



The Ocala International Horse Trials will be taking place April 16-19th; truly one of the best times of the year at the Park. This is one of our largest, if not the largest of our Horse Trial events, bringing Three-Day Eventers from around the world together to compete at an FEI level of competition. Last year's International

Horse Trials was the third time in the Florida Horse Park's history to offer a CC14\*-S level of competition, and we look forward to being able to offer such an advanced level of competition again. If you're interested in volunteering for this special event, go to <https://www.eventingvolunteers.com/>.

## Ocala Fire Rescue Cancer Prevention Grant Funding

### Ocala Fire Rescue Hosts Ceremony and Receives Cancer Prevention Grant Funding

(OCALA, FL.)— In a significant step towards enhancing firefighter safety and emergency response capabilities, Ocala Fire Rescue proudly served as the host site for the presentation of cancer prevention and firefighter assistance grants awarded by Florida's Chief Financial Officer and Fire Marshal, Blaise Ingoglia.

The grants, aimed at strengthening firefighters' protection against harmful chemicals encountered during fires, are part of Florida's commitment to equipping firefighters with the tools and infrastructure that support their critical role in public safety. The funding is provided through the Firefighter Cancer Decontamination Grant

and the Firefighter Assistance Grant. These programs are designed to improve the health and safety of firefighters by ensuring they have access to essential equipment and educational training.

During the event, Firefighter Cancer Decontamination Grants were awarded to:  
- Ocala Fire Rescue (\$6,372.75), and  
- High Springs Fire Department (\$4,793.44).

A third \$500,000.00 award was presented to the City of Newberry Fire Department for a training facility.

Ocala Fire Chief Clint Welborn expressed gratitude for the support provided through these grants, stating, "This investment directly enhances the safety and well-being of our firefighters and reinforces our ongoing mission to protect them as

## Senior Fishing Derby (Photos By CK Johnson)



This is my favorite event. About 30 years ago I started sponsoring the Senior Fishing Derby. It is fun for all. The leader Latoya top left in back and Grace sitting at the desk puts the derby together with the

help of the people above. After It is once a year. I thank them all for all they do! See more on pages 6 & 7. Photos by CK Johnson



diligently as they protect others." Contact: Ashley Lopez, Public Information Officer Telephone: (352) 629-8306 Mobile: (352) 817-5914



Fishing Derby  
More fun on  
pages 6 & 7

## CEP CHAMBER NEWS



By Matt McCormick

There's something about downtown that makes networking feel a little more natural.

Maybe it's the walkability. Maybe it's the familiar faces. Or maybe it's just that when you spend enough time here, conversations don't feel like "networking" at all, they just feel like part of your day.

You run into someone grabbing coffee. You stop and catch up outside a storefront. One quick introduction turns into a longer conversation, and before you know it, you've made a connection you didn't plan on, but you're glad you did.

That's the kind of environment downtown Ocala creates.

It's not forced. It's not overly structured. It just happens.

And those moments matter more than people realize.

Because while big events and formal meetings have their place, there's something powerful about the everyday interaction, the unplanned conversations that build familiarity, trust, and over time, real relationships.

Downtown gives us that space.

It brings together business owners, professionals, creatives, and community leaders in a way that feels accessible. You don't have to go far. You don't have to overthink it. You just have to show up.

And when people show up consistently, good things follow.

Businesses support each other. Ideas get shared. Opportunities surface in ways that feel organic, not transactional. It creates a sense of connection that's hard to replicate anywhere else.

As Ocala continues to grow, that kind of connected, close-knit environment becomes even more valuable. Downtown plays an important role in keeping that feeling alive, it's where our community comes together in a very real, very visible way.

So, if you're looking to get more connected, start here.

Walk the square. Step into a local business. Say hello to someone you don't know yet.

It doesn't have to be complicated.

Because some of the best connections in Ocala don't happen in a boardroom.

They happen downtown.

*Connect with  
your community*

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## Travel: Meet Sue Fullerton



Sue Fullerton's journey into the world of travel is rooted not only in a love of exploration, but in a deep understanding of what truly matters—time, connection, and the

memories we create along the way. Since becoming a travel advisor in 2008, Sue has dedicated herself to helping others experience the world in meaningful, memorable ways, all while based in sunny Florida with her husband of 48 years.

Together, Sue and her husband have built a strong and loving blended family that now spans four children, twelve grandchildren,

and four great-grandchildren—with another eagerly anticipated addition on the way. Family plays a central role in Sue's life, and it's this appreciation for togetherness that shapes how she approaches travel planning. She understands firsthand how powerful shared experiences can be, whether it's a multi-generational cruise, a milestone celebration, or a long-awaited getaway.

Originally raised in California, Sue later made her way to New Jersey, where she met the love of her life. Their journey together has been filled with growth, change, and the kind of life experiences that give Sue a unique ability to connect with her clients on a personal level. She doesn't just plan trips—she listens, she understands, and she designs travel experiences that reflect each

client's story, priorities, and dreams.

Sue's path to becoming a travel advisor was shaped by a profound and life-changing moment. Early in her career, a former boss shared a story that would stay with her forever. He and his wife had planned to postpone vacations until retirement, believing they would have all the time in the world to travel later. Tragically, his wife passed away from cancer just six months before he was set to retire. What remained was not just grief, but the painful absence of shared adventures and cherished travel memories. That story deeply impacted Sue and ultimately inspired her career. She made a promise to herself to help others avoid that same regret—to encourage people to embrace the present and create memories now, while they can.

As the owner and driving force behind Walk Don't Run Travel, Sue has spent more

than a decade turning that mission into reality for her clients. Her business philosophy is simple but powerful: travel should never feel rushed or overwhelming—it should be savored, thoughtfully planned, and deeply enjoyed. This philosophy is reflected in the name of her agency, which serves as a gentle reminder to slow down and truly experience the journey.

Sue's expertise spans a wide range of travel styles and experiences. She is highly skilled in planning ocean and river cruises, guided tours, and scenic rail journeys, as well as customized itineraries that weave together multiple destinations seamlessly. Whether a client is seeking a relaxing escape, an immersive cultural experience, or a complex, once-in-a-lifetime adventure, Sue brings both creativity and precision to every detail.

Her clients value her not only for her extensive industry knowledge, but for her personalized, hands-on approach. Sue takes the time to understand each traveler's preferences, pace, and expectations, ensuring that every itinerary is tailored to fit their unique vision. She handles the logistics, anticipates potential challenges, and provides guidance every step of the way, allowing her clients to travel with confidence and peace of mind.

Over the years, Sue has built a reputation as a trusted advisor and advocate for her clients. She believes that travel is more than just visiting new places—it's about creating stories, strengthening relationships, and enriching lives. Whether she's helping a couple celebrate an anniversary, coordinating a family reunion, or planning a dream vacation years in the making, Sue approaches every trip with genuine care and dedication.

Through Walk Don't Run Travel, Sue continues to inspire others to embrace the joy of travel without delay. Her work is guided by a simple but meaningful belief: the best time to make memories is now. And with her expertise, passion, and heartfelt commitment, she ensures those memories are as seamless, special, and unforgettable as possible.

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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



### Not sure how true it is... Information from the web says:

Mounting evidence suggests that the kidnapping of Savannah Guthrie's mother in Arizona may be linked to a violent Mexican drug cartel.

An anonymous tipster reported seeing the kidnapped senior in Mexico. They demanded a ransom in Bitcoin for information leading to her return. The Guthrie family fears the worst due to the drug cartels' reputation for torture and abuse of hostages. Experts cite past cases of brutal treatment and high mortality rates among victims.

### A different sighting (Not True bloody fingerprint found)

Unvarified mounting evidence points to a terrifying conclusion: the tragic kidnapping of Today host Savannah Guthrie's ailing 84-

year-old mother in Arizona bears the bloody fingerprints of a violent Mexican drug cartel member, sources say. The possibility emerged three weeks after Nancy Guthrie was taken from her home outside of Tucson when an anonymous tipster reached out to an entertainment news outlet via email to report a sighting of the snatched senior in Mexico.

**Tipster said:** "I know what I saw south of the border," the tipster wrote in the last of four emails received by the outlet. "I was told to shut up, so I know who he is, and that was definitely Nancy with them." There is no Democratic Party as there used to be! They are politicians lying, obstructing, and anarchists.

**Publishers Question:** I wonder if the cartels have her maybe in a Mexican hospital under an assumed name sedated? The hospital is one place I have not heard that they have looked extensively.

We have taken revenue from the cartel, so maybe they are trying to get even.

I ask AI and it bounces me around to different places on the web. Savannah Guthrie a news caster and co-host may have a problem from putting to much pressure on them???

**SOME DAY:** The truth will come out. The FBI might know the truth and have to stay silent until they find her.

### Jacky Gleason in the series from the past said TO THE MOONALICE!

Jacky Gleason used that as a description of where he was going to send his wife when he got mad at her. They were funny! That was a show that would make you laugh. Speaking of to the moon: Astronaut's and where they lived. We had an Astronaut living and working in Dunnellon Florida. He taught middle school Science and Math was married to Lora who had children. He was chosen for the Astronaut team as an Educator / Geologist & Hydrologist. He was from Puerto Rico, he was the first person of Caribbean descent.

Joseph Acaba was born of Ralph and Elisa Acaba. He was a sergeant in the United States Marine Corps Reserve. He was a dedicated to teaching over 300 teachers in Puerto Rico the modern teaching Methodologies. It's a small solar system! Acaba left Dunnellon when he was chosen for the Astronaut team. He still works for NASA.

All these big companies do it. Is it legal? I

don't know! When Space X builds a rocket the parts cost one Million to build. When they get finished they have a rocket valued Five million. They have just added four million dollar profit.

How about county taxes. You have a house worth \$150,000, in 2023, in 2024 they reevaluate the house to \$250,000. The county gets to tax you for \$100,000 more or probably \$100 dollar per month on your value. The insurance company says your house is now worth \$250,000, we need to insure it for the replacement value your insurance payment on your Mortgage goes up \$100 per month \$1200 dollars a year. WAIT it is now 2026 and the county does it again. So they have just added another \$100 per month in taxes and your house insurance. That is \$2400 per year in two years on your house insurance and plus another increase on the taxes. SENIORS BEWARE! They are going to raise your taxes again if we don't vote it down.

DeSantis said it would be on the next ballot. VOTE TO STOP County Taxes, bring the values back to reality so the insurance companies can no longer make large profits on us.

How about the Villages, they squeeze a farmer off his property, Pay him the true value if necessary. Now they send a plan to the County and they see all the roads to be built that they don't have to pay for. They

Continued page 5

## Newspaper Deadlines

Editorial & Ad Copy for June

Seniors Voice & Ocala DownTown

Noon, May 22nd

Lady Lake Magazine & Village Spectator

12am, May 27th

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

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## CHAIR CHAT

BY BRIGGITTE SMITH

**DID YOU KNOW:** Sewage effluent is being dumped into our Aquifer.

According to the CDC, Marion county is leading in cancer sicknesses and it is getting worse. Boiling water won't help remove carcinogens, according to health officials. Best way to say it is, we have a sewage problem in central Florida, and it's not coming from farmer's agriculture, nor homes with septic systems.

Few people know that the University of Florida and Gainesville utilities inject vast quantities of sewage effluent every day and we are all living with this awful situation. According to their own data, the University of Florida and Gainesville Utilities are injecting 16 million gallons of sewage effluent every single day straight into the Florida aquifer – right under where people live and drink and especially suffer downstream. No one currently employed at the sewage treatment plants invented this method of dumping sewage effluent. It's been going on and increasing for many decades. Some wastewater goes in the Alachua sinkhole into the drinking water aquifer, some goes into Kanapaha injection pipes to the drinking water aquifer, This must stop.

That's not "recharge!" That's chronic low-level exposure to sewage carcinogens daily for thousands of families in Ocala,

Silver Springs, Lake Weir, Rainbow Springs, the Villages and Marion county now leads the nation in cancer rates for people under 50 according to the CDC and NIH.

The sewage effluent can be used in farming safely under the Sun, or in a data center safely. The XAI Colossus data center uses 13,000,000 gallons daily of sewage effluent to cool data chips, just outside Memphis, Tennessee. The numbers are ugly, especially for women with breast cancer. Blaming septic tanks is nonsense. A septic system works in the gold zone, the top 12 feet, exactly where sun, oxygen, and biology turn waste into fertilizer. There is no pipe from any septic tank going 400 feet down into the aquifer. The gold zone solution is simple: keep the effluent up top where nature designed the nitrogen cycle to work. Uses for example on Surface irrigation, golf courses, or even cooling data centers like XAI Colossus data center. Same water, zero aquifer risk, and free fertilizer.

No number of words like treatment, recharge, recycle sewage emissions can change what is really happening. It is polluting our drinking water source

UF has the science. Florida Representatives and Senators along with Governor DeSantis are keen on health and prosperity for all. Shut down the deep middle and shallow pipe injection, move all sewage liquids to work and profit on the surface in the gold zone. We protect our families, children and our community, real estate values and turn a liability into an asset.

## Publisher

*Continued from page 4*

approve the expansion if they paid \$20,000 per acre the lots are valued at \$20,000 just by drawing a plan. They float a bond and start building. They build the house they want to build and let the buyer change it to what they want after built at extra charge. Everybody is happy. The Villages hires three or four developers give them an idea of what their expectations are. With that many builders they can probably finish two house a day. If one builder put up four or more houses, they send in the dry wallers and they do four house, or six houses.

If some in a city complains and they call a meeting to discuss it they send out a message to the employees fill up the meeting room early and the city residents can't into their own meeting. Strength through size.

A farmer named Farnsworth stopped the building for a short time. He sue them. They went to court and when they came out they

had a gag order on them. They could not give me a story. They actually won but could not tell anyone. Farnsworth sold his land to them and moved to Tennessee. He sent me a picture of him and his grandson in a horse drawn cart, just living the life.

**THAT IS HOW BIG BUSINESS WORKS!** The tax payer always loses.

To close on this issue the mortgage insurance in Marion county will over take what you are paying for your mortgage.

Well the news media did it again. The new ball room project includes a 90,000-square-foot ballroom and an **underground bunker on the former East Wing site**, the largest White House change in over 70 years.

**Colorado** officials just confirmed the **removal of 372,000 ineligible voter names** from their state's voter registration lists following a **Judicial Watch** lawsuit and legal settlement.

Don't be discouraged if you are the little guy, we are powerful in numbers!

Health Service Area	Age-Adjusted Incidence Rate † cases per 100,000 (95% Confidence Interval)	CI*Rank ‡ (95% Confidence Interval)	Average Annual Count	Recent Trend	Recent 5-Year Trend † in Incidence Rates (95% Confidence Interval)
Marion (Ocala), FL - Citrus, FL †	130.0 (123.7, 136.6)	1 (1, 5)	319	rising ↑	0.9 (0.3, 1.6)
Brevard (Palm Bay), FL - Indian River, FL †	127.1 (122.1, 132.3)	2 (1, 6)	490	rising ↑	0.7 (0.1, 1.2)
Sarasota (Sarasota), FL - Charlotte, FL †	122.2 (116.4, 128.3)	3 (1, 9)	336	rising ↑	1.4 (0.7, 2.2)
Hillsborough (Tampa), FL - Pinellas, FL †	122.0 (119.8, 124.2)	4 (2, 8)	2,297	rising ↑	0.5 (0.2, 0.8)

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# Senior Fishing Derby (photos by By CK Johnson)

The Annual Senior Rising Derby was held and Lake Tuscaawilla by the Ocala Recreation & Parks. Hundred thirty five were fishing it was catch

and release fishing derby. The weather was great, the fish were biting. Door prizes galore, trophy's were won! Everyone enjoyed lunch

and a great time was had by all.

The three top trophies were won by:  
• Oldest Fisherman Mary Reynolds 98 yrs young

- Most Fish Willie Wahington
- Largest Fish Willie Washington



# Senior Fishing Derby (photos by By CK Johnson)



FROM THE DESK OF  
**CONGRESSWOMAN KAT CAMMACK**



**Cammack Introduces Landmark Bill to Deliver Critical Mental Health Support for First Responders**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Today, Rep. Cammack (R-FL-03) introduced the

Answering the Call Act of 2026, in recognition of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week. This legislation strengthens the implementation of the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline by ensuring it effectively serves first responders.

First responders regularly face traumatic situations that increase the risk of depression, PTSD, substance use, and suicide. Despite the availability of the 9-8-8 Lifeline, utilization among the first responder community remains limited due to stigma, lack of tailored services, awareness and concerns about confidentiality.

The Answering the Call Act directly addresses these challenges by requiring targeted outreach and strengthening collaboration with organizations that understand the unique needs of the first responder community. The legislation also expands training and public awareness efforts, while incorporating strong privacy safeguards to ensure information is handled responsibly and used solely to guide future program improvements.

This legislation ensures that a critical national resource is accessible, trusted, and better equipped to address the needs of those who serve on the front lines.

“First responders run toward danger in our darkest moments—and as the wife of a first

responder, I've seen the reality of that sacrifice up close,” said Rep. Cammack. “The stress, the sleepless nights, and the weight they carry home after every shift is real. This bill is about having their backs the same way they've always had ours. By expanding awareness, protecting privacy, and delivering support tailored to their experiences, we're making sure our public safety telecommunicators, firefighters, and EMTs have access to the care they deserve.”

The bill has earned strong support across the first responder community.

“Behavioral health is a readiness issue for the fire service,” said Florida Fire Chiefs' Association President William Barrs. “Supporting the mental wellness of our personnel not only protects the individuals who serve our communities but also strengthens the resilience and effectiveness of our emergency response systems. The Florida Fire Chiefs' Association stands ready to assist in advancing this important legislation and to partner in efforts that improve the health, safety, and well-being of our nation's first responders.”

“Congresswoman Kat Cammack has long been a friend to Florida's sheriffs and a steadfast advocate for law enforcement. The Answering the Call Act of 2026 is yet another example of her continued advocacy for law enforcement,” said Florida Sheriffs Association President and Seminole County Sheriff Dennis Lemma. “Florida's sheriffs are grateful for the federal support focused on the mental health and well-being of our first responders.”

**Rep. Cammack Helps Launch Inaugural USDA Office of Seafood**

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Rep. Kat

Cammack (R-FL-03) joined U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, and White House National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett to announce the creation of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Office of Seafood.

The newly established office will strengthen the domestic seafood industry, support American fishermen and aquaculture producers, and expand access to markets—ensuring American seafood remains competitive at home and abroad. Florida's aquaculture sector supports thousands of jobs and plays a vital role in rural and coastal economies, particularly in North Central Florida. As Chairwoman of the Aquaculture Caucus, Rep. Cammack has been a leading advocate for policies that promote domestic aquaculture, protect producers, and invest in the future of American food security.

“Proud to be part of the launch of the inaugural, first-ever USDA Office of Seafood!” said Rep. Cammack. “Food security is national security which means prioritizing domestic production and strengthening our food supply here at home. From our Florida coasts to communities across the country, we're cutting red tape, backing our fishermen, and ensuring American seafood competes—and wins—on the world stage.”

“This office will not only elevate and support commercial production, but also advance commonsense conservation so future generations can thrive in this industry,” Cammack added. “I'm grateful for the tenacious leadership driving this effort forward—Secretary Rollins, Secretary Lutnick, Secretary Hassett, Secretary Burgum—and President Trump.”

**FAIR TAX**



Missouri is the most recent state in the process of eliminating their state income tax and replacing it with a sales tax. An

amendment to their state constitution has passed the House and has advanced to the state Senate.

State Representative Bishop Davidson presented the tax plan to the House calling the in-come tax “the least fair tax” that “undermines economic growth.” “When you tax income,” Davidson said, “we tax productivity. We tax creativity.”

State legislators in Missouri are looking at Florida and other states without a state income tax and seeing their economic expansion. They understand that the state income tax is a disincentive for people and businesses to come to Missouri.

There is a growing understanding in our country that we have been burdened for far too long by the income tax at both the state and national level. People are seeking more freedom to make their own decisions and one of those decisions is how much tax they pay. A sales tax on new goods and services is much more stable when the state or national economy is in flux and inflation rises and ebbs. Just think how nice it would be to eliminate filing cumbersome and confusing tax forms.

In addition, a sales tax is visible and not hidden like the income tax.

More states should and are in the process of removing the state income tax. We need to also abolish the income tax on the national level and put the IRS on the scrap heap of history. The FAIRtax is the answer.

For more information please go to FAIRtax.org

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**Blue Green Algae**

The Florida Department of Health in Marion County (DOH-Marion) cautions the public of the presence of blue-green algae in Lake Bryant - Resort Dock on April 21, 2026. Water sample testing is underway. Blue-green algae have the potential to produce toxins. Since environmental conditions can change at any time, it is important to exercise caution, even if presence of toxins has not yet been confirmed.

- Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:  
Do not drink, swim, wade, use personal watercrafts, or come into contact with waters where there is a visible bloom.
- Wash your skin and clothing with soap and water if you have any contact with algae, or discolored or water that smells unpleasant.
- Keep pets and livestock away from the area to avoid any contact with water. Waters where algae blooms are present are not safe for animals. Pets and livestock should use an alternative source of water when algae blooms are present.
- Do not cook or clean dishes with water contaminated by algae blooms. Boiling the water will not eliminate toxins.
- Eating fillets from healthy fish caught in freshwater lakes experiencing blooms is safe. Rinse fish fillets with tap or bottled water, throw out the guts, and cook fish thoroughly.
- Do not eat shellfish in waters with algae blooms.



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Join us at the Ocala Downtown Market (ODM) to purchase a diverse array of products from farmers, artisans, craftspeople, food trucks! A true destination location, ODM is set just blocks off the Ocala Downtown square, in a beautiful open-air Market Pavilion. Besides permanent roof cover the facility it also has large overhead fans, restrooms, a nearby ATM, and water fountains. The Market Pavilion is also available for rental.



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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 Xolaitzcuinli, or Xolo, which is Mexican hairless dog breed.



Fuchsla 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**



**Attorney General James Uthmeier Recognizes Outstanding Law Enforcement and Victims' Advocates during 2025 Crime Victims' Rights Awards Ceremony**

Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced the Distinguished Victim Services Award recipients during the National Crime Victims' Rights Week Ceremony. Every year, the Florida Attorney General's Office honors victim advocates and law enforcement officers who go above and beyond the call of duty to assist crime victims. Attorney General Uthmeier recognized the 2025 award winners during a ceremony in the Florida Cabinet Meeting Room this morning.

“These law enforcement officers and victim advocates meet victims on the worst days of their lives and make the choice to fight for them every day,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “It is an honor to recognize them for their service to our great state. We will stand together to ensure victims' rights come first.”

The following law enforcement officers received the Attorney General's Distinguished Victim Services Award:

- Corporal Amanda Baranowski, Tampa Police Department;
- Detective Stephen Buscemi, Palm Beach Police Department;
- Detective Cora Milliken, Green Cove

Springs Police Department; and Commander Daniel Mosquera, Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office.

The following victim advocates received the Attorney General's Distinguished Victim Services Award:

- Fawn Bascom, Dana Milton, Britney Noyes, and Annalise Spotts, Tallahassee Police Department Victim Advocates Unit;
- Johanne Baxter, Manatee County Sheriff's Office; and
- Rose Desmornes, Pembroke Pines Police Department.

Since 1981, National Crime Victims' Rights Week helps citizens and advocates reflect on commitments to serving victims of all crime. The Florida Constitution and Florida Crime Victims' Bill of Rights give crime victims or lawful representatives, including the next of kin of homicide victims, granted rights. These include the right to be informed, present and heard when relevant at all crucial stages of criminal proceedings, to be free from harassment, intimidation or abuse, and to have the safety of the victim and the victim's family considered when setting bail or pretrial release conditions.

**Attorney General James Uthmeier Launches Investigation into Major Corporations, Environmental Groups over Potential Antitrust Violations**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier issued Civil Investigative Demands (CID) to several major corporations and environmental groups as part of an investigation into potential antitrust violations.

“Environmental groups are pressuring corporations to abandon free market principles and raise prices on consumers for products they don't want, and many corporations continue their associations with these groups,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “Our office provided them with a sufficient opportunity to respond to our inquiries regarding potential violations of the law. Time's up.”

Unilever, Coca-Cola, Target, Nestle, Mondelez International Holdings LLC, the U.S. Plastics Pact, the Consumer Goods Forum, and the Green Blue Institute all received CIDs. The CIDs are investigating suspicions that the corporations may have engaged in collusive partnerships through and with the environmental groups that, among other things, restricted trade, increased prices for consumers, and diminished free market competition.

The filings require the corporations and groups to produce documentation including:

- Communications between the corporations and the environmental groups.
- Communications between the corporations and other corporations within their same environmental groups.

Documents related to the environmental groups' “problematic materials” lists and rules.

Records of steps the corporations have taken to eliminate any such “problematic materials” and the economic impact on consumers from those steps.

All subpoenaed documentation must be provided by May 27, 2026.

**Attorney General James Uthmeier Secures Death Sentence of 1990's Rapist-Murderer at Florida Supreme Court**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney

General James Uthmeier announced that the Capital Appeals Division secured a death sentence for Joseph Zieler for the 1990 murder and rape of an 11-year-old girl and her babysitter during a home invasion. Zieler evaded justice for decades until the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) linked him to his crimes.

“This depraved criminal managed to sleep at night for decades as he evaded justice for the rape and murder of a little girl and her babysitter,” said Attorney General James Uthmeier. “Due to the tireless work of Assistant Attorney General Christina Pacheco, and with support from the Solicitor General's Office, we affirmed the ultimate form of punishment, and he will never see the outside of a prison cell again.”

The Florida Supreme Court's affirmation of Zieler's conviction is one of the first capital sentences under Florida's new death penalty law, Senate Bill (SB) 450, which reformed Florida's death penalty statutes, reducing the number of jurors needed to recommend capital punishment from unanimous to a supermajority of eight jurors out of twelve. Governor Ron DeSantis signed SB 450 into law on April 20, 2023.

Zieler will await his execution in the Florida Department of Corrections.

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FROM THE DESK OF

GOVERNOR DESANTIS



**Governor Ron DeSantis Signs Legislation to Eliminate Local DEI Programs and Block Carbon Taxes in Florida**

JACKSONVILLE, Fla.—Governor Ron DeSantis signed two major pieces of

legislation aimed at protecting Florida taxpayers, strengthening existing laws against DEI in Florida, and protecting Floridians against ESG and Green New Deal agendas.

“Floridians should not be forced to pay for radical climate agendas or identity politics with their hard-earned tax dollars,” said Governor Ron DeSantis. “Today in Jacksonville, I signed two important bills to limit government overreach and prevent local authorities from imposing carbon taxes and discriminatory DEI mandates on Floridians.”

“The bill is necessary because cities and counties have been funding and promoting divisive activities under the guise of DEI,” said Senator Clay Yarborough. “Decisions related to individuals and actions should be based on merit and, if they are not, those making the decisions need to be replaced. At a time when many Floridians are struggling to afford groceries and gas, millions of taxpayer dollars should not continue to be wasted by local governments on DEI initiatives, even more so because they are failing to do what they claim.”

“Net-zero mandates and carbon taxes increase costs on families, businesses, and consumers,” said Representative Berny Jacques. “This bill protects Floridians from higher energy prices, increased transportation costs, and other hidden junk fees caused by emissions mandates and burdensome regulations. Thanks to Governor DeSantis’ action today, decision

making will be kept in our hands, and not in the hands of global elites or green new deal activists.”

“We’re finding our way back to the everyman principles that make America great,” said Representative Dean Black. “The Governor’s signature positions this law as a guiding light for equal and fair opportunity in our state. No matter where you come from, no matter what you look like, the message should be clear: Florida recognizes your work ethic and the content of your character, and that’s what matters.”

Governor DeSantis signed SB 1134, which prohibits counties and municipalities from funding, promoting, or implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.

This legislation:

Prohibits local governments from establishing or maintaining DEI offices, officers, or programs.

Bars taxpayer funding for DEI-related initiatives or third-party contractors promoting such efforts.

Requires grant recipients to certify that public funds will not be used to advance DEI.

Provides enforcement mechanisms, including penalties for officials who violate the law.

Governor DeSantis also signed HB 1217, which prevents state and local governments from adopting or enforcing net-zero greenhouse gas emissions policies, including carbon taxes.

This legislation:

Prohibits government entities from implementing net-zero mandates or emissions targets.

Prevents new taxes, fees, or penalties tied to carbon emissions.

Bans participation in carbon trading programs such as cap-and-trade agreements.

Blocks the use of taxpayer funds to support organizations promoting net-zero policies.

Requires annual reporting to ensure compliance and transparency.

These actions build on Florida’s broader efforts to promote individual freedom, fiscal responsibility, and economic opportunity. The state has taken steps in recent years to ensure that we focus on excellence over indoctrination, eliminate taxpayer-funded ideological programs, and safeguard residents from burdensome regulations.

**Governor Ron DeSantis Dedicates Bobby Bowden-Tallahassee International Airport**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Governor Ron DeSantis announced the dedication of Bobby Bowden-Tallahassee International Airport in the state’s capital city. Additionally, the governor announced the first phase of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) widening and improvement project for State Road (S.R.) 263 (Capital Circle) from Springhill Road to orange Avenue would open to drivers a full year ahead of schedule, with construction on the second phase of widening Capital Circle Southwest accelerated and now underway.

“Bobby Bowden-Tallahassee International Airport is now official,” said Governor Ron DeSantis. “Coach Bowden was a college football legend, and it is fitting that we honor his legacy in a way that will be seen by all who travel to and from our capital city.”

“FDOT is proud to deliver Phase One of Capital Circle improvements one year ahead of schedule and to get started on the highly anticipated Phase Two,” said Florida Department of Transportation Secretary Jared W. Perdue, P.E. “Thanks to Governor DeSantis’ Moving Florida Forward initiative, this second phase is the last piece to complete the Capital Circle loop and to seamlessly connect multiple modes of travel in Florida’s capital city.”

“I spoke with my mother this past weekend, and while she is unable to attend the ceremony this afternoon, she asked me to relay her deepest appreciation for this great honor,” said State Attorney Ginger Bowden Madden. “Daddy spent so many

hours in the terminals of the Tallahassee airport over his 46 years in this great city, so it feels appropriate that it now bears his name. On behalf of my mother and the entire Bowden family, I want to thank Governor DeSantis for his leadership and service to the Free State of Florida, and for leading the initiative to honor our father, your Coach Bobby Bowden, in this way.”

Bobby Bowden rose from humble beginnings in Birmingham, Alabama, to become one of the most iconic figures in college football, ultimately transforming Florida State University into a national powerhouse after being named as head coach in 1976. Over 34 seasons, he led the Florida State Seminoles to two national championships, 12 ACC titles, and an extraordinary era of dominance in the 1990s, including 14 consecutive top-five finishes and five national championship appearances. He retired with a 316—97—4 record at FSU and a 377—129—4 record overall, coached countless All-Americans and future NFL players, and left a lasting impact not only through his success on the field but through his leadership, faith, and mentorship of generations of young men. He was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in 2006 and awarded the inaugural Governor’s Medal of Freedom in 2021.

The \$63.5 million Capital Circle Southwest Phase One project expanded the road to six lanes for nearly four miles. This project is now wrapping up and completing a year ahead of schedule. Phase Two of this project was previously unfunded for construction, but thanks to Governor DeSantis’ Moving Florida Forward Infrastructure Initiative, the project has been advanced and is now beginning construction. This phase will widen 2.2 miles of the roadway to six lanes with an anticipated completion in mid-2030. This remarkable progress allows residents, businesses, and commuters to benefit from improved connectivity and enhanced safety, while reducing the duration of construction impacts along this critical corridor.

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