

## WEEKLY TALLAHASSEE UPDATE



### Opening Day Speeches and State of the State Highlight Priorities of Legislature and Governor

Tuesday's opening day ceremonies were filled with pomp and circumstance, recognition of dignitaries, and the typical flowers. In speeches before their respective chambers, Senate President Ben Albritton and House Speaker Danny Perez laid out their priorities for the 2025 session, followed by Governor Ron DeSantis, who gave his annual State of the State in a joint session of the House and Senate. In his [address](#), President Albritton spoke to his key priority, Senator Corey Simon's "Rural Renaissance" bill, and highlighted other bills that are important to him around autism support services, mental health, child welfare, the Everglades, and food insecurity. President Albritton also touched on the Florida version of DOGE taskforce, or the Department of Government Efficiency.

Speaker Perez focused less on his priorities and instead [shared his vision](#) of a member-driven process in the House, asking members to lean in and ask questions. Speaker Perez also announced that he has asked the Insurance & Banking Subcommittee to examine Florida's insurance crises after a recent news article, empowering the subcommittee to conduct hearings with a full range of tools, including subpoena power, putting witnesses under oath, and hiring outside experts, to examine Florida's insurance crises after a recent news article."

In his [State of the State](#), Governor DeSantis focused on previous legislative wins, Florida's economic growth trajectory, and his priorities, such as eliminating the Business Rent Tax and addressing petition/amendment fraud. You can read the press release for the State of the State [here](#), President Albritton's remarks [here](#), and Speaker Perez's address [here](#).

### Legislation to Protect the Florida Constitution from Out of State and Special Interests Passes First House Committee 14-4

Yesterday, a Florida Chamber-backed bill to protect Florida's Constitution from special interests, [HB 1205](#), passed the House Government Operations Subcommittee by a bipartisan vote of 14-4. For over two decades, the Florida Chamber has led the effort to protect the Florida Constitution from out-of-state and special interests seeking to buy their way into the Constitution, circumvent the legislative process or use an amendment as a tool for political turnout. The so-called "citizens'" initiative process has become ripe for fraud and abuse, making it critical to put adequate safeguards in place to ensure changes truly reflect the will of Floridians.

HB 1205 reduces out-of-state-influence in Florida's citizens' initiative process by ensuring that paid petition gatherers collecting signatures are Florida residents and meet certain requirements. The bill strengthens accountability by requiring voters to provide identifying information on the petition and improves the process for supervisors of elections to review gathered petitions. Finally, the bill requires the petition sponsor to post a \$1 million bond before collecting signatures. HB 1205 has one remaining committee stop, and the Senate will take up a proposed committee bill on paid petition reform on Monday in the Ethics and Elections Committee.

## WEEKLY TALLAHASSEE UPDATE



### House & Senate Advance Bills that Further Exacerbates Florida's Healthcare Workforce Shortage

During the opening week of session, both the House and Senate advanced legislation that would worsen Florida's highly litigious environment and bottom-five legal climate. [HB 6017](#) and [SB 734](#) expand who is eligible to sue for pain and suffering in medical malpractice lawsuits, further driving up insurance premiums, and making it even harder to attract and retain healthcare professionals in Florida. As the Florida Chamber testified, Florida already has the highest medical malpractice insurance rates in the nation—encouraging doctors to leave, switch specialties, stop performing high-risk procedures, or retire early.

SB 734 passed the Senate Judiciary Committee on opening day, receiving two no votes, and will next be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee on Health and Human Services. HB 6017 passed the House Civil Justice & Claims Subcommittee unanimously this week, and it's only assigned to one more committee, the House Judiciary Committee.