of love.



Ninja is paralyzed in his hind legs but enjoys runs with his wheels.

Your donations make it possible to provide medical care, food and shelter to animals in need. On behalf of all the animals, thank you for caring.



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Donations to the Humane Society are tax-deductible. Check with your accountant for more information. No goods or services have been provided to the donor as a result of this gift.

FROM THE DESK OF ATTORNEY GENERAL UTHMEIER



Florida Attorney General's Office Secures More Than \$4 Million and a Lifetime Industry Ban Against Deceptive Moving Broker Enterprise

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Attorney General James Uthmeier

announced that the Consumer Protection Division secured a lifetime ban and final judgments totaling more than \$4 million settling ongoing litigation related to a Florida-based moving brokerage scheme. Charles Abrams, Rudolph Rice, and Daniel Metz operated a common enterprise of moving brokerage companies, including Gold Standard Moving and Storage and others.

"We will not tolerate shady moving operators scamming hardworking Floridians," said Attorney General James Uthmeier. "Thanks to the work of Senior Assistant Attorney General Josie Warren, Deputy Director Sasha Funk Granai, and Assistant Attorney General Pooneh Charkhian-Martinez of the Consumer Protection Division, these operators and entities are permanently banned from the moving business in Florida and will be paying millions of dollars in monetary judgments."

These entities represented to consumers that they were professional movers providing door-to-door service; however, the companies were actually online brokers that provided low quotes to secure large, up-front deposits from customers and

outsourced the work to unvetted moving carriers, subjecting many consumers to demands for additional payment, resulting in consumer complaints. Consumers further complained that although the defendants promised to provide refunds and customer service throughout the moves, the entities and operators failed to do so.

The entities included in the Gold Standard Moving enterprise are Executive Van Lines, Imperial Moving Group d/b/a Simple Path Moving, National American Van Lines, Razor Van Lines, Spartan Moving and Storage, United American Moving, Us Pro Moving and Logistics, and Gold Standard Moving and Storage. The companies serially changed names when bad reviews made it difficult to attract new customers.

As a result of Attorney General Uthmeier's action, five final consent judgments permanently banned the defendants from the moving broker industry in Florida.

The total monetary judgment against the Gold Standard entities and the individual defendants is \$4,139,239, including \$1,120,239 in consumer relief. Eligible consumers will be contacted.

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Investigation into Glass Lewis & Co. and Institutional Shareholder Services Inc. for ESG and DEI Policies

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Attorney General James Uthmeier directed an investigation into proxy advisors Glass Lewis & Co. and Institutional Shareholder Services Inc. (ISS) for potential misrepresentations related to their

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) investing policies in violation of the Florida Deceptive and Unfair Trade Practices Act and possible unlawful collusion in adopting and enforcing these policies in violation of the Florida Antitrust Act of 1980. Civil Investigative Demands will be forthcoming.

"We won't allow ESG goals to handcuff Florida businesses and threaten Floridians investments," said Attorney General James Uthmeier. "If these proxy advisors use their overwhelming market power to advance partisan political agendas rather than maximizing shareholder value, we will hold them accountable."

Glass Lewis and ISS provide vote recommendations to institutional investors and control a large share of the proxy-advisory market, with some estimates as high as 97%. Institutional investors, such as those who manage the portfolios of many Americans' retirement accounts, rely on proxy advisors to direct them on how to vote their shares. Thus, the decisions of proxy advisors have a substantial influence over how major American companies are run.

Glass Lewis and ISS told their clients and the public that their decisions were not politically motivated and instead based purely on economic factors. Glass Lewis that the company "evaluates all environmental and social issues through the lens of long-term shareholder value." ISS has similarly argued that all its research is grounded in a "neutral and analytical perspective" and places its "clients' interests first and above" its own. But pushing racial and gender quotas and attacking the concept of a meritocracy destroys long-term shareholder value.

Glass Lewis and ISS asserted that their

ESG investment strategies improve financial performance. But the numbers tell a different story. ESG funds have broadly underperformed the market for years, [trailing](#) the S&P 500, posting double-digit losses in 2022, and [continuing to underperform](#) through 2024.

While these advisors represented ESG as a sound, apolitical investment strategy, their motivations for recommending ESG to investors may have been to advance particular ideological views. Investors were trapped with few alternatives for services because Glass Lewis and ISS control a large portion of the market and have the power to negatively impact corporations' ratings if shareholders reject their advice or drop their services. These factors suggest very real anti-competitive and consumer protection infirmities.

Attorney General James Uthmeier Secures 10-Year Prison Sentence for Predator in Possession of Child Sexual Abuse Material and AI-Generated Child Pornography

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— Attorney General James Uthmeier's Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a 10-year prison sentence for a child predator. Warner Smith entered a guilty plea in Lake County on charges of possession of child sexual abuse material and possession of AI-generated child pornography.

"Thanks to a cyber tip, law enforcement took a predator who possessed child sexual abuse material and AI-generated child pornography out of the community," said Attorney General James Uthmeier. "Now, Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Rebecca Smith-Hameroff ensured this pedophile spends a decade behind bars."

A law enforcement investigation began
Continued page 12

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FROM THE DESK OF

GOVERNOR DESANTIS



GOVERNOR
RON DESANTIS
ANNOUNCES
FLORIDA'S
LABOR FORCE
SURPASSES 11.1
MILLION IN
JANUARY 2025

TALLAHASSEE,
Fla.— Governor Ron
DeSantis announced

that Florida's labor force exceeded 11.1 million in January 2025, reinforcing the state's economic strength. Job growth continued across most major industries, including manufacturing, which reached 430,800 jobs.

Additionally, newly revised data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) indicates that Florida's labor force has been consistently larger than previously estimated, with an upward revision of 162,000 workers. The updated data shows that the state's labor force grew or remained stable in 10 of the past 12 months, underscoring Florida's sustained economic momentum.

"Florida continues to prove that leadership and conservative fiscal policies drive success," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "We will keep the momentum going by insisting on reducing government spending, continuing to eliminate bureaucracy, and finding more tax reductions for Floridians."

Florida added 113,600 jobs (+1.3%) over the year in January 2025. Since May 2020, employers across the state have expanded their workforce in 54 of the past 57 months. Florida's private sector job growth rate of 1.3% outpaced the national rate of 1.2% over the same period. Additionally, Florida's statewide unemployment rate has remained

below the national average for 51 consecutive months since November 2020.

"Under Governor DeSantis' decisive leadership, Florida continues to generate wins," said Secretary of Commerce J. Alex Kelly. "These revised numbers demonstrate Florida's unique resiliency and the strength and efficacy of Governor DeSantis' approach to economic and workforce development—creating an environment that promotes future growth and builds confidence in job seekers and job creators."

The education and health services sector gained the most jobs among all major industries, adding 7,200 jobs (+0.5%) from the previous month; followed by leisure and hospitality, adding 6,100 jobs (+0.5%).

Resources for Job Seekers:

- Florida's Labor Exchange Marketplace, [Employ Florida](#), connects job seekers to employment, training, and education and job creators to skilled talent.
- [CareerSource Florida's](#) network of local career centers offers tailored career counseling, skills assessments, resume assistance, and job placement support.
- [Apprentice Florida](#) is a partnership between the Florida Department of Education, Florida Commerce, and CareerSource Florida to expand apprenticeship programs across the state.
- [Veterans Florida](#) works to help military veterans transition to civilian life, connecting them with employers who are eager to hire them for jobs that align with the skills they gained serving in the military.
- [Advocacy Program](#) delivers priority workforce services to active-duty military spouses and family members through Military Family Employment Advocates

located in local career centers throughout Florida.

- More information on the Governor's site.

Data in the month of January continues to indicate there are jobs available for every Floridian who wants to work, with more than 393,000 jobs posted online. Floridians in search of work and new job opportunities can utilize the CareerSource Florida network for help. Floridians can find guidance on how to register with Employ Florida and search listings of available local job openings. Career seekers also can improve their employability by perfecting resume writing and interviewing skills, establishing career goals, and pursuing customized career training. These services are provided at no cost to job seekers.

Visit [Florida Insight](#) for more information on the labor market and economic data. Additionally, FloridaCommerce has provided a [video](#) to assist users in explaining the data provided through [Florida Insight](#).

GOVERNOR RON DESANTIS
ANNOUNCES COMPLETION OF THE
NASA CAUSEWAY BRIDGE MONTHS
AHEAD OF SCHEDULE

TITUSVILLE, Fla.— Governor Ron DeSantis announced the early completion of the NASA Causeway Bridge in Brevard County, delivering the second of two bridges six months ahead of schedule. The new bridge will officially open to traffic as soon as Wednesday, March 19.

The new, taller, and wider bridges stretch 4,025 feet over the Indian River and, as fixed spans, eliminate the need for drawbridge openings. This upgrade also supports the increasing volume and size of payloads and space industry vehicles traveling through the region's growing high-tech aerospace corridor. With the opening of the new bridge, traffic will transition to its final configuration—westbound vehicles will

utilize the newly completed bridge, while the existing bridge will be dedicated exclusively to eastbound traffic. This \$128 million project was made possible through a strong partnership between FDOT, NASA, and SpaceFlorida.

"Cape Canaveral Spaceport broke records with 93 launches and 2.7 million pounds of space cargo last year—and we're expecting over 150 launches this year," said Governor Ron DeSantis. "Florida is committed to building the infrastructure the space industry needs to keep growing, and with these new bridges, Florida is more ready than ever to become home to NASA's new headquarters."

The first of the two bridges was completed 125 days ahead of schedule in 2023 and has already supported over 1,000 space industry transports. It has played a vital role in serving every launch partner at Kennedy Space Center and Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, including NASA and the U.S. Department of Defense.

"The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) worked closely with our space industry partners and our local communities to meet their vision for the area and their transportation needs," said FDOT Secretary Jared W. Perdue, P.E. "This NASA Causeway Bridge project along with the Space Commerce Way widening project will support the growing workforce and evolving needs of this community and our state long into the future."

Additionally, in late 2024, FDOT completed the 2.7-mile widening of Space Commerce Way—from NASA Parkway West to Kennedy Parkway—expanding it from two to four lanes to better accommodate oversized loads traveling to and from Kennedy Space Center, Exploration Park, and the area's growing space industry hubs.



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Teens Reading Colorectal Cancer Tests

Continued from page 8

better literacy teaching strategies, 33% need more age-appropriate materials for adolescent readers, and 32% need real-time data to improve their implementation plan.

The survey also reveals gaps in support for students with dyslexia and emergent bilinguals. More than half of respondents (57%) are not confident that intervention strategies are adequate for successful outcomes for adolescent readers, and 52% need more teachers on staff who can support secondary English language learners.

An Answer

“The survey findings indicate that while a majority of leaders are committed to aligning literacy resources with the science of reading, many districts need more support and guidance to translate these principles into effective classroom practices for adolescent students,” said Lexia President Nick Gaehde. “For the past 40 years we’ve been focused on transforming literacy education and delivering research-based solutions grounded in the science of reading. We combine high-quality teaching resources with professional learning that’s tailored to the specialized needs of middle and high school students, so districts can deliver programs that are more impactful and lead to stronger adolescent literacy outcomes.”

Gaehde continued, “With our comprehensive suite of professional learning curricula, solutions, and embedded assessment solutions, we continue to stand ready to help schools connect educator knowledge with practical classroom instruction to accelerate literacy gains so more learners can read, write and

Medicare Now Covers Less Invasive Colorectal Cancer Tests

(NewsUSA) - Expanded Screening Coverage Can Reduce Needless Deaths

Colorectal cancer deaths are declining, but shocking regional, racial and ethnic disparities remain. According to the American Cancer Society, Latinos in the United States are more likely to die from colorectal cancer than those in many Central and South American countries, and death rates among Black men and women are 40% higher than their white counterparts. Rural residents are also far more likely to die from this often-preventable disease than those in urban areas. Much of this is due to lack of screening.

Colorectal cancer care groups, minority healthcare advocates and doctors have long held that virtual colonoscopy, or CT Colonography, can overcome cultural stigmas and anxiety associated with this screening. In January, Medicare began covering virtual colonoscopy – which uses a CT scanner to generate 3D, moving images of the colon that doctors examine for signs of cancer and for precancerous polyps, which can be removed before they become cancers.

“Patients should have a choice in their screening options,” said Anjee Davis, MPPA, CEO of Fight Colorectal Cancer. “It’s important to consider the whole patient—their preferences, comfort, and what they feel is the best fit for them. For some, it might be a virtual colonoscopy or another less-invasive screening option.”

At least 53,000 people in the U.S. still die from colorectal cancer each year. Virtual

colonoscopy use is growing most quickly among Black Americans and Latinos. Many experts think more covered exams can convince the 30% of US residents who should be screened, but choose not to, to get tested.

“Affordability and accessibility are critical factors in determining whether a person will get screened for colorectal cancer. Improving access and choice for more people can help save lives and bring us closer to ending the disease in our lifetime,” said Michael Sapienza, CEO of the Colorectal Cancer Alliance.

The Affordable Care Act requires private insurers to cover the exam. CIGNA, UnitedHealthcare, Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, Aetna and other large insurers have covered these tests for years.

Preparation for virtual and standard colonoscopies is the same, but the virtual test is far less invasive and does not require sedation. It is over in minutes. A person does not need to get a ride to or from the exam and can return to daily activities.

Read full article:

<https://about.newsusa.com/medicare-now-covers-less-invasive-colorectal-cancer-tests>

Uthmeier

Continued from page 10

after the Florida Department of Law Enforcement received a cyber tip from the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children stating that Smith had accessed child pornography. FDLE served a search warrant at Smith's residence and seized the defendant's cellphone. During a forensic analysis, authorities found child exploitation files depicting the sexual abuse of young children, some as young as six-years-old. Authorities also found evidence of AI-generated child pornography on Smith's devices.

Smith pled guilty to 15 felony counts of possession of child sexual abuse material and six counts of possession of AI-generated child pornography. Smith is sentenced to 10 years in prison, followed by 10 years of sex-offender probation.

Last year, Governor Ron DeSantis signed SB 1680 into law, making it a crime to knowingly possess, control, intentionally view, or create AI-generated child pornography.

Attorney General Uthmeier's OSP handled the case.

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