



WEEKLY TALLAHASSEE UPDATE

As the Florida Legislature moves through Week 4 of the 2026 Legislative Session, activity in Tallahassee is beginning to pick up, particularly around budget planning and business-related policy priorities. Before jumping into this week's highlights, I want to flag an important opportunity for our local business community.

Community Scorecard – This Friday

The Venice Area Chamber of Commerce will host its 2026 Community Scorecard event this Friday, bringing together community leaders and stakeholders for a timely discussion on the issues shaping our region. Events like this are critical for ensuring the voice of our business community is heard and reflected in public policy.

Details and registration: <https://business.venicechamber.com/events/details/2026-community-scorecard-9091>

Week 4 Legislative Highlights

Budget Timing Update

Week 4 typically marks the beginning of serious budget work in Tallahassee. This year, Senate leaders announced a one-week delay in releasing the proposed Senate budget to better align with the House. The Senate budget is now expected to be unveiled on February 12, with a full committee vote anticipated the following week.

It is important to note that the state budget is the only item the Florida Legislature is constitutionally required to pass each year. While hundreds of bills may be filed during a legislative session, the General Appropriations Act funding state government operations is the sole mandate under the Florida Constitution, making budget negotiations one of the most critical components of session.

Citizen Initiatives Fail to Qualify for 2026 Ballot

All 22 paid petition initiatives failed to meet the required signature threshold for placement on the 2026 ballot. As a result, issues such as recreational marijuana legalization will not appear before voters this cycle. This development reinforces the Legislature's role in addressing major policy questions through statute rather than constitutional amendment. With 2026 not being a Presidential election year, it's hard to remember the last time a statewide election didn't include various constitutional amendments.



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Legal Climate & Litigation Reform

A Senate bill addressing third-party litigation financing transparency has cleared its final committee and is now headed to the Senate Floor. The proposal increases transparency around foreign entities funding lawsuits in Florida and includes consumer protections to prevent undue influence on litigation outcomes.

In addition, legislation clarifying the statute of limitations under the Florida Civil Rights Act moved unanimously in both chambers. These measures aim to resolve claims more efficiently, providing certainty for both employers and employees.

Relevant legislation:

- SB 1396 – Litigation Financing Transparency

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/1396>

- HB 1157 – House Companion

<https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=83861&SessionId=113>

- SB 1096 – Florida Civil Rights Act Remedies

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/1096>

- HB 1407 – House Companion

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=1407>

Housing & Growth Management

Several bills addressing Florida's housing supply advanced this week. Notably, a Senate measure requiring local governments to allow accessory dwelling units (such as carriage houses or "granny flats") passed unanimously. The goal is to increase workforce housing options without unnecessary local barriers.

Other proposals related to growth management and development seek to streamline permitting processes and limit abuses in impact fee calculations—issues that directly affect local business expansion and development.

Relevant legislation:

- SB 48 – Affordable Housing / Accessory Dwelling Units

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/48>

- HB 1139 – Growth Management / Impact Fees

<https://www.flhouse.gov/Sections/Bills/billsdetail.aspx?BillId=83837&SessionId=113>



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Data Centers & Infrastructure

Legislation creating a statewide framework for data centers continues to move, balancing economic development opportunities with protections for utilities, water resources, and ratepayers. Lawmakers emphasized ensuring that large-scale users pay the full cost of infrastructure without shifting burdens to residents or small businesses.

Relevant legislation:

- SB 484 – Data Centers

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/484>

- SB 1118 – Public Records Exemption (Related)

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2026/1118>

Looking Ahead

With key committee deadlines approaching, the coming weeks will determine which bills gain momentum and which stall. Budget negotiations, housing policy, insurance reform, and regulatory clarity for businesses will remain front and center.

I'll continue monitoring developments that matter most to Venice-area employers and will share updates as the session progresses. I hope to see many of you this Friday at the Community Scorecard.

Details and registration: <https://business.venicechamber.com/events/details/2026-community-scorecard-9091>

Best regards,

Justin Taylor