

We, the people of the State of Florida,
being grateful to Almighty God for our constitutional liberty, in order to secure its
perfect our government, insure domestic tranquility, maintain public order, and guaran
and political rights to all, do ordain and establish this constitution. PREAMBLE TO THE FLORIDA

FSA LEGISLATIVE REPORT 2026

One of the primary roles and responsibilities of the Florida Sheriffs Association is to support and monitor legislation that ensures public safety. During the 2026 legislative session, FSA's legislative team actively worked with lawmakers to ensure the bills that passed are in the best interest of Florida citizens' safety and Florida's law enforcement officers.





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Executive Summary

Florida's 2026 Legislative Session was defined by a clear and consistent theme: closing gaps in the law that create risk for public safety and challenges for law enforcement. Throughout this session, Florida's sheriffs played a key role in advancing practical solutions, working with lawmakers to refine existing statutes, address unintended loopholes, and ensure deputies have the authority and tools needed to respond effectively to evolving public safety threats.

Of the nearly 1,900 bills filed during the 2026 Legislative Session, only about 230 ultimately passed both chambers, roughly 12 percent. This marks one of the lowest passage rates in recent years, underscoring how few proposals make it across the finish line and highlighting the significance of the public safety priorities that successfully passed both chambers.

While the Legislature made significant progress on policy, the session concluded without final passage of the state budget, requiring lawmakers to return to Tallahassee in mid-May to complete negotiations. That unfinished work included funding priorities such as the Florida Sheriffs Youth Learning Center, for which the Florida Sheriffs Association requested \$9 million to support completion of a center that will highlight more than 200 years of sheriff history and introduce students to careers in law enforcement and public service. In addition, during the week of April 26, legislators convened during a special session and adopted a new congressional map that reshaped redistricting in Florida.

Rather than sweeping policy shifts, the 2026 session focused on targeted, practical fixes that strengthen accountability and remove barriers to timely enforcement, delivering meaningful public safety gains for Florida's communities.

Key Budget Victories

Funding for the Florida Deputy Sheriffs Association

The Florida Deputy Sheriffs Association received \$5 million in non-recurring revenue to continue a statewide grant program to recruit, train, and certify deputy sheriff candidates who cannot afford law enforcement academy tuition. Grants would go to local agencies, with priority for fiscally constrained counties, and the association may coordinate with the FDLE.

Funding for Fiscally Constrained Sheriffs Offices

Once again, the state budget included \$25.9 million for the 29 fiscally constrained sheriffs to provide pay raises for their deputies and correctional officers. The funding is recurring and will be administered by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. These funds support recruitment and retention efforts in the 29 sheriff's offices most in need, helping to attract and keep dedicated deputies and correctional officers.



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Florida Sheriffs Youth Learning Center

For the third year in a row, the Legislature invested in the creation of the Florida Sheriffs Youth Learning Center, appropriating \$9 million towards the project this year. With \$24 million in state funding now secured, the Center is on track to be completed during the summer of 2027.

Once complete, the Youth Learning Center will celebrate over 200 years of sheriff history and serve as an educational hub where children can learn about law enforcement through immersive exhibits, videos, and hands-on activities. The Youth Learning Center will introduce students to such careers as law enforcement officer, correctional deputy, dispatcher or civilian roles within a sheriff's office.



The Florida Sheriffs Association Youth Learning Center has secured \$24 million over three years in state funding and is on track to be completed in summer of 2027.



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Florida Sheriffs Association Priorities

Issue: Jason Raynor Act

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-144

Effective: Took effect upon the Governor's signature on June 16, 2026.

(HB 17 Rep. Baker and SB 156 Sen. Leek)

In 2021, Officer Jason Raynor was shot and killed by Othal Wallace while investigating a possible stolen vehicle. Wallace refused to comply during questioning and fatally shot Officer Raynor, later claiming self-defense based on the alleged unlawfulness of Officer Raynor's actions. Although convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to 30 years, Wallace avoided a life sentence because current law did not enhance penalties for manslaughter of a law enforcement officer.

Under Florida law, a person may not use violence to resist a law enforcement officer in an arrest or detention. However, ambiguities around an officer's "legal duty" have been used by defendants such as Wallace to justify force. This legislation clarifies that resisting an officer with violence is unlawful when the officer is performing his or her official duties and acting in good faith, replacing the prior standard requiring proof that the officer was engaged in a "lawful duty." The bill defines acting in good faith as making a sincere and reasonable effort to comply with legal requirements during an arrest or detention and places the determination of fault during a police interaction fully in the hands of the court.



Since 2002, the FSA Memorial wall has added 448 names, a living record of the sheriffs personnel who have died in the line of duty.

The bill also increases penalties for crimes committed against law enforcement officers. It requires a mandatory life sentence without eligibility for release for anyone convicted of manslaughter of a law enforcement officer and increases the offense severity ranking for battery on a law enforcement officer under the Criminal Punishment Code.



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Impact To Sheriffs: This legislation strengthens legal protections for law enforcement officers during arrests, detentions, and other official interactions. This bill clarifies that individuals may not use or threaten force against an officer who is performing official duties and acting in good faith, which will help prevent violent offenders from exploiting legal technicalities to justify attacks on officers carrying out their responsibilities.

Mandatory life sentence for manslaughter of an officer and increased penalties for battery on an officer will ensure serious consequences for those who commit acts of violence against deputies and reinforce protections for sheriffs' offices statewide.

Issue: Xylazine

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-148

Effective: October 1, 2026.

(HB 309 Rep. Bankson and SB 432 Sen. Yarborough)

Xylazine is a powerful veterinary sedative that has increasingly appeared in the illicit drug supply, often mixed with opioids and other dangerous substances. Because it is not approved for human use, its growing presence has raised concerns for both law enforcement and public health officials.

This legislation addresses the issue by adding xylazine to Florida's Schedule I list of controlled substances under s. 893.03, F.S., while preserving an exception for FDA-approved animal drug products used for legitimate veterinary purposes.

The bill also creates new criminal offenses for individuals who sell, manufacture, deliver, or possess with intent to sell xylazine, including mandatory minimum prison sentences. Specifically, the bill makes it a first-degree felony with a 3-year mandatory minimum when xylazine is disguised as a food product, such as candy, gummies, or cereal, or when deceptive branding or packaging is used. In addition, the legislation establishes the offense of trafficking in xylazine, with enhanced penalties and fines based on the quantity involved.

The bill also includes provisions known as "Meg's Law," which prohibit tobacco and nicotine dealers from possessing, selling, delivering, or giving nitrous oxide on or from their licensed premises, with certain exceptions for grocery stores and finished food products where nitrous oxide is used as a propellant.

Impact to Sheriffs: By scheduling xylazine as a controlled substance and establishing trafficking thresholds, this legislation gives law enforcement clearer authority to investigate and charge



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individuals involved in distributing xylazine. The inclusion of offenses targeting xylazine disguised as food products will assist law enforcement in identifying these illicit drugs that are designed to appeal to minors.

Additionally, the bill limits the sale of nitrous oxide at certain retail locations, which is intended to reduce access to products that are increasingly being misused for intoxication. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) will adopt rules to enforce this section. Together, these changes help sheriffs' offices and the DBPR respond to emerging drug trends and address substances that are increasingly appearing in the illegal drug market.

Issue: Sexual Offenders
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-17
Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 45 Rep. Plakon and SB 212 Sen. McClain)

This bill strengthens protections for children by placing new restrictions on certain sexual offenders in and around public swimming pools. It prohibits qualifying offenders from living within 1,000 feet of a public swimming pool and limits their ability to work, volunteer, or visit these locations without approval while under supervision. The bill also expands criminal penalties and enforcement tools for inappropriate contact with minors at public swimming pools and other prohibited locations. It also requires background checks for anyone looking to work or volunteer at public swimming pools, helping add another layer of protection in settings where children are likely to be present.

Residency Restrictions for Persons Convicted of Certain Sexual Offenses

The bill prohibits certain sexual offenders convicted of specified sexual offenses on or after July 1, 2026, in which the victim was under 16 from living within 1,000 feet of a public swimming pool. A violation is a third-degree felony if the person's original conviction was a first-degree felony or higher, and punishable as a first-degree misdemeanor if the person's original conviction was a second or third-degree felony.

The bill defines a "public swimming pool" for the purposes of residency restrictions *as a structure which is located either indoors or outdoors and used for recreational bathing or swimming by humans, including a conventional pool, spa-type pool, wading pool, special purpose pool, spray pool, splash pad, or other water recreation attraction, to which admission may be gained with or without payment of a fee, regardless of whether entry to the swimming pool is limited by a gate or other method of controlling access. The term includes swimming pools operated by or serving*



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subdivisions, apartments, condominiums, mobile home parks, or townhouses, or any pool operated by a governmental entity which is held open to the public. The term does not include a swimming pool at a private single-family residence, hotel, motel, recreational vehicle park, or a swimming pool where the operator prohibits the use of such pool by persons younger than 18 years of age.

A person who is subject to the residency restrictions in the bill would not be required to move if he or she is living in a residence that meets existing residency requirements and a public swimming pool is subsequently established within 1,000 feet of his or her residence.

The bill also prohibits a person who was convicted of committing a specified sexual offense in Florida on or after October 1, 2004, and before July 1, 2026, or who has been convicted of committing an offense in another jurisdiction on or after May 26, 2010, and before July 1, 2026, regardless of whether adjudication was withheld, in which the victim was less than 16 years of age from residing within 1,000 feet of any public swimming pool if he or she changes his or her permanent residence on or after July 1, 2026.

The residency restrictions created by the bill do not apply to an offender who has been removed from the requirement to register as a sexual offender or sexual predator.

Probation or Community Control for Persons Convicted of Certain Sexual Offenses

The bill requires that any person who has been convicted of committing specified sexual offenses on or after July 1, 2026, against a victim who was younger than 18 years of age at the time of the offense and who is sentenced to a term of probation or community control, in addition to all other existing requirements and restrictions, to also be prohibited from:

- Living within 1,000 feet of a public swimming pool, although such person would not be required to move if he or she is living in a residence that meets existing residency requirements and a public swimming pool is subsequently established within 1,000 feet of his or her residence; or
- Working for pay or volunteering at a public swimming pool.

The bill also prohibits a probationer or community controllee who is subject to supervision for a crime that was committed on or after July 1, 2026, and who has been convicted at any time of committing, or attempting, soliciting, or conspiring to commit, an offense requiring sexual offender designation against a victim who was younger than 18 years of age at the time of the offense from visiting a public swimming pool without the prior approval of his or her supervising officer.



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Conditional Release

The bill requires that any person who has been convicted of a crime committed on or after July 1, 2026, or who has been previously convicted of committing specified sexual offenses on or after July 1, 2026, against a victim who was younger than 18 years of age at the time of the offense and who is subject to conditional release supervision, in addition to all other existing requirements and restrictions, to also be prohibited from:

- Living within 1,000 feet of a public swimming pool, although such person would not be required to move if he or she is living in a residence that meets existing residency requirements and a public swimming pool is subsequently established within 1,000 feet of his or her residence; or
- Working for pay or volunteering at a public swimming pool.

The bill also prohibits a person who is subject to conditional release supervision for a crime that was committed on or after July 1, 2026, and who has been convicted at any time of committing, or attempting, soliciting, or conspiring to commit, an offense requiring sexual offender designation against a victim who was younger than 18 years of age at the time of the offense from visiting a public swimming pool without the prior approval of his or her supervising officer.

Loitering or Making Prohibited Contact or Communication with Children in Certain Locations The bill revises offenses related to loitering and prowling in close proximity to children by a person who was convicted of committing certain sexual offenses against a victim who was younger than 18 years of age at the time of the offense by:

- Prohibiting such a person from committing the offense of loitering and prowling within **500 feet** of a place where children were congregating, rather than within 300 feet.
- Revising an existing offense that prohibits such a person from approaching, contacting, or communicating with a person younger than 18 years of age in specified locations *with the intent to engage in conduct of a sexual nature* to instead prohibit the person from knowingly contacting, communicating with, or approaching with the intent to contact or communicate with, a person younger than 18 years of age in any park building or on real property comprising any park, playground, or public swimming pool, for any reason unless the child is his or her family or household member, and **authorizing a law enforcement officer to make a warrantless arrest if he or she has probable cause to believe that a person has committed a violation.**
- Revising the prohibition against such a person knowingly being present in a child care facility or school or on the real property comprising any child care facility or school when such child care facility or school is in operation by:



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- Requiring such a person who would otherwise be prohibited from being present in a child care facility or school to do all the following, instead of one of the following:
 - Provide written notification to the school board, superintendent, principal, or child care facility owner that he or she has been convicted of a specified sexual offense and that he or she intends to be present at the school or child care facility.
 - Notify the child care facility owner or the school principal's office when he or she arrives and departs the child care facility.
 - Remain under direct supervision of a school official or chaperone when present in the vicinity of children.
- Authorizing a law enforcement officer to make a warrantless arrest if he or she has probable cause to believe that a person committed a violation.
- Revising the exceptions to the prohibition by authorizing:
 - A legal guardian to pick up his or her child or grandchild from a child care facility or school.
 - A person to be at a child care facility or school for the purpose of attending a religious service.

For purposes of the restrictions described above, the bill defines the terms association with all prohibited locations, including "public swimming pool." Under this section, public swimming pool means *a structure which is located either indoors or outdoors and used for recreational bathing or swimming by humans, including the area immediately surrounding the structure. The term includes a conventional pool, spa-type pool, wading pool, special purpose pool, spray pool, splash pad, or other water recreation attraction, to which admission may be gained with or without payment of a fee, regardless of whether entry to the swimming pool is limited by a gate or other method of controlling access. The term also includes, but is not limited to, pools operated by or serving camps, churches, governmental entities, day care centers, parks, schools, subdivisions, apartments, condominiums, hotels, motels, mobile home parks, recreational vehicle parks, and townhouses. The term does not include a swimming pool at a private single-family residence or a swimming pool where the operator prohibits the use of such pool by persons younger than 18 years of age.*

Employment Screening

The bill requires a state agency or governmental subdivision, prior to making a decision to appoint or employ a person to work or volunteer at a public swimming pool to conduct a search of such person's name or other identifying information against the registration information regarding sexual predators and sexual offenders through the Dru Sjodin National Sexual Offender Public



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Website maintained by the United States Department of Justice or, if such website is unavailable, a search of the registration information regarding sexual predators and sexual offenders maintained by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. A state agency or governmental subdivision is not required to conduct such a search if the position requires a state and national criminal history background check.

Impact to Sheriffs: This bill closes a gap in current law by adding public swimming pools to existing sexual offender restrictions, helping to better protect children where they are most vulnerable. Specifically, this bill creates new enforcement responsibilities while also providing clearer authority in managing sexual offenders in the community. Agencies will need to factor public swimming pools into residency verification, compliance checks, and address updates.

Importantly, the bill uses two different definitions of “public swimming pool,” and sheriffs will need to pay close attention to when each applies. Both definitions cover indoor and outdoor water features used for recreational swimming, including traditional pools, spas, wading pools, splash pads, and similar attractions. Each definition also makes clear that access can be with or without a fee and that a pool can still qualify even if access is controlled by gates or other barriers. However, the definition is narrower for residency and supervision restrictions. Specifically, the definition *excludes* pools at hotels, motels, and recreational vehicle parks. This narrower approach keeps the housing restrictions more targeted, while still making sure offenders have realistic options for housing, so law enforcement can effectively track and monitor them.

For the loitering, contact, and presence restrictions, the definition is broader and *includes, but is not limited to* pools at locations such as camps, churches, day care centers, hotels, motels, and recreational vehicle parks. This distinction will be critical when deputies are determining whether an offender may legally reside near a location versus whether that person is violating the expanded loitering and contact restrictions.

The bill also clarifies that offenders already living in a compliant residence are not required to move if a public swimming pool is later established within 1,000 feet, which will be an important consideration during enforcement. The residency restrictions created by the bill do not apply to an offender who has been removed from the requirement to register as a sexual offender or sexual predator.

Lastly, the bill also expands the circumstances under which a law enforcement officer may make a warrantless arrest for violations involving sexual offenders. Specifically, an officer may arrest without a warrant when there is probable cause to believe an offender has violated the revised restrictions related to loitering or prowling near places where children congregate, or has unlawfully approached, contacted, or communicated with a minor in prohibited locations such



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as parks, playgrounds, or public swimming pools. Additionally, warrantless arrest authority applies when an offender violates the updated requirements governing presence at a school or child care facility—such as failing to provide advance notice, check in and out, or remain under required supervision. These provisions give deputies the ability to take immediate enforcement action in situations involving potential risk to children, without the delay of obtaining a warrant.

Issue: **Pretrial Violations**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-155**

Effective: *October 1, 2026.*

(HB 397 Rep. Daley and SB 760 Sen. McClain)

This bill creates a new criminal offense for willfully violating a no-contact order imposed as a condition of pretrial release for specified violent offenses (including crimes such as murder, manslaughter, battery, stalking, kidnapping, robbery, sexual battery, and other violent felonies involving the use or threat of force). A first violation is a first-degree misdemeanor, and a subsequent violation is a third-degree felony.



FSA Legislative Chair and Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri briefs Florida sheriffs and their teams on key legislative priorities during Sheriffs Day at the Capitol.



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The bill also authorizes a law enforcement officer to make a warrantless arrest in the case that the officer has probable cause to believe that a person has violated his or her no-contact order. The bill provides that a law enforcement officer may not be held liable in a civil action where an arrest was made based on such probable cause.

The bill requires that a person be held in custody until his or her first appearance hearing if he or she is arrested for violating a no-contact order or if the person, while on pretrial release for a specified violent offense, is arrested for committing a new law violation. At first appearance, the court must determine whether to order pretrial detention or release, with priority given to the safety of the victim and the public

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill strengthens public safety by creating clear, enforceable consequences for individuals who violate no-contact orders in serious violent cases. By elevating repeat violations to a felony and authorizing warrantless arrests based on probable cause, the bill gives law enforcement immediate authority to intervene before situations escalate further. The requirement that offenders be held until first appearance helps close gaps in pretrial oversight, reduces the risk of reoffending, and reinforces accountability for high-risk individuals. Additionally, the liability protection recognizes the realities of “he said, she said” scenarios, ensuring officers can make good-faith arrests based on probable cause without fear of civil liability, allowing them to prioritize victim safety in the moment.

Issue: **Public Postsecondary Tuition and Fee Waivers for Sheriff's Office Employees**

Outcome: **Failed.**

(HB 307 Rep. Johnson and SB 372 Sen. Trumbull)

This bill would have expanded the state employee tuition and fee waiver program to include employees of sheriff's offices, including sworn law enforcement officers, correctional officers, and civilian personnel. Under the bill, eligible employees could receive a waiver of tuition and required fees for up to six credit hours per term at state universities and Florida College System institutions, on a space-available basis and subject to approval by the sheriff. Currently, sheriff's office employees are not eligible for this benefit and must typically cover tuition costs on their own unless local assistance is available.

The bill was intended to provide greater access to higher education opportunities for sheriff's office personnel through the existing state-supported waiver program.



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Issue: Access to the Mental Competency (MECOM) Database
Outcome: Failed.

(No associated bill)

The bill would have provided local law enforcement with access to the Mental Competency (MECOM) Database to determine the eligibility of a citizen who carries a concealed weapon or firearm without possessing a Concealed Weapons License, which is no longer required under Florida law.

Law Enforcement

Issue: Pub. Rec./Crime Victims
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-33
Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 1113 Rep. Tuck and SB 350 Sen. Grall)

The bill seeks to protect the identities of crime victims and law enforcement officers by addressing a current gap in the law following a 2023 decision by the Florida Supreme Court, which held that Marsy's Law does not create a categorical right to keep a victim's identity confidential. In that decision, the court declined to resolve broader questions regarding who qualifies as a "victim" under Marsy's Law, particularly in the context of law enforcement officers, and when those protections apply. Since the adoption of Marsy's Law in 2018, and further underscored by the Court's ruling in 2023, there has been inconsistent application across the state regarding who is considered a victim and what information is protected from public records.

The bill expands a public record exemption for victims of crime to include the name and personal identification number (such as a Social Security number or other unique identifying number) and any other information that could be used to locate, intimidate, harass, or abuse a victim, and creates a public record exemption for specified identifying information, including the name or personal identification number, home or employment telephone number, home or employment address, or personal assets of a lawful representative, family member, or next of kin of a person identified as a victim. The exemption does not apply to the accused, or to a lawful representative, family member, or next of kin of a victim upon a showing that the interest of such person would be in actual or potential conflict with the interests of the victim.

The bill further expands the exemption to encompass any public record, meaning *any material made or received by an agency* in connection with official business, regardless of format, rather than just documents. The bill also clarifies that the exemption applies to records generated by any agency that regularly creates information concerning the victims of crime victims, rather than



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being limited to records received by an agency. For crime victims who are not law enforcement officers, the protected information is exempt from public records requirements indefinitely, on an ongoing basis.

Under the bill, the name of an officer who becomes a victim of a crime in the course and scope of his or her employment or official duties is confidential and exempt for the first 72 hours immediately following the incident. The name is then exempt for an additional 60 days after the 72-hour period. After the expiration of the 60 days, the name of the officer is no longer exempt, unless the officer is a victim of a sexual battery under s. 119.071(2)(h)1.b., F.S.

Under the bill, a “family member” means *a spouse, child, parent or legal guardian, or sibling, and does not include the accused*. An “officer” means any *full-time, part-time, or auxiliary law enforcement officer, correctional officer, or correctional probation officer certified under s. 943.13, F.S.* A “victim” means *a person who suffers direct or threatened physical, psychological, or financial harm as a result of the commission or attempted commission of a crime or delinquent act or against whom the crime or delinquent act is committed, and does not include the accused*.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill provides clarification regarding how law enforcement should handle the public records of crime victims. Sheriffs should be aware of the new law and should ensure all information that could be used to identify, locate, harass, or abuse a victim is kept exempt from public records as described above.

Additionally, each agency will need to decide how they will determine whether an officer falls within the broad definition of a “victim” under the bill. If an agency decides an officer falls within the definition of a victim, the officer’s name must be made exempt and confidential for the first 72 hours. After that period, the officer’s name is only exempt and no longer confidential, for up to 60 days. A sheriff may decide during the 60-day period whether to release the victim officer(s) name because the identity is exempt and not confidential (**Sheriffs office personnel need to familiarize themselves with the difference between “exempt” and “confidential” under Florida law to properly apply the provisions of this bill**). FSA is currently working with a workgroup, with assistance from other law enforcement and public service agencies, to develop guidance and best practices for implementation of the bill’s requirements.



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Issue: Drug Paraphernalia
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-157
Effective: July 1, 2026

(HB 477 Rep. Salzman and SB 646 Sen. Gaetz)

This bill expands the drug testing equipment excluded from the definition of “drug paraphernalia” to include products that are used solely to determine whether a controlled substance contains Xylazine.

Impact to Sheriffs: Individuals may now legally possess and use Xylazine drug testing equipment without being charged with drug paraphernalia possession. This equipment is limited to single-purpose testing tools, such as Xylazine test strips or similar kits designed specifically to detect the presence of Xylazine rather than equipment with broader applications. Agencies will need to update training to reflect the change to distinguish lawful Xylazine testing supplies from prohibited paraphernalia.

Issue: Search Warrants for Computers, Computer Systems, and Electronic Devices
Outcome: Passed. Chapter 2026-177
Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 359 Rep. Anderson and SB 442 Sen. Yarbrough)

Midway through the 2025 legislative session, a court ruling found that a search warrant for an electronic device had become stale because it was executed more than 10 days after issuance. Recognizing the potential statewide impact on digital evidence cases—where forensic analysis often takes significantly longer than traditional searches—Florida’s sheriffs moved quickly in 2025 to pass legislation extending the return period for search warrants involving computers and other electronic devices from 10 to 45 days.

While the 45-day timeframe was a meaningful and immediate improvement, it was intended as a temporary solution. It served as a placeholder to stabilize ongoing investigations, prevent the loss of critical evidence, and allow time to evaluate the need for a longer return period in a future legislative session.

As digital forensics units continued to face growing caseloads, backlogs, and increasing technical complexity, it became clear that 45 days still did not provide sufficient time to complete thorough and lawful analyses. In response, the Legislature passed HB 359 this year, which builds on the earlier fix by amending s. 933.05, F.S., to extend the return period for search warrants involving computers, computer systems, and electronic devices from 45 days to 365 days.



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The bill also provides important clarification that a warrant is considered timely executed if the device itself is seized within the original 10-day window. Once the device is lawfully seized, law enforcement may continue reviewing and analyzing the data even after the return period has passed by obtaining an extension. This change ensures that complex digital investigations are not undermined by arbitrary deadlines and better aligns Florida law with the realities of modern forensic work.

The bill also adjusts return timelines for other types of warrants from the standard 10 days to:

- 20 days if a search warrant is issued to an out-of-state provider for electronic communications, and
- 30 days for warrants involving the search and collection of DNA specimens

The bill also clarifies the circumstances for which a judge may issue a search warrant to explicitly authorize the issuance of a warrant to recover a deceased body and authorizes a law enforcement agency to obtain a search warrant to use a drone to search an area or areas where evidence that a crime was committed might reasonably be found. Lastly, the bill specifies that a judge may authorize a law enforcement officer to appear remotely using audio-video communication technology when applying for search warrants or court orders.

Impact to Sheriffs: This legislation helps the law to reflect the reality of living in a digital age. Extending the return period for electronic search warrants to 365 days will give Sheriff's Offices needed flexibility to manage forensic workloads and the challenges of electronic warrants.

Issue: **Law Enforcement Officer Interactions with Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-147**

Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 365 Rep. Valdes and SB 418 Sen. Jones)

This bill creates a "Blue Envelope and Blue Card Program" under the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) to facilitate communication between individuals with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) and law enforcement officers.

The blue envelope is intended to hold a copy of the individual's important information such as a driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. The exterior of the blue envelope will identify the individual as having ASD and the envelopes will include communication guidelines for officers during interactions with drivers with ASD. The blue card may be digital or a durable wallet sized card. Blue envelopes and blue cards will be available by request from the



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DHSMV and local tax collectors beginning January 1, 2027.

The blue envelope is intended to hold a copy of the individual's important information such as a driver's license, vehicle registration, and proof of insurance. The exterior of the blue envelope will identify the individual as having ASD and the envelopes will include communication guidelines for officers during interactions with drivers with ASD. The blue card may be digital or a durable wallet sized card. Blue envelopes and blue cards will be available by request from the DHSMV and local tax collectors beginning January 1, 2027.

The bill also requires the Florida Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission to develop a training component for law enforcement officers on recognizing and interacting with individuals with ASD. The training must include information on behavioral indicators associated with ASD, communication considerations, and de-escalation techniques. This training must be incorporated as in-person training in basic recruit training by July 1, 2028, and must be completed online by all currently certified officers, including deputies, as part of continuing employment education or appointment by July 1, 2030.



School Resource Officers and Deputies will receive specialized training to better assist our most vulnerable populations.

Impact to Sheriffs: Sheriffs' offices should ensure all current officers complete the required ASD training by July 1, 2030. For most agencies, this will likely occur through existing in-service training requirements as FDLE phases the training into the system. The Blue Envelope and Blue Card Program may also appear during traffic stops or other routine encounters. Officers should be aware that individuals may present these materials to indicate they have ASD and may communicate or react differently during interactions with law enforcement officers.



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Issue: **Electronic Payments made to Units of Local Government**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-169**

Effective: *January 1, 2027.*

(HB 967 Rep. Buchanan and SB 1612 Sen. DiCeglie)

The bill requires local governments, including constitutional officers, to accept payment by means of credit cards, charge cards, bank debit cards, and electronic funds transfers, for payments owed to the local government, except when another form of payment is required by law. The bill also requires local governments to have a method for accepting such payments online.

Impact to Sheriffs: Sheriff's offices that do not currently accept payments electronically will need to ensure they have some form of electronic payment processing in place. Sheriff's offices may also charge a surcharge to cover any applicable processing fees. Offices will be responsible for verifying the validity of the method of payment used and whether the person using the card or transfer has sufficient credit to complete the transaction.

Issue: **Local Government Cybersecurity**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-115**

Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 1085 Rep. Miller and SB 576 Sen. Harrell)

The bill creates the Local Government Cybersecurity Protection Program, to be administered by the Florida Digital Service (FLDS), to assist local governments in mitigating and defending against cybersecurity threats. The bill establishes requirements for FLDS, allows FLDS to apply for and accept Federal funds or grants, and allows local governments to purchase services and commodities from contracts executed by FLDS.

The bill also requires FLDS to contract for IT commodities and services and award them to local governments through the Program. The bill requires FLDS to award grants annually by December 1 and specifies that fiscally constrained counties receive preference in the Program. The bill allows local governments to purchase IT commodities and services from the contracts managed by FLDS under the Program even if the local government does not apply for or receive a grant award.



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Lastly, the bill requires FLDS to enter into data-sharing agreements with local governments to facilitate the collection, analysis, and exchange of security-related information to support the detection, prevention, and response to cybersecurity incidents consistent with the State Cybersecurity Act.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill may expand access to cybersecurity funding and services at the local level. A county that received funding through the program may be able to incorporate their sheriff's office into their grant-funded initiatives.

Issue: **Local Administration of Vessel Restrictions**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-36**

Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 1103 Rep. Andrade and SB 1682 Sen. Trumbull)

The bill expands the authority of counties and municipalities to regulate and enforce certain vessel-related activities on state waters, subject to review and approval by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC). Previously, these functions were primarily handled by law enforcement and FWC, but the bill authorizes local governments to delegate certain enforcement responsibilities to code enforcement officers.

Specifically, counties and municipalities will now be able to adopt ordinances authorizing local code enforcement officers to administer provisions relating to vessels at risk of becoming derelict and long-term anchoring permits. Code enforcement officers may issue uniform boating citations for noncriminal infractions and may assist in identifying, relocating, removing, or disposing of vessels that are derelict or are deemed a public nuisance. The bill also allows counties and municipalities to adopt ordinances that regulate vessel speeds and operation near certain hazards when necessary for boating safety, such as blind corners or waterway intersections. These ordinances must be reviewed and approved by FWC.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill expands local governments' role in regulating vessel activity by allowing code enforcement officers to take on duties traditionally handled solely by law enforcement and FWC. This may help alleviate some workload related to noncriminal boating violations and derelict vessel enforcement.



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Issue: Statute of Limitations Period for Violations Involving Required Reports Concerning Children

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-95

Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 373 Rep. Duggan and SB 590 Sen. Bradley)

This bill extends the time period to prosecute a person who knowingly and willfully fails to make a required report of known or suspected child abuse, including sexual abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Under current law, such a violation is a third-degree felony that must generally be prosecuted within three years of the offense (failure to report). Under the bill, the statute of limitations (SOL) for such an offense is tolled until a law enforcement agency or other governmental agency becomes aware of the violation, rather than beginning at the time the offense is committed. The bill applies to any offense that is not otherwise barred from prosecution on or before July 1, 2026.

Impact to Sheriffs: Under current law, the state generally has three years from the time a person fails to report suspected child abuse to initiate prosecution. This bill revises that timeframe by providing that the SOL does not begin to run until law enforcement or another governmental agency becomes aware of the failure to report, excluding the institution where the violation occurred. As a result, if a person knowingly fails to report child abuse and that violation is not discovered until a later date, prosecutors may still pursue charges, as the limitations period begins upon discovery rather than at the time the offense occurred. In practice, this discovery will occur when the failure to report is uncovered through a hotline, criminal investigation, or other official inquiry. This will make it easier for law enforcement to pursue accountability in cases that may otherwise go unreported for extended periods, particularly in complex or concealed abuse situations.

Issue: Criteria for Determining Criminal Gang Membership

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-156

Effective: October 1, 2026.

(HB 429 Rep. Baker and SB 536 Sen. Martin)

This bill revises the criteria used by law enforcement to determine whether a person qualifies as a *criminal gang member* by revising and adding additional criteria that is used in making such a determination, at least two of which must be satisfied for a person to fall within the definition. The changes are intended to modernize the existing definition to better reflect how gangs currently recruit members, communicate with one another, and publicly claim affiliation.



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Current law relies heavily on traditional indicators of gang membership, but the bill expands those indicators to account for the growing role of social media and digital communication in gang activity.

This bill amends the criteria used to determine whether a person is a criminal gang member to include (in addition to current criteria):

- Admissions made on social media or an online platform of gang membership.
- Identification by a criminal gang as one of its members.
- Identification of a person as a criminal gang member by a person's spouse living with the person.
- Observation in the company of one or more known criminal gang members two or more times (reduced from four).
- Communications indicating gang affiliation or gang activity, or acceptance of responsibility for the commission of any crime by a criminal gang member.
- The use of gang-related language in furtherance of criminal gang-related activity on an online platform or social media.

Impact to Sheriffs: This bill will update the criteria law enforcement use when identifying and documenting criminal gang members. By recognizing social media activity and other digital communications as indicators of gang affiliation, the bill reflects how many gangs now communicate, recruit, and claim membership online. Lowering the number of required documented associations may make it easier for law enforcement to establish gang membership.

Issue: **Public Nuisances**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-145**

Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 481 Rep. Booth and SB 168 Sen. Truenow)

This bill revises provisions relating to local government enforcement of public nuisances by increasing penalties and expanding enforcement tools. Specifically, the bill increases the maximum fine that may be imposed for a public nuisance from \$250 to \$500 per day if the nuisance is not abated within one year and removes the existing \$15,000 cap on total fines. Additionally, the bill revises the definition of "public nuisance" to include properties used as a gambling house on more than two occasions within a 12-month period.

Impact to Sheriffs: This bill strengthens enforcement against chronic nuisance properties by increasing penalties, removing the cap on fines, and expanding the definition of public nuisance to include repeat illegal gambling activity.



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Issue: Animal Welfare
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-78
Effective: October 1, 2026.

(HB 559 Rep Chaney and SB 676 Sen. Arrington)

This bill creates a new third-degree felony offense if a person 18 years or older causes or entices a minor to commit, or commits in the presence of a minor, the following crimes:

- Aggravated animal cruelty
- Fighting or baiting animals
- Sexual activities involving animals

Any minor who commits animal cruelty must be ordered by the juvenile court to undergo a psychological evaluation and, if recommended, receive specified counseling or treatment.

Expands the information FDLE must publish online for animal abuse offenders (currently only the offender's name is required).

The additional information includes:

- All aliases
- Date of birth and race
- County of conviction
- Charges and case number
- Case disposition
- Identifying marks/tattoos
- Booking photograph



Impact to Sheriffs: This bill gives law enforcement another tool to address *Alachua County Sheriffs Chad Scott and K9 Tracker were the FSA March Madness K9 Winners.*

serious animal cruelty cases involving minors by creating new felony offenses when an adult commits these acts in the presence of, or involves, a minor. The bill also expands the FDLE animal abuse database and requires additional offender information to be submitted by clerks of court and county detention facilities. Sheriffs who operate county jails should ensure they provide the new required information.



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Issue: **Felony Battery**
Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-149**
Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 623 Rep. Gentry and SB 436 Sen. Leek)

This bill adds resisting an officer with violence to the list of prior offenses that can elevate a subsequent battery from a first-degree misdemeanor to a third-degree felony. As a result, a person who has a prior conviction for resisting an officer with violence and commits a new battery offense may now be charged with felony battery. The bill also adds battery on a law enforcement officer resulting in bodily injury to the list of offenses that qualify for prison releasee reoffender (PRR) sentencing. PRR sentencing applies when a person commits certain offenses within three years of being released from prison and requires the offender to serve a mandatory prison sentence without early release.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill provides a stronger deterrent against repeat violence and reinforces officer safety by ensuring that violent offenders, particularly those who target officers, are held accountable and removed from the community.

Issue: **Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)**
Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-96**
Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 709 Rep. Kincart Johnson and SB 656 Sen. Bradley)

This bill renames the “Online Sting Operations Grant Program” in the Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to the *Internet Crimes Against Children Grant Program*, which supports local law enforcement affiliates in Florida working to combat online child exploitation. This bill expands the purpose of the program to support broader efforts in targeting internet crimes against children.

The bill also expands the allowable uses of grant funds awarded by FDLE to local law enforcement agencies. In addition to hardware and software, funds may be used for:

- Overtime pay.
- Travel.
- Investigative or digital forensic training.

The bill defines eligible affiliates as local law enforcement agencies that have a memorandum of understanding with an ICAC task force or are otherwise in “good standing”, which includes agencies that receive CyberTips and follow ICAC standards in investigating internet crimes against children.



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This bill also creates the ICAC Task Force Funding Program to provide a consistent funding source for ICAC task forces and participating agencies. Funding appropriated to this program must be distributed with 80% equally to eligible ICAC task forces, and 20% to FDLE for their efforts in combating online child exploitation.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill provides an additional source of funding for sheriff's offices that participate as Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) affiliates. The state budget included \$2.1 million in nonrecurring funding for a statewide ICAC case management dashboard and \$3 million in recurring grant funding, which may be used to support personnel, overtime, training, travel, technology, and other resources to combat online child exploitation.



The Florida Sheriffs met with the Florida Commissioner of Agriculture Wilton Simpson at the annual Florida Sheriffs Day at the Capitol.

Issue: Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-3
Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 433 Rep. Alvarez, D. and SB 290 Sen. Truenow)

The bill makes numerous changes relating to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Among other provisions, the bill prohibits the possession, manufacture, offering for sale, sale, importation, distribution, or use of signal jamming devices designed to intentionally interfere with cellular communications, police radar, GPS signals, or other radio communications. The prohibition does not apply to federal or military law enforcement agencies using such devices as part of a lawful criminal investigation or to the Federal Communications Commission. A violation constitutes a first-degree misdemeanor. The bill also establishes a statewide standard prohibiting commercial solicitation at a dwelling displaying a compliant sign identifying the property as one where commercial solicitation is prohibited. A first violation constitutes a noncriminal violation, while a second or subsequent violation is punishable as a second-degree misdemeanor.



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Impact to Sheriffs: The bill provides sheriffs' offices with additional enforcement authority by creating a new state criminal offense prohibiting the unlawful possession, manufacture, distribution, sale, or use of signal jamming devices that may interfere with emergency communications or law enforcement operations. The bill also establishes a uniform statewide standard governing commercial solicitation at private residences, providing deputies with clear statutory authority to enforce violations when a dwelling displays the required statutory notice.

Law Enforcement Bills that Failed:

Issue: Gaming Machines

Outcome: Died in returning messages.

(HB 189 Rep. Trabulsy and SB 204 Sen. Bradley)

This legislation would have made several changes to Florida law related to illegal gaming machines and gambling operations. The bill aimed to clarify what activities and devices qualify as illegal gambling under state law and increase criminal penalties for operating or promoting illegal gambling houses, possessing slot machines, and financially benefiting from unlawful gaming activity.

Issue: Bail Bonds

Outcome: Died in messages.

(HB 1017 Rep. Baker and SB 600 Sen. Truenow)

The bill would have made many changes to Florida's bail bond laws, primarily dealing with how surety bonds are handled and what happens when a defendant fails to appear in court. It revised requirements for bond agents and clarified their role in making sure defendants return for scheduled hearings. It also updated the process for bond forfeiture, including when a forfeiture is triggered, how notice must be provided, and the circumstances under which a forfeiture can be set aside or reduced.

Issue: Location of Sheriffs' Offices

Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 713 Rep. Gonzalez-Pittman and SB 798 Sen. Burgess)

This bill would have removed the requirement that a Sheriff's office must be located at the county seat and would have allowed the office to be located anywhere within county boundaries.



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Issue: Eyewitness Identification
Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 875 Rep. Koster and SB 1202 Sen. Truenow)

This bill would have changed eyewitness identification procedures for law enforcement agencies by requiring documentation of an eyewitness's description of a suspect before an identification procedure. Also, the bill would have limited the use of facial recognition technology by requiring independent evidence to include a suspect in a lineup. The bill also would have established standardized requirements for lineups including the use of independent administrators, specific lineup composition standards, required instructions to eyewitnesses, and audio and video recording of identification procedures.

Issue: Prosecution of Defendants
Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 1505 Rep. Weinberger and SB 1326 Sen. Martin)

This bill would have made several changes to the insanity defense. Specifically, the bill would have narrowed the affirmative defense of "not guilty by reason of insanity" by removing the provision allowing a defendant to claim they knew what they were doing but did not know it was wrong, effectively shifting the standard to focus on whether a defendant understood the nature of their actions. The bill would have also eliminated the traditional insanity defense in favor of a "culpable mental state" standard, requiring defendants who intended to commit a crime to be held criminally responsible even if they could not distinguish right from wrong.

Issue: Violation of State Immigration Law
Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 229 Rep. Jacques and SB 304 Sen. Martin)

This bill would have created the "Shane Jones Act," establishing a framework to penalize law enforcement agencies and local governments that fail to comply with state immigration enforcement requirements and to provide compensation to victims of crimes committed by unauthorized aliens. Specifically, the bill required the Department of Law Enforcement to impose a \$10,000 fine per violation on agencies that do not comply with state immigration law, with funds directed toward a victim compensation program. The bill also created a cause of action allowing victims or their families to sue local governments or law enforcement agencies with unlawful sanctuary policies and waived sovereign immunity for such claims.



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Issue: 911 Public Safety Telecommunicator Employment-related Mental or Nervous Injuries

Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 451 Rep. Holcomb and SB 774 Sen. Pizzo)

The bill would have enhanced workers' compensation benefits to 911 public safety telecommunicators for employment-related accidents and injuries.

Issue: Department of Law Enforcement

Outcome: Died in returning messages.

(HB 849 Rep. Abbott and SB 524 Sen. Simon)

The bill would have included several provisions including a requirement that the FDLE's Criminal Justice Information Program must collect, process, store, maintain, and disseminate immigration detainer information. Under the bill, each law enforcement agency would have been required to capture and electronically submit the fingerprints of qualifying offenders who are in custody and subject to an immigration detainer, and the FDLE must create a record containing the offender's immigration detainer information upon receipt.

Issue: Funding for Body Cameras

Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 1077 Rep. Holcomb and SB 1102 Sen. Massullo)

The bill would have expanded the allowable uses of the local government infrastructure discretionary sales surtax to include the equipment, software, and storage necessary for the use of body cameras by law enforcement agencies.

Issue: Complaints Against Law Enforcement and Correctional Officers

Outcome: Died in messages.

(HB 1283 Rep. Fabricio and SB 1544 Sen. Pizzo)

The bill would have required all complaints against law enforcement officers to be in writing and signed by the complainant under oath, or alternatively, require "corroborating evidence" to accompany the oral, unsworn, or anonymous complaint. Additionally, the bill would have prohibited the use of the investigative file being considered for "promotion, raise, or other commendation" if no disciplinary action resulted. The bill did not define what corroborating evidence" meant, nor did it define "disciplinary action."



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Public Safety

Issue: School Safety ("ARMOR Act")
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-80
Effective: Took effect May 15, 2026, upon the Governor's signature.

(HB 757 Rep. Salzman and SB 896 Sen. Gaetz)

The bill allows employees and faculty members of public postsecondary educational institutions to participate in the Guardian Program, if appointed by an institution's president. **The bill requires the sheriff to establish a guardian program or contract with other sheriff's offices that have established guardian training programs to meet the demand for the training of school employees or security guards.** The sheriff providing the required training for guardians at public postsecondary educational institutions will be reimbursed for screening and training-related costs, including a one-time stipend of \$500 to each school guardian trained.

Additionally, the bill clarifies that **upon the request of a private school, child care facility, or public postsecondary educational institution that has not implemented a guardian program, the sheriff in the county *must* establish a guardian training program or contract with other sheriff's offices that have established a guardian training program to meet the demand for the training of the school employees or security guards.**

The Florida Sheriffs Association is responsible for establishing guidelines for the costs associated with such training programs. Sheriffs may still provide additional training, but any additional training must be provided at no cost to the private school, child care facility, or security agency. **The FSA is working to develop and publish statewide cost guidelines for guardian training programs.**

Public postsecondary educational institutions include workforce education, Florida College System institutions, state universities, and all other state-supported postsecondary educational institutions that are authorized and established by law. As with other entities that participate in the guardian program, public postsecondary educational institutions that elect to participate are required to verify that guardians meet the statutory requirements as well as report guardian information to the FDLE.

Under the bill, public postsecondary educational institutions must promote the use of FortifyFL if they do not already have a public safety reporting application. Additionally, similar to current requirements for public and charter K-12 schools, public postsecondary educational institutions must adopt an active assailant response plan, conduct an annual security risk assessment, train faculty to detect and respond to mental health issues, and establish threat management teams. Institutions must annually certify that faculty, staff, and students have completed active assailant



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preparedness training. The bill also requires institutions to adopt and annually review a family reunification plan coordinated with local law enforcement agencies and local government.

Certain records related to a student's behavior, including threat assessment reports, and student psychological evaluations relating to threat assessment and behavioral concerns must be transferred from a K-12 school to a Florida College System institution or state university upon his or her enrollment.



Starting *October 1, 2026*, the bill expands the existing prohibition against discharging a weapon or firearm at a school-sponsored event or on the property of any school, school bus, or school bus stop to also prohibit a person from discharging a weapon or firearm within 1,000 feet of a school, during school hours or during the time of a sanctioned school activity, unless the person discharges the weapon or firearm for the lawful defense of himself, herself, or another person or if the person's presence on such property has been authorized, licensed, or invited by the

owner. A violation is punishable as a second-degree felony. A person who is arrested for discharging a weapon or firearm within 1,000 feet of a school or who is arrested for discharging a weapon or firearm at a school-sponsored event or on the property of any school, school bus, or school bus stop must be held in custody until his or her first appearance hearing.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill expands the Guardian Program to include public postsecondary institutions, requiring sheriffs to establish training programs or partner with other counties to accommodate additional participants. Sheriffs are responsible for providing guardian screening and training, with reimbursement for associated costs and a required \$500 stipend per guardian provided to the sheriff who conducts the training. Sheriffs must adhere to the cost guidelines set by the Florida Sheriffs Association when charging for such trainings.

The bill clarifies and expands sheriffs' obligations relating to guardian training programs by requiring sheriffs, upon request, to establish or coordinate training programs for participating private schools, child care facilities, and public postsecondary educational institutions. Additionally, starting October 1, 2026, sheriffs will need to adjust enforcement practices to



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reflect the expanded firearm prohibition within 1,000 feet of schools and comply with mandatory detention requirements for violators.

Issue: Education

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-59

Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 1279 Rep. Kincart Johnson and SB 7038 Sen. Calatayud)

This education package includes provisions which clarify that charter schools may have a safe-school officer on campus through any of the authorized options under Florida law, regardless of any local ordinance or development order.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill reinforces that school safety requirements are governed under state law to ensure charter schools are not restricted by local government policies and are able to satisfy the requirement that at least one safe-school officer be present on each school facility.

Issue: Violent Criminal Offenses

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-86

Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 277 Rep. Tendrich and SB 682 Sen. Calatayud)

This bill makes several changes to Florida law related to domestic violence offenses and violations of protective injunctions. Specifically, the bill authorizes a penalty enhancement if a person commits a crime of domestic violence and has a prior conviction for committing such an offense. Under the bill, the penalty for violating a domestic violence injunction is enhanced from a first-degree misdemeanor to a third-degree felony upon a second or subsequent violation of such an injunction committed against the same victim, rather than a third or subsequent violation, or a violation of such an injunction when the defendant has a prior conviction for committing a crime of domestic violence against the same victim.

The bill adds threatening to kill or injure a family pet and the existence of a military protective order to the list of factors that a judge may consider when determining whether to grant a domestic violence injunction. Under the bill, a law enforcement officer who has probable cause to believe that a person violated a military protective order must report such a violation to the agency that entered the order.



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Additionally, FDLE will be required to enter injunctions against dating and sexual violence into a statewide database. Finally, the bill establishes two, two-year electronic monitoring pilot programs to evaluate the use of GPS monitoring in domestic violence cases. One pilot program will operate in Pinellas County for misdemeanor offenders and will be administered by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. The second pilot program will operate in the Sixth Judicial Circuit for felony offenders and will be administered by the Department of Corrections.

In both programs, courts may order electronic monitoring as a condition of probation and are required to do so in certain cases where the offender poses a threat to the victim. The pilot programs are intended to collect information on the effectiveness of electronic monitoring in improving victim safety and compliance with court orders. The programs are scheduled to run from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2028, and require reporting to the Legislature on outcomes, costs, and effectiveness.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill strengthens protections for victims of domestic violence while giving law enforcement clearer authority and stronger tools to intervene earlier and more effectively. By increasing penalties for repeat offenders and escalating violations of protective injunctions to felonies sooner, the bill helps deter ongoing abuse and allows officers to take more decisive action. Additionally, the creation of electronic monitoring pilot programs provides an opportunity to enhance victim safety through real-time supervision of high-risk offenders, while generating data to guide future statewide policy.

Issue: **Dangerous Crimes ("Missy's Law")**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-19**

Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 445 Rep. Greco and SB 928 Sen. Martin)

This bill, entitled "Missy's Law," expands Florida's pretrial detention framework by adding computer pornography and child exploitation offenses as described in F.S. 847.0135 to the list of "dangerous crimes" under Florida law. Individuals arrested for these offenses will not be granted nonmonetary pretrial release at first appearance and may be subject to pretrial detention if certain criteria are met.



Missy's Law was named in remembrance of Missy who was murdered by her stepfather, a registered sex offender who was allowed to remain free on bond pending his sentencing.



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The bill also creates s. 903.0472, F.S., requiring that a person who pleads guilty or nolo contendere to, or is found guilty of, a dangerous crime be immediately remanded into custody and remain in custody pending sentencing, without the possibility of release on bond. This requirement applies regardless of adjudication and regardless of whether the individual intends to appeal. The remand requirement does not apply if the plea or finding of guilt is later vacated, reversed on appeal, set aside, or otherwise nullified.

Impact to Sheriffs: This bill helps to ensure dangerous offenders remain in custody while awaiting sentencing.

Issue: Sexual Offenses
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-20
Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 1159 Rep. Jacques and SB 1750 Sen. Martin)

The bill increases criminal penalties for use of a child in a sexual performance, possession and transmission of child sexual abuse material, creation of generated child sexual abuse material, possession of a child-like sex doll, and specified sexual activities involving animals.

The bill replaces the term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse material” throughout Florida statutes. This change has been made in many states across the country *to better reflect the abuse that is depicted in the images and videos and the resulting trauma to the child*, according to a recent DOJ memo.

Sexual Performance by a Child and Child Sexual Abuse Material

Increases penalties related to specified offenses of sexual performance by a child and child sexual abuse material, by:

- Increasing the penalty for using a child in a sexual performance under s. 827.071(2), F.S., **from a second-degree felony to a first-degree felony**, and requiring a court to sentence a person convicted of the offense to a **15-year mandatory minimum** if he or she was 18 years of age or older at the time of the offense.
- Requiring a court to sentence a person who commits a second-degree felony under s. 827.071(3), F.S., for promoting a sexual performance by a child, to a **5-year mandatory minimum** if he or she was 18 years of age or older at the time of the offense.
- Increasing the penalty for knowingly soliciting, possessing, controlling, or intentionally viewing a photograph, motion picture, exhibition, show, representation, image, data, computer depiction, or other presentation which, in whole or in part, a person knows includes child sexual abuse material, **from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony**.



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In order to address potential concerns regarding the close-in-age “Romeo and Juliet” (Florida Statute 943.04354) situations, the bill includes a provision that specifies a court is not required to impose a mandatory minimum for an above violation related to use or promotion of a child in a sexual performance if the court makes the following written findings related to the sexual performance that forms the basis of the violation:

- The child depicted in the sexual performance was 14 years of age or older at the time the sexual performance was created;
- The sexual performance was created with the depicted child’s permission;
- The offender was not more than 4 years older than the depicted child at the time the sexual performance was created; and
- The offender did not promote the sexual performance to any third party.

The bill also creates a new life felony offense for aggravated use of a child in a sexual performance if a person employs, authorizes, or induces a child younger than 12 years of age to engage in a sexual performance.

- Under the bill, a court is required to sentence a person convicted of the offense to a **25-year mandatory minimum** if he or she was 18 years of age or older at the time of the offense.



Governor Ron DeSantis signs HB 1159 and HB 445 (Missy's Law), two bills that strengthen protections for children.



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Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material

The bill increases the penalty for creating generated child sexual abuse material from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony. Additionally, the bill creates a second-degree felony related to transmitting generated child sexual abuse material if:

- Any person in Florida knew or reasonably should have known that he or she was transmitting generated child sexual abuse material to another person in Florida or in another jurisdiction.
- Any person in any jurisdiction other than Florida knew or reasonably should have known that he or she was transmitting generated child sexual abuse material to any person in Florida.

Transmitting Child Sexual Abuse Material

The bill amends the current prohibition against transmitting child sexual abuse material to another person by:

- Increasing the penalty from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony;
- Increasing the ranking from a Level 5 to a Level 6 offense; and
- Requiring a court to sentence a person convicted of the offense to a 5-year mandatory minimum if he or she was 18 years of age or older at the time of the offense.

A court is not required to impose a mandatory minimum for a violation of transmitting child sexual abuse material if the court makes the following written findings related to the image that forms the basis of the violation:

- The child depicted in the image was 14 years of age or older at the time the image was created;
- The image was created with the depicted child's permission;
- The offender was not more than 4 years older than the depicted child at the time the image was created; and
- The offender did not transmit the image to any third party.

The bill also provides definitions for terms related to the crime of transmitting child sexual abuse material, including:

- "Access credential" means any password, username, token, unique link, uniform resource locator (URL), hyperlink, or other data that enables a user to access a digital file or other data in cloud storage.



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- “Cloud storage” means any remote, networked, or third-party provided storage service that enables a user to store, host, or share a digital file or other data and to access such a digital file or other data via the Internet or other network, whether by direct file transfer, access credential, link, or other similar means.
- “Link” means any uniform resource locator (URL), hyperlink, short link, shareable link, magnet link, or other string, token, or data that, when used, directs or grants a user access to a digital file or other data that is stored remotely, including in cloud storage.

The bill expands the definition of “transmit” to also include the act of providing access to any image, information, or data in cloud storage by sharing, publishing, or otherwise making available a link, access credential, or other similar means by which another person may access, view, or obtain such image, information, or data.

The bill specifies that a person does not commit the offense of transmitting child sexual abuse material if he or she provides a link, access credential, or other information, in good faith to a law enforcement agency, prosecuting authority, or authorized forensic examiner for the purpose of:

- Reporting suspected child sexual abuse material;
- Cooperating with an investigation;
- Preserving evidence; or
- Seeking lawful removal of content.

In explicitly providing lawful exceptions, the bill ensures investigators can handle evidence without the risk of criminal liability, provided their actions are in good faith and solely for authorized investigative purposes.

Acts in Connection with Obscene Materials

The bill increases criminal penalties if a person has in his or her possession, custody, or control an obscene, childlike sex doll, so that a person commits a:

- Third-degree felony upon a first violation, rather than a first-degree misdemeanor.
- Second-degree felony upon a second or subsequent violation, rather than a third-degree felony.



HB 1159, sponsored by Rep. Jacques, expands criminal penalties on sexual offenses against children.



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The bill also specifies that prosecution of a person for an offense under s. 847.011, F.S., related to the prohibition of certain acts in connection with obscene, lewd, and other related materials, does not preclude prosecution of that person in Florida for a violation of any other law of Florida, including a law providing for greater penalties than prescribed under s. 847.011, F.S., or any other crime punishing the sexual performance or the sexual exploitation of children.

Penalty Reclassification and Enhanced Penalties for Repeat Sexual Offenders

The bill revises the current penalty reclassification related to possessing **10 or more images** of child sexual abuse material or material harmful to minors when at least one such image contains specified content by revising criteria for prohibited specified content from including an image of a child under 5, to instead include an image of a child under 12.

The bill also amends required mandatory minimums related to sexual offenses by persons previously convicted of sexual offenses, so that a qualifying offender who reoffends must be sentenced to:

- 15 years, instead of 10 years, if the subsequent offense is a violation for lewd and lascivious molestation.
- 30 years, instead of 20 years, if the subsequent offense is a violation for using a child in a sexual performance.
- 30 years, instead of 20 years, if the subsequent offense is a violation for selling or buying minors.

Sexual Activities Involving Animals

The bill increases penalties for specified offenses of sexual activities involving animals, to increase the penalty from a third-degree felony to a second-degree felony, and increase the offense ranking from a Level 6 to a Level 7 offense on the OSRC, for knowingly:

- Engaging in any sexual contact with animal; or
- Causing, aiding, or abetting another person to engage in any sexual contact with an animal.

The bill also requires, instead of authorizes, a court order to be effective for at least 5 years after the date of conviction prohibiting a person convicted of specified sexual activities involving animals from:

- Harboring, owning, possessing, or exercising control over any animal;
- Residing in any household in which animals are present; and
- Engaging in an occupation, whether paid or unpaid, or participating in a volunteer position at any establishment at which animals are present.



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Impact to Sheriffs: The bill strengthens public safety by increasing penalties for serious offenses involving the sexual exploitation of children to more accurately reflect the gravity of these offenses. Additionally, the bill provides clearer statutory authority and enhanced tools to investigate and prosecute cases involving child sexual abuse material. Specifically, child sexual abuse material is increasingly stored and shared via cloud storage, often through applications such as MEGA or Telegram. Offenders frequently trade or sell links or access credentials to these services, which may be hosted internationally and may not report child sexual abuse material to National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC). By providing definitions under Florida law related to the transmission of child sexual abuse material, investigators will have greater statutory authority to address modern methods of distribution and access.

Issue: **Lewd or Lascivious Acts**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-159**

Effective: *October 1, 2026.*

(HB 1525 Rep. Bankson and SB 1742 Sen. Martin)

The bill creates a third-degree felony offense, indecent exposure of sexual organs while observing a child, if that person, while observing a child under 16 years of age for the purpose of his or her own sexual arousal or gratification:

- Intentionally exposes his or her sexual organs in a lewd or lascivious manner; or
- Intentionally performs any sexual act that does not involve actual physical or sexual contact with the child, including, but not limited to, sadomasochistic abuse, sexual bestiality, masturbation, or the simulation of any act involving sexual activity.

Under the bill, the term “observing” means intentionally viewing another person under circumstances in which the offender is reasonably capable of being seen by the person being viewed. The bill specifies that **it is not a defense that the person being observed was not aware of any specific conduct on the part of the offender or did not see the offender’s sexual organs.** Additionally, the bill repeals s. 800.02, F.S., relating to unnatural lascivious acts.

Impact to Sheriffs: This bill closes a gap in Florida law by criminalizing indecent exposure or sexual acts committed for gratification while observing a child, even if the child is unaware, giving law enforcement a clearer tool to intervene before conduct escalates.



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Issue: Virtual Currency Kiosks
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-178
Effective: July 1, 2027.

(HB 505 Rep. Owen and SB 198 Sen. Rouson)

This bill establishes a regulatory framework for virtual currency kiosks (or cryptocurrency ATMs). These changes are intended to address the growing use of virtual currency kiosks in financial scams, particularly those targeting vulnerable populations. The bill requires kiosk operators to register with the Office of Financial Regulation as a “money services business”.

The following is required by such operators:

- Warning customers of the risk of fraud.
- Limiting kiosk transactions for new customers to \$2,000 per day and \$10,000 per day for existing customers.
- Providing customers with a physical or electronic receipt that includes contact information for the business, transaction details, a liability statement, and a refund policy.
- Requiring virtual currency kiosk businesses to issue a refund of a customer’s first transaction within 72 hours.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill establishes oversight and consumer protections for virtual currency kiosks to combat their growing use in financial scams, particularly those targeting vulnerable individuals. It provides clearer regulatory standards and safeguards that can help prevent fraud, support investigations, and reduce scam-related victimization in the community.

Issue: Victims of Domestic Violence and Dating Violence
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-91
Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 269 Re. Gossett-Seidman and SB 296 Sen. Berman)

The bill requires the Division of Telecommunications within the Department of Management Services to conduct a feasibility study on the creation of a web-based 911 alert system for victims of domestic violence and dating violence. The Division must consult with public safety answering points (PSAPs) and law enforcement agencies and submit a report to the Legislature by January 31, 2027.



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The feasibility study must evaluate a system capable of:

- Ensuring real-time data-sharing between PSAPs and law enforcement agencies.
- Creating a unique telephone number for each user which will connect the user to a PSAP.
- Creating a user-generated numerical code or phrase that can be utilized by the user after contacting a PSAP that will indicate the user's need for immediate law enforcement assistance.
- Transmitting specified data to law enforcement when a user calls from his or her unique phone number and enters his or her numerical code or phrase.

The bill also expands eligibility for the Attorney General's Address Confidentiality Program to include victims of dating violence, allowing such individuals to use a substitute address in place of their actual address for purposes of public records and voter registration.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill may affect law enforcement agencies through participation in the feasibility study and coordination with PSAPs regarding potential emergency alert system capabilities for domestic violence and dating violence.

Issue: Security Services at Places of Worship

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-46

Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 95 Rep. Grow and SB 52 Sen. Gaetz)

This bill amends F.S. 493.6102, which regulates private investigative services, private security services, and repossession services, to include an additional exception for voluntary security services at places of worship. This bill clarifies that such regulation does not apply to any person who volunteers without compensation to provide armed security at churches, mosques, synagogues, or other places of worship.



This change is intended to provide clarity for religious institutions that already utilize volunteer security teams and to increase clarity associated with volunteer security personnel. The



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legislature emphasized increasing safety concerns at places of worship and the need for more immediate, on-site protection.

Impact to Sheriffs: This legislation may lead to an increase in religious institutions establishing volunteer security teams. Sheriffs' offices may see more coordination with places of worship regarding security planning and may be asked to provide guidance on best practices for safety, training, and emergency response. **However, sheriffs should be aware the new law does not require sheriffs to provide any guidance.**

Issue: **Habitual Traffic Offender Designation**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-53**

Effective: *July 1, 2026.*

(HB 35 Rep. Barnaby and SB 1370 Sen. Martin)

This bill, named "Isaiah's Law", revises the definition of a "habitual traffic offender" (HTO) by adding the offense of driving a motor vehicle without a valid license to the list of qualifying offenses. Under the bill, three or more convictions for driving without a license within a five-year period, arising out of separate acts, will count toward HTO designation. The bill also provides that a person who has never been issued a driver's license and is designated an HTO is not eligible to apply for a restricted license during the five-year revocation period.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill strengthens law enforcement tools against repeat unlicensed drivers and supports roadway safety by expanding the offenses that qualify an individual as a habitual traffic offender.

Public Safety Bills that Failed:

Issue: **Micromobility Devices**

Outcome: **Vetoed by Governor.**

(HB 243 Rep. Benarroch and SB 382 Sen. Truenow)

The bill would have established additional operating requirements for electric bicycles on sidewalks and shared-use paths. Riders would have been required to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians, provide an audible signal when overtaking pedestrians on shared pathways, and not operate an electric bicycle at a speed greater than 10 miles per hour when a pedestrian is within 50 feet. Violations would have been noncriminal traffic infractions. This legislation came in response to the growing popularity of electric bicycles, particularly among teenagers and young adults, and a corresponding increase in crashes and injuries involving these devices.



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Additionally, the bill would have created the *Micromobility Device Safety Task Force* within the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) to examine Florida's current regulatory framework and recommend changes aimed at improving safety and reducing crashes, injuries, and fatalities. It also would have required local law enforcement agencies and the Florida Highway Patrol to collect and submit specified information related to crashes involving micromobility devices to DHSMV. Law enforcement agencies would track crashes involving micromobility devices and provide the information to DHSMV for inclusion in a statewide report to the Governor and Legislature.

Issue: **Statewide Counterintelligence and Counterterrorism Unit**

Outcome: **Died in Committee.**

(HB 945 Rep. Alvarez, D. and SB 1712 Sen. Martin)

This bill would have created a Statewide Counterintelligence and Counterterrorism Unit within the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) to proactively identify and respond to terrorist threats, foreign intelligence activity, and other security risks. The bill would have required FDLE to establish an initial 10-person leadership team followed by an expansion into seven regional teams operating out of FDLE's regional operations centers. Each team would have worked in coordination with Regional Domestic Security Task Forces and included intelligence analysts, counterintelligence agents, and designated federal, state, and local liaison officers.

Issue: **Product Liability for Firearms**

Outcome: **Died in Committee.**

(HB 1551 Rep. Duggan and SB 1748 Sen. Trumbull)

This bill would have provided immunity from certain product liability claims for firearm manufacturers by prohibiting lawsuits based on the absence or presence of design features, safety mechanisms, or performance standards not required by federal law. This bill would not have applied in cases involving an actual manufacturing or design defect or where the firearm failed to operate as warranted by the manufacturer.

Issue: **Interpersonal Violence Injunctions**

Outcome: **Died in Committee.**

(HB 1105 Rep. Booth and SB 1280 Sen. Calatayud)

This bill would have made updates to Florida laws on interpersonal violence injunctions including domestic violence, repeat violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking. This bill was largely aimed at making the process consistent across different types of injunctions. The bill



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included provisions such as allowing certain documents to be served by e-mail and requiring recording of injunction proceedings. It also would have required clerks to electronically transmit injunction orders to the sheriff and required sheriffs to make that information available to other law enforcement agencies within 24 hours.

Issue: **Noncriminal Traffic Infractions Resulting in Vehicle Crashes**

Outcome: **Died in Committee.**

(HB 807 Rep. Melo and SB 1054 Sen. Martin)

The bill would have required a mandatory hearing for a person who commits certain noncriminal traffic infractions that result in a crash with another vehicle, including running a red light, failing to obey a traffic control device or sign, or failing to yield the right-of-way under certain conditions. The bill would have also increased penalties for these violations, including fines of \$500 for a first offense and \$1,000 for a second or subsequent offense, along with driver license suspensions for repeat offenders. The bill would have also required individuals convicted of such offenses to carry higher motor vehicle liability insurance for a specified period, consistent with existing requirements for certain DUI offenses.

Issue: **Transportation**

Outcome: **Died in returning messages.**

(HB 1233 Rep. Griffitts and SB 1220 Sen. Massullo)

The bill was a comprehensive transportation package that included several provisions that impact law enforcement and public safety. Specifically, the bill would have increased the maximum allowable speed limit on limited access highways from 70 to 80 miles per hour and increased speed limits on certain other highways outside urban areas. The bill would have also authorized private property owners to install and operate ALPR systems, subject to data privacy and security requirements. The bill incorporated provisions eliminating the requirement to display validation stickers on license plates and instead required motor vehicle registration and renewals to be recorded electronically. Finally, the bill would have prohibited a person from operating a motor vehicle in a manner that intentionally produces excessive or unusual noise, such as revving or accelerating the engine unnecessarily.



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Issue: **Transportation**
Outcome: **Died in returning messages.**

(HB 543 Rep. McFarland and SB 1080 Sen. DiCeglie)

The bill would have made changes to transportation and motor vehicle regulation by addressing traffic enforcement and safety measures including regulations to school zone speed enforcement systems, red-light camera intersections, noise enforcement, and radar and LiDar devices. The bill also revised regulation of automated license plate recognition systems. Additionally, the bill would have specified that license plate frames and decorative covers are allowed as long as they do not obscure the license plate's letters, numbers, registration decal, or the state.

Issue: **Artificial Intelligence Bill of Rights**
Outcome: **Died in House Committee.**

(HB 1395 Rep. Rizo and SB 482 Sen. Leek)

This bill would have established an "Artificial Intelligence Bill of Rights" outlining certain rights for Floridians related to the use of artificial intelligence, including transparency, data privacy, and protections against misuse. It also imposed requirements on artificial intelligence platforms, including disclosures when users are interacting with AI, restrictions on the use of personal data, and enhanced protections for minors using companion chatbot platforms.

Issue: **Anti-Semitism Task Force**
Outcome: **Died in House Committee.**

(HB 111 Rep. Gottlieb and SB 1072 Sen. Calatayud)

This bill would have created an antisemitism task force within the Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Legal Affairs to combat antisemitism in Florida. This task force would have been comprised of 18 members of varied background and would have provided policy recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature regarding antisemitism in our communities.



FSA Vice President Marion County Sheriff Billy Woods, FSA Executive Director Matt Dunagan, and FSA President and Seminole County Sheriff Dennis Lemma gather during Sheriffs Day at the Capitol.



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Issue: Utility Terrain Vehicles
Outcome: Died in Committee.

(HB 101 Rep. Gentry and SB 356 Sen. Wright)

This bill would have expanded the authorized operation of utility terrain vehicles (UTVs) on two-lane county roads and two-lane city streets where the speed limit is less than 55 miles per hour. This bill would have also allowed counties and municipalities to enact ordinances that are more restrictive than state statute and to prohibit the use of UTVs on any road within its jurisdiction that would have been determined as necessary for public safety.

Issue: Public Safety
Outcome: Died in Committee.

(HB 1427 Rep. Alvarez and SB 1586 Sen. DiCeglie)

The bill would have developed a comprehensive framework for improving current 911 dispatch operations across the state by eliminating call transfers in emergencies.

Issue: Pub. Records/Petitions for Injunctions for Protection Against Serious Violence by a Known Person
Outcome: Died in House Committee.

(HB 549 Rep. Gerwig and SB 210 Sen. Sharief)

This bill would have created a public records exemption for petitions seeking injunctions for protection against serious violence by a known person. Specifically, the bill made such petitions, and any identifying information of the parties, confidential if the petition was dismissed without a hearing or denied based on legal insufficiency, and until the respondent was formally served. The exemption was intended to protect the privacy of petitioners and respondents in cases where no injunction is ultimately issued.



Florida sheriffs meet with Senate Majority Leader and incoming Senate President Jim Boyd during Sheriffs Day at the Capitol to discuss key public safety priorities.



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Jails, Corrections & Re-Entry

Issue: Juvenile Justice

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-16

Effective: Took effect on March 30, 2026, upon the signature of the Governor.

(HB 1153 Rep. Cobb and SB 1734 Sen. Martin)

This bill makes several changes to the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) regarding personnel, detention, and court processes. The bill expands the definition of “officer” to include juvenile detention officers (JDOs) and juvenile probation officers (JPOs), aligning them with correctional and correctional probation officers for purposes of benefits, legal protections, and criminal penalties. As a result, offenses committed against JDOs and JPOs, including aggravated manslaughter, are now subject to enhanced penalties. The bill also clarifies that authorized agents of the DJJ are exempt from criminal penalties related to sheltering minors without parental notification or otherwise notifying law enforcement. This exemption applies in the same manner as existing statutory protections afforded to authorized agents of the Department of Children and Families when acting within their duties.



St. Johns County Sheriff Rob Hardwick and his team participated in more than 80 meetings with legislators, advocating for policies that strengthen public safety across Florida.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill enhances protections for juvenile justice personnel by elevating juvenile detention officers and juvenile probation officers to the same status as correctional officers for purposes of legal protections and enhanced penalties for offenses committed against them. The bill also protects DJJ staff from being criminally charged when they take lawful steps to ensure a child’s safety, such as temporarily sheltering a minor without prior notice, so long as they are acting within their legal duties, similar to the protections already given to DCF personnel.



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Prevention & Youth Services

Issue: Specific Medical Diagnosis in Child Protective Investigations
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-165
Effective: July 1, 2026.

(HB 47 Rep. Bartleman and SB 42 Sen. Sharief)

This bill revises child protective investigation procedures in cases involving allegations of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect where a child may have certain preexisting medical conditions that could resemble signs of abuse. Specifically, the bill authorizes the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to delay referring allegations of criminal conduct to law enforcement while certain medical conditions (such as rickets or Vitamin D deficiency) or differential diagnoses are being evaluated. Any allegations of criminal conduct that remain after the child protective investigation must still be referred to law enforcement.

The bill also requires DCF to notify parents or legal custodians of their responsibility to provide information regarding relevant medical diagnoses and treating healthcare providers during an investigation.



The Polk County Sheriff's Office Honor Guard presents the colors during the Opening Day ceremonies of the 2026 Legislative Session at the Florida Capitol.



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Impact to Sheriffs: The bill may affect the timing and coordination of certain child abuse investigations involving potential underlying medical conditions by allowing DCF to delay referrals to law enforcement while additional medical evaluations are conducted. The bill also creates additional procedures related to medical reviews, records collection, and coordination between DCF, healthcare providers, and law enforcement agencies during child protective investigations.

Prevention and Youth Services Bills that Failed:

Issue: Child Welfare (“Ellie’s Law”)

Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 499 Rep. Alvarez, J. and SB 438 Sen. Leek)

The bill would have revised Florida’s child welfare laws by expanding protections for children in parricide-related cases.

Administration

Issue: Retirement

Outcome: Passed.

Effective: July 1, 2026

(HB 5205E and SB 2E)

The bill establishes the contribution rates paid by employers that participate in the Florida Retirement System (FRS) beginning July 1, 2026. These rates are intended to fund the full normal cost and the amortization of the unfunded actuarial liability of the FRS and the impact of changes made by the bill.

The rates for state fiscal year 2026-2027 are:

Membership Class	Effective July 1, 2026				
	Normal Cost	UAL Rate	Admin	HIS	Total
Regular	7.11%	4.42%	0.06%	2.00%	13.59%
Special Risk	21.58%	14.10%	0.06%	2.00%	37.74%
Special Risk Admin Support	11.45%	28.28%	0.06%	2.00%	41.79%
Elected Officers-County Officers	11.45%	41.49%	0.06%	2.00%	55.0%
Senior Management	8.68%	21.86%	0.06%	2.00%	32.60%
DROP	9.86%	10.26%	N/A	2.00%	22.12%



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Additionally, the bill creates a minimum 1.5% annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for eligible FRS Special Risk Class members beginning July 1, 2026. The new COLA applies specifically to eligible Special Risk Class retirees and annuitants, including law enforcement officers, firefighters, and correctional personnel. An eligible "Special Risk Class retiree" means a retiree initially enrolled in the FRS before July 1, 2011, who has completed at least 72 months of creditable service as a Special Risk Class member or a retiree initially enrolled in the FRS on or after July 1, 2011 and who has completed at least 96 months of creditable service as a Special Risk Class member. Eligible retirees will receive the greater of the standard FRS COLA calculation or a 1.5% annual adjustment. The enhanced COLA applies beginning after the fifth anniversary of retirement of an eligible Special Risk Class member.

The bill also allows an elected officer, other than an officer serving as a legislator, who has completed his or her Deferred Optional Retirement Program (DROP) participation, to receive the DROP accumulations after reaching 59½ years of age without terminating from the office. This is the only authorized in-service distribution for the FRS. The Department of Management Services and the State Board of Administration must take appropriate steps to recoup any DROP accumulations distributed to an elected officer if the DROP accumulations would have been subject to forfeiture based on the elected officer's conviction of certain crimes.

Impact to Sheriffs: Sheriffs should ensure they account for the increases in the FRS rates as well as the new minimum COLA costs during their budget preparations.

Issue: Local Government Spending
Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-161
Effective: January 1, 2027

(HB 1329 Rep. Benarroch and SB 1566 Sen. DiCeglie)

The bill establishes new transparency and budgeting requirements for county governments. Specifically, the bill requires counties to hold a budget workshop and conduct a budget reduction exercise identifying ways the upcoming fiscal year's budget could be reduced by 10 percent **without compromising core public safety services, such as law enforcement or fire services**. The exercise must occur at least 14 days prior to final budget adoption. The bill requires the county budget officer to post the result of the exercise on the official website of the county or municipality.



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The bill also requires counties to post their tentative, adopted, and final budgets on the county's official website in PDF or similar downloadable format. This applies specifically to county departments and is not intended to apply to sheriff's offices. The posted budgets must include certain information, such as the budget overview, an overall countywide summary of revenue and expenditures, a summary of revenue and expenditures by fund, a summary of expenses by department and division and by program or function, etc. In addition, counties must publish a quarterly report of all employees funded through county appropriations, including each employee's name, job title, and salary.

Each county is required to publish a budget development calendar for the ensuing fiscal year and must include a host of budget-related events, including the expected timeframe for:

- County agencies to submit their proposed budget requests.
- Constitutional county officers to submit their tentative budgets to the BOCC.
- Holding any budget workshops.
- The budget public hearings may be held.
- The county will hold a budget workshop where the BOCC will perform the budget reduction exercise.

The budget development calendar must be published on the county's website on or before January 30 of each calendar year.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill is not intended to apply to sheriff's offices, but it may affect budget discussions at the county level. Counties will now be required to go through a public exercise showing how their budget could be reduced by 10 percent, which may prompt questions or discussions about funding across county departments, including public safety. **Sheriffs have no obligation to participate in this budget reduction exercise.**

While counties must publish a quarterly report of all employees funded through county appropriations, including each employee's name, job title, and salary, the reporting requirement applies to positions funded solely through county appropriations and is not intended to encompass grant-funded positions. Additionally, sheriffs are not required to disclose confidential or exempt matters or personnel. **Sheriffs should strongly consider redacting undercover personnel names, titles, and other identifying information from anything submitted to the county due to the sensitive and protected nature of those assignments.**

Additionally, the bill requires the counties to have a budget development calendar, and as such, sheriffs should be expecting this. It is required to be posted on the county's website on or before January 30 of each calendar year.



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Issue: Official Actions of Local Governments
Outcome: Passed, Chapter No. 2026-43
Effective: January 1, 2027.

(HB 1001 Rep. Black and SB 1134 Sen. Yarborough)

The bill prohibits counties and municipalities from funding, promoting, or taking official action as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Although the law does not expressly reference the constitutional office of the sheriff, **sheriffs are county officers and should assume that they are subject to this law and therefore must comply with its provisions.** Under the bill, any county or municipal official acting in an official capacity who violates this law commits misfeasance or malfeasance in office, which can be a basis for suspension or removal from office by the Governor.

The bill defines “diversity, equity, and inclusion” as any effort to:

- Manipulate or influence the composition of employees with reference to race, color, sex, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation; other than to ensure that hiring is conducted in accordance with state and federal anti-discrimination laws;
- Promote or provide preferential treatment or special benefits to a person or based on that person’s or group’s race, color, sex, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation;
- Promote or adopt training, programming, or activities designed or implemented with reference to race, color, sex, ethnicity, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

The bill prohibits local governments from using public funds for DEI initiatives, including related training or programming. In addition, it restricts local governments from requiring employees, contractors, or members of the public to participate in DEI training or to affirm DEI-related statements as a condition of employment, contracting, or participation in government services. The law also provides that a potential recipient of a county or municipality contract or grant shall certify to the county or municipality before being awarded the contract or grant that the potential recipient does not and will not use county or municipal funds in requiring its employees, contractors, volunteers, vendors, or agents to ascribe to, study, or be instructed using materials relating to DEI. The law is silent on the method of this certification, but including a certificate paragraph in the contract or grant should satisfy this requirement. This is consistent with the practice regarding Florida public records laws where the compliance requirement on contractors is included in the contract or other written agreement.

The legislation further clarifies that hiring, promotion, contracting, and other official actions by local governments must be based on merit and may not rely on diversity, equity, or inclusion considerations.



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The bill creates a cause of action allowing a resident of the county to sue a county official that is alleged to have violated this law. A court can award declaratory and injunctive relief, damages, and costs.

The bill does not prohibit official action required for compliance with general or federal law. Additionally, the bill does not prohibit a county from doing any of the following:



- Recognizing or promoting federal holidays.
- Recognizing or promoting state holidays and special observances.
- Recognizing or promoting patriotic and national observances recognized by federal law, or the events and individuals forming the basis for such observances.
- Recognizing or honoring the individuals and groups honored by state monuments, memorials, and museums, or national monuments and memorials, including recognizing the events and individuals forming the basis for such monuments and memorials.
- Issuing event permits in a content-neutral manner and providing public safety services.
- Using equal opportunity or equal employment opportunity materials designed to inform a person about the prohibition against discrimination based on protected status under state or federal law.

Impact to Sheriffs: Sheriffs received a legal alert from the FSA's General Counsel on May 1, 2026, that provides guidance for implementation of the bill. Sheriffs should eliminate any office, program, policy, or procedure that promotes or involves taking official action regarding DEI. For example, a policy that applies affirmative action to employment decisions would violate the law because affirmative action factors race or other status into the employment decision. Also, agency sponsored study groups for promotional exams that are not completely race, national origin, gender, etc., neutral could violate the law.



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Sheriffs should also review any internal employee committees, such as diversity committees, that involve DEI to ensure that their existence does not violate the law. Sheriffs who use internal instructors or hire outside instructors to teach classes for employees, such as implicit bias classes, may also violate the law. Sheriffs, and members of their agencies should refrain from promoting or participating in their official capacities of events that endorse DEI, such as local celebrations or festivities. However, sheriffs are permitted to use equal opportunity or equal employment materials designed to inform a person about the prohibition against discrimination based on protected status under state or federal law.

In sum, as a result of this new law, which does not take effect until January 1, 2027, sheriffs should revisit their policies and procedures to ensure they are in compliance. Any official action, endorsement, or promotion of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in hiring applicants, promoting employees, agency activities, or contracting with vendors, as well as sponsorship of or contributions to any program or event that embraces DEI could violate the law and lead to a lawsuit by a citizen against the sheriff or removal from office by the Governor.

Issue: **Elections**

Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-26**

Effective: *January 1, 2027.*

(HB 991 Rep. Persons Mulicka and SB 188 Sen. Garcia)

This bill makes several changes to Florida election laws related to voter registration, election security, candidate qualifications, and election-related offenses.

The bill revises Florida's voter registration process by requiring additional verification of United States citizenship and legal status information through the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles and other governmental databases. The bill also creates additional procedures for identifying, reviewing, and removing potentially ineligible voters from voter rolls, including individuals who may not be United States citizens. In addition, the bill adds notice that knowingly submitting false voter registration information is a felony offense and establishes procedures allowing applicants to provide documentation verifying eligibility if questions arise regarding citizenship status. The bill also creates additional candidate qualification requirements by requiring candidates to disclose dual citizenship status and prohibiting a person from qualifying as a candidate if the person legally changed his or her name through the general statutory name-change process within 365 days before qualifying for office, subject to limited exceptions for marriage, dissolution of marriage, or adoption proceedings. The bill further establishes a process for challenging whether a candidate satisfies the legal qualifications required to appear on the ballot or hold office.



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The bill expands election-related enforcement provisions by creating a five-year statute of limitations for felony violations of the Florida Election Code, extending the current timeframe that generally applies to most felony offenses. The bill also authorizes certain petition-related violations to be prosecuted as racketeering activity under Florida's RICO laws and prohibits political entities from knowingly accepting campaign contributions from foreign nationals in connection with Florida elections.

Additionally, the bill revises the list of acceptable forms of voter identification by removing several currently accepted forms of identification, such as student and neighborhood association identification cards, while adding certain government-issued identification documents. The bill also requires driver licenses and identification cards issued or renewed on or after July 1, 2027, to reflect a person's legal status as recorded by the state.

Impact to Sheriffs: This bill strengthens election integrity and enforcement mechanisms by expanding tools to identify ineligible voters, increasing penalties and investigative timeframes for election-related crimes, and enhancing safeguards against foreign influence in Florida elections.

Issue: Trade Secrets

Outcome: Passed. Chapter No. 2026-52

Effective: April 23, 2026.

(HB 7017 Rep. Sapp and GOS and SB 7026 OGSR)

This bill removes the scheduled repeal of the public records exemption for trade secrets held by state and local government agencies, thereby maintaining existing protections for such information. The bill also eliminates duplicative, agency-specific exemptions by consolidating trade secret protections under a single, uniform provision applicable to all agencies.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill maintains current protections for trade secret information that may be held by or shared with public safety agencies, including information from vendors, contractors, or technology providers. In practice, this helps ensure that sensitive proprietary information is not subject to public disclosure, while requiring agencies to continue properly identifying and handling exempt records.



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Issue: **OGSR/Cybersecurity**
Outcome: **Passed. Chapter No. 2026-120**
Effective: *June 10, 2026.*

(HB 7023 Rep. Conerly and SB 7024 Governmental Oversight and Accountability)

This bill expands the existing public records and public meeting exemption for cybersecurity information by incorporating additional categories of sensitive data, including information related to security processes and practices, risk assessments and audits, login credentials, and data identifying how and when users access public systems. The bill applies these protections across all state and local agencies and maintains exemptions for portions of meetings where such information is discussed.

Impact to Sheriffs: The bill strengthens the confidentiality of critical security information and supports efforts to safeguard agency networks, operational systems, and sensitive public safety data from cyber threats.



Administration Bills that Failed:

Issue: **Suits Against the Government (Sovereign Immunity)**
Outcome: **Vetoed by Governor.**

(HB 145 Rep. McFarland and SB 1366 Sen. Brodeur)

The bill would have increased the statutory caps on claims against the state and its agencies or subdivisions from \$200,000 per person and \$300,000 per incident to \$350,000 per person and \$500,000 per incident for causes of action accruing on or after October 1, 2026.

The bill also would have revised statutes of limitation and pre-suit notice requirements for claims against governmental entities, including negligence, wrongful death, medical malpractice, contribution, and certain sexual battery claims. In addition, it would have shortened certain timeframes for filing pre-suit notices and for agencies to respond to claims, tolled the statute of limitations while a claim was pending before an agency, and clarified that attorney fees may not exceed 25 percent of any judgment or settlement recovered.



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Issue: Public Records/ Law Enforcement Officers Actively Engaged in Official Duty
Outcome: Died in committee.

(HB 627 Rep. Berfield and SB 744 Sen. Yarborough)

The bill would have authorized a law enforcement officer who is actively engaged in the performance of an official duty, as determined by the officer, to decline to accept or process a public records request, so long as the officer informed the requestor that he or she cannot accept or process the request and direct such person to a records custodian or online public records request portal, if available.

Issue: Public Records
Outcome: Died in Senate Committee.

(HB 437 Rep. Andrade and SB 770 Sen. Rouson)

This bill would have imposed stricter requirements on Florida's public records laws by requiring agencies to respond to requests within three business days, either by providing the records, issuing a cost estimate, or citing a legal basis for denial. The bill limited the fees agencies can charge in certain circumstances, including prohibiting charges for smaller or previously fulfilled requests, and required more detailed written explanations for delays or exemptions. It also expanded enforcement provisions by increasing penalties for violations and broadening the availability of attorney fee awards.

Issue: The Sealing of Criminal History Records
Outcome: Died in Committee.

(HB 745 Rep. Koster and SB 810 Sen. Simon)

This bill would have broadened eligibility for sealing criminal history records, allowing for a second sealing in limited circumstances. The bill was aimed at extending relief to more individuals with non-violent, lower-level offenses who have completed their sentences and remained law-abiding.



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Issue: Public Records/Sealed Criminal History Records
Outcome: Died in Committee.

(HB 747 Rep. Koster and SB 812 Sen. Simon)

This bill was the public records companion bill to the bill above (HB 745/SB 810) and would have created a public records exemption for certain criminal history information that is ordered sealed. Specifically, the bill would have exempted identifying information related to sealed criminal history records from public disclosure, consistent with the underlying policy changes in the substantive bill.

Issue: Adverse Personnel Actions and Ethics Complaints
Outcome: Died on 2nd Reading Calendar

(HB 139 Rep. Maney and SB 92 Sen. Gaetz)

This bill would have created additional whistleblower protections for those who disclose ethics violations to the Commission on Ethics. The bill would have prohibited an agency or independent contractor from firing, demoting, suspending, transferring, reducing salary, and other actions toward such a whistleblower employee.

Issue: Legal Notices
Outcome: Died in messages.

(HB 1009 Rep. Griffiths and SB 380 Sen. Trumbull)

This bill would have expanded how local governments, including clerks and other county officials, can publish legally required notices by allowing them to post notices on their own websites or other designated online platforms instead of relying primarily on newspapers, if doing so is more cost-effective.

Issue: Statewide Data Sharing of Secondhand Dealer, Secondary Metals Recycler, and Pawnbroker Transactions
Outcome: Died in Committee.

(HB 1345 Rep. Michael and SB 1582 Sen. Yarborough)

This bill would have required secondhand dealers, secondary metals recyclers, and pawnbrokers to submit transaction records to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE), in addition to current requirements to provide these records to local law enforcement agencies.