



District Advisory Council Meeting

10.7.26 @ Deltona High School

Overview

- Presentation reviewed 2027 legislative context: **property tax reform (Amendment 3)**, **mid-cycle congressional redistricting**, and **budget pressures** dominated the session.
- Florida adopted a **\$114.5 billion** budget before vetos; **education ~ \$31 billion** (flat in real terms; **BSA +~1.58%**).
- Amendment 3 would raise the homestead exemption from **\$50K → \$150K (immediately) → \$250K (1/1/2028)** and needs **60%** voter approval; modeling estimates **Volusia loss ≈ \$272.4M (near term)** and **\$351M (5th year)**.

Delegation & leadership

- Current delegation composition and expected changes were listed; Tom Wright is retiring and a replacement race is underway.
- Incoming leadership preview: **Sam Garrison** likely House Speaker; **Jim Boyd** likely Senate President; budget chairs still being finalized (candidates: Tracy Kasper, John Snyder, Jason Roeder referenced).
- Leadership priorities signaled: **quality schools, safer streets, strong economy, property insurance, growth management, and mental health**.

Major state issues that shaped the session

- Property tax reform (Amendment 3) loomed over budget and tax votes; House proposals were not advanced in the Senate during regular session.
- Mid-cycle congressional redistricting created political churn and candidate recruitment pressure; recent Supreme Court guidance altered majority-minority district drawing.
- Budget building: revenues remained high post-COVID (sales tax, inflation), but leadership was cautious about future fiscal cliffs and sought a relatively flat budget year.

Notable governor/legislative actions and bills

- Data centers: legislation passed preserving **local control** with requirements (power neutrality, consumptive water permits).
- Emergency trust fund (used previously for immigration detention) reauthorized with stronger transparency and procurement timelines to Legislative Budget Commission oversight.
- Several high-profile proposals failed: an AI bill, broad vaccine-mandate rollbacks, some rural funding proposals, and major school deregulation efforts.
- Sovereign immunity cap increase passed the legislature but was **vetoed by the governor** (relief for districts' tort exposure this year).
- DEI restrictions and other preemption measures were passed at the state level.

K-12 specific legislation and impacts

- K-12 budget: overall roughly flat after inflation; some targeted increases (ESOL, exceptional student allocations, **mental health assistance allocation**).
- Notable K-12 bills passed or considered:
 - Expansion/tweaks to the **Guardian** program (expanded to higher ed) and increased criminal penalties (discharging a firearm within **1,000 ft** of a school now a 2nd-degree felony).
 - Omnibus preK-college bill with new deadlines (Florida Virtual School requirements, epinephrine devices, IEP notification changes) – many new duties carried **without dedicated funding**.
 - Athletics/NIL-related clarifications (Teddy Bridgewater law) and extracurricular access rules for charter/FLVS students (insurance requirements noted).
 - Two years of marching band can satisfy **PE/performance arts** credit; Special Olympics participation can satisfy PE credit for students with disabilities.
- Voucher/school choice implementation concerns: program size near **\$1B**; state report indicates **tens of millions of dollars and tens of thousands of students are not tracked reliably**, creating fiscal and operational issues for districts.

Amendment 3 (property tax reform) – mechanics & local impact

- Ballot language: increases homestead exemption in stages; includes a CPI indexing stair-step to expand exemptions over time.
- Fiscal modeling: **significant recurring revenue losses for counties and cities**; Volusia estimated loss ≈ **\$272.4M (year 2)** and ≈ **\$351M (year 5)** (estimates vary with growth assumptions).
- Schools were **removed from direct exemption** in the final legislative language (the state did not commit to backfilling school funding lost to homestead changes), meaning primary direct impacts fall on **cities and counties**, with **indirect impacts** to districts via shared local revenue and service changes.
- Implementation changes: tighter rules on local millage increases – the traditional rollback adjustments were reduced and certain millage raises may now require **supermajority votes** (two-thirds) depending on the change.
- Political dynamics: pro-Amendment 3 spending (realtors \$10M+) vs. opponents (Sheriffs Association ad); passage requires **60%**, historically hard to achieve.

Citizen initiatives & ballot process

- Citizen-initiated constitutional amendments remain legally possible but have been made much harder (shorter signature windows, higher thresholds, and more complex rules); recent high-profile citizen petitions (medical marijuana, abortion protections) prompted statutory tightening.
- Florida Taxation & Budget Reform Commission (every 20 years) can place tax/budget items on the **2028** ballot – potential vehicle for broader tax-structure proposals (TDT, sales tax, mileage/road funding adjustments).

Local/district operational updates

- Safety: district implementing metal detectors in middle schools; **4th middle school (River Springs) fully implemented**, all middle schools expected online **by Christmas break**; all high schools completed last year.
- Superintendent note: **end of first quarter** is Friday; Monday following is a teacher duty day (no students); families urged to check Focus/Parent Portal for grades.
- District capacity concerns: continued student losses to choice programs require recruitment and retention efforts; funding rules that allow vouchers to remain with private schools even if students transfer back to public schools remain a pressure point.

Outlook & next steps

- Key items to watch for 2028: **Amendment 3 election results**, Tax & Budget Reform Commission proposals, **growth management (Chapter 163)** overhaul, property-insurance fixes, and any implementing legislation addressing local revenue shortfalls.
- Timeline: committee weeks after the election (Dec-Feb); legislative session begins **March 2** and (if on time) ends **April 30**; governor sworn in **Jan 5**.
- Districts should plan for increased reporting and unfunded mandates, monitor implementing bills tied to Amendment 3, and track local millage/voter-approval rule changes that will affect budget planning.