



## 2025 Legislative Session Bills of Note

This year's legislative session was a busy one. Nearly 2,000 bills were filed (1,952 to be exact), and 255 of them made it all the way through both the House and Senate. One of those was our very own local bill, HB 4007, which we're especially proud of. It's always exciting to see local priorities move forward in Tallahassee.

All of the bills mentioned in this wrap-up have passed the Legislature and are now waiting for the Governor's signature (or veto). Once signed, they'll officially become law.

Now here's where things played out a little differently this year. While lawmakers finished all of the policy bills within the usual 60-day session, they weren't able to reach an agreement on the state budget. Since passing a balanced budget is a key responsibility each year, the Legislature will be coming back for an extended session starting May 12 and running through June 6 to work that out.

It's not unusual for budget talks to take a little extra time, especially when there are a lot of competing priorities. We'll be keeping an eye on how things come together in the weeks ahead.



### **HB 11 - Municipal Water and Sewer Utility Rates**

- This bill corrects an unintended consequence of Florida law regarding municipal utility surcharges. Current law allows a municipality providing water or utilities to another municipality to charge up to a 25% surcharge, recognizing the costs of building infrastructure to extend services. However, there are unique cases where a utility facility is physically located within one municipality but owned by another. Despite not paying taxes, providing police protection, or maintaining roads in the host city, the owner municipality imposes a 25% surcharge on the residents where the facility is located—while its own residents pay no surcharge, even though they receive the same water. This creates an unfair burden on the host city's residents, who not only support the facility's infrastructure but also pay higher rates than those in the owner municipality. This bill ensures fairness by requiring that all residents, both in the facility's owner municipality and the host city, be charged the same rate. It is a matter of equity and good governance to prevent unjustified financial burdens on communities that already support these essential utilities.
- Require municipalities that operate water or sewer utilities in other municipalities to charge the same rates, fees, and charges as those within their own boundaries under specific conditions.
  - Adds a new provision mandating that any municipality running a water or sewer utility in a recipient municipality, where it also has a facility, must charge the same rates as it charges consumers inside its municipal boundaries.
  - Specifies that the new requirements only apply to municipalities located in certain counties defined in s. 125.011(1).
  - Defines key terms such as “facility,” “wastewater treatment facility,” and “water treatment facility” to clarify the scope of the new requirements.
  - Removes or revises certain references allowing surcharges on consumers outside the municipal boundaries in cases where a municipality operates within another municipality and has a facility there.
- Effective Date: July 1, 2025



### **SB 164 - Vessel Accountability**

- Amends state laws to enhance vessel accountability, adjust vessel ownership definitions, and specify penalties for improper anchoring.
  - Defines "vessel owner" and removes inconsistent use of the term "owner."
  - Outlines conditions under which a vessel is considered at risk of becoming derelict, detailing responsibilities for vessel owners or operators to demonstrate means of propulsion.
  - Introduces a non-criminal penalty for unauthorized long-term anchoring, requiring a no-cost permit that includes operator and vessel information.
  - Specifies that a vessel involved in multiple violations can be declared a public nuisance with the owner liable for associated costs.
  - Establishes an electronic system for long-term anchoring permits and reiterates that these regulations do not supersede other state anchoring laws.
  - Stipulates that derelict vessels or those declared public nuisances are subject to immediate removal, with the owner responsible for related costs.
  - Incorporates vessel accountability measures into various statutes, ensuring comprehensive enforcement across relevant state laws.
- Effective Date: Except as otherwise provided in this act, this act shall take effect July 1, 2025



### SB 180 – Emergencies

- Enhances and streamlines the state's emergency management, recovery, and rebuilding processes while restricting certain local government actions after natural disasters.
  - Requires landlords to provide tenants with notice or opportunities to retrieve belongings from damaged premises.
  - Prohibits participating local governments from adopting cumulative substantial improvement ordinances for flood protection purposes.
  - Exempts or proportionally reduces impact fees for reconstruction or replacement of a previously existing structure without increasing its intensity of use.
  - Increases the homestead property damage threshold that may be rebuilt without a full assessment adjustment from 110% to 130% of prior square footage and from 1,500 to 2,000 total square feet.
  - Prioritizes public hurricane shelter construction funding for projects in counties with deficits and expands medical care authorization for servicemembers during emergencies.
  - Refines the state's comprehensive emergency management plan to include updated public health collaboration, minimum training hours for local officials, and annual hurricane readiness sessions.
  - Allows caregivers and people with special needs to shelter together and requires certain state agencies to provide information on registering for special needs shelters.
  - Mandates transparent reporting of state contracts and expenditures exceeding 90 days during extended emergencies, with annual updates to legislative leadership.
  - Requires local governments to post essential storm recovery information online, develop poststorm permitting plans, freeze permit fees for 180 days after a declared emergency, and adopt expedited rebuilding protocols.
  - Restricts counties and municipalities in certain hurricane-impacted areas from imposing moratoriums or more stringent development rules and establishes a judicial remedy for violations.
  - Requires new contract provisions penalizing breaches by vendors or service providers during an emergency recovery period.
  - Directs state agencies to identify vulnerable infrastructure and compile a Flood Inventory and Restoration Report with periodic updates.
  - Increases the maximum hurricane evacuation clearance time for the Florida Keys Area from 24 to 24.5 hours, with guidelines for future building permit allocations.
  - Clarifies and updates references, reporting requirements, and training protocols for various agencies and emergency programs.
  - Establishes safety requirements for cranes during hurricane events, with Florida Building Commission guidance, and revises definitions for building renovations following natural disasters.
- Effective Date: Except as otherwise provided in this act, this act shall take effect upon becoming a law.



### **HB 209 - State Land Management**

- Strengthen environmental stewardship of Florida parks by requiring public hearings, increasing public access to land management information, and restricting new development in state parks.
  - Names the act the “State Park Preservation Act.”
  - Mandates public hearings for all new or updated conservation and nonconservation land management plans, including at least one hearing in an affected county.
  - Requires electronic copies of land management plans for parcels exceeding 160 acres or located within a state park to be available to the public at least 30 days before the hearing.
  - Updates the duties of the Division of Recreation and Parks to ensure parks are managed for conservation-based recreational uses and prohibits construction of new sporting facilities or lodging establishments within state parks.
  - Authorizes installation of campsites and cabins if they are compatible with the park’s management plan and do not harm critical habitat or resources.
  - Renames the St. Marks River Preserve State Park to Ney Landrum State Park.
  - Requires an advisory group to provide input and hold public hearings on individual management plans for parcels over 160 acres and within state parks.
  - Directs the Department of Environmental Protection to submit a report by December 1, 2025, identifying needed repairs, improvements, and associated costs for park amenities.
- Effective Date: July 1, 2025

### **HB 211 - Farm Products**

- Expands the definition of “farm product” and prohibits local governments from restricting additional farm-related activities.
  - Revises the term “farm product” to include all plants, whether edible or nonedible, and animals useful to humans, along with any derived product.
  - Prohibits governmental entities from limiting the collection, storage, processing, and distribution of a farm product as part of a bona fide farm operation.
  - Incorporates the updated definition of “farm product” into references regarding rural agricultural industrial centers.
- Effective Date: July 1, 2025



### **HB 393 - My Safe Florida Condominium Pilot Program**

- Why I Filed This Bill (by Representative Lopez, V.): HB 393 revises the My Safe Florida Condo Pilot Program to enhance its effectiveness in improving condominium safety, hardening the buildings, and reducing insurance premiums. Florida’s history with hurricanes and extreme weather underscores the urgent need for robust mitigation measures to protect residents and property. The bill limits eligibility to condominiums three stories or higher and ensures the program prioritizes buildings with significant structural and safety considerations. Lowering the grant approval threshold to a 75% supermajority vote empowers communities to access critical funding while maintaining fairness. Revised rules for roof-related projects reflect the diverse needs of pitched and flat roofs, ensuring tailored improvements like reinforced connections and water resistance that bolster storm resilience. Simplifying reimbursement by establishing a maximum grant per association removes unnecessary complexity, making it easier for associations to implement large-scale safety upgrades. Finally, clarifying the exclusion of detached units aligns the program with its intended focus on condominiums. These revisions collectively streamline the program, improve accessibility, and prioritize impactful safety enhancements. With these updates, Florida can better protect its residents and build more resilient communities in the face of natural disasters.
- Refines the definition of condominiums, narrows eligibility for the My Safe Florida Condominium Pilot Program, and revises conditions under which associations may receive hurricane mitigation inspections and grants.
  - Excludes detached units on individual parcels of land from the term “condominium” to align with program eligibility.
  - Limits participation to condominiums three or more stories high that contain at least two units per structure or building.
  - Prohibits associations from seeking inspections or grants unless they have satisfied specific statutory inspection requirements and established windows as common elements where applicable.
  - Reduces the vote required to approve grants from unanimous consent of unit owners to at least 75 percent of residing unit owners.
  - Removes prior per-square-foot and per-opening funding caps and retains a two-to-one matching grant structure, with a maximum award of \$175,000 per association.
  - Restricts grant funding to water intrusion or structural mitigation improvements that result in an insurance credit, discount, or rate differential.
  - Requires any funded improvements, including doors, windows, skylights, or roof elements, to be identified in the final hurricane mitigation inspection and completed on all openings when needed for an insurance credit.
- Effective Date: upon becoming a law.



### **HB 703 - Utility Relocation**

- Establish the Utility Relocation Reimbursement Grant Program and revise distributions of communications services tax proceeds to reimburse certain providers for facility relocation costs.
  - Requires a portion of communications services tax proceeds to be transferred monthly to the Department of Commerce's Grants and Donations Trust Fund for the new Utility Relocation Reimbursement Grant Program.
  - Revises the percentage reduction applied to amounts transferred into the Local Government Half-cent Sales Tax Clearing Trust Fund and updates the applicable date from July 1, 2003, to October 1, 2025.
  - Mandates that communications service providers must begin relocation of their facilities within 30 days of written notice and allows these providers to seek reimbursement of relocation costs through the new grant program.
  - Requires agencies that manage roadways to notify providers of upcoming projects within specified timelines and provide a joint cost-participation offer for recently installed infrastructure if being relocated to improve safety or reduce congestion.
  - Creates s. 337.4031 to establish the Utility Relocation Reimbursement Grant Program within the Department of Commerce, outlining eligibility for communications service providers, application procedures, reimbursement rules, and funding sources.
  - Amends multiple cross-references to reflect these changes and provides a nonrecurring appropriation to launch the grant program.
- Effective Date: July 1, 2025





### **HB 733 – Brownfields**

- Expands and clarifies Florida’s brownfield program by removing local mapping requirements, revising tax credit conditions, and recognizing partial site rehabilitations within larger contaminated areas.
  - Removes the requirement for property owners to provide institutional control information to local governments and abolishes related local mapping obligations.
  - Ensures that any brownfield site issued a site rehabilitation completion order without institutional controls is removed from the contaminated site registry.
  - Allows an additional 25 percent tax credit for cleanup costs when a site rehabilitation completion order is issued, with a two-year window to claim the credit.
  - Changes the Department of Environmental Protection’s annual deadline for tax credit determinations from May 1 to June 1 and extends its notice-of-deficiency response time from 90 to 120 days.
  - Clarifies definitions of brownfield terms, including newly defining 'brownfield site' as property identified in a brownfield site rehabilitation agreement.
  - Prevents denial of a site rehabilitation completion order for a brownfield site that is only part of a larger contaminated area, assuming cleanup requirements are met.
  - Updates eligibility and participation criteria by allowing certain local entities or parties who did not cause or contribute to site contamination to enter the brownfield program.
  - Conforms cross-references in various statutes to align with the updated definitions and revised program requirements.
- Effective Date: July 1, 2025

### **SB 954 - Certified Recovery Residences**

- Requires counties and municipalities to adopt procedures for approving certified recovery residences and modifies supervision requirements and resident capacity for certain Level IV recovery residences.
  - Mandates each county or municipality to adopt an ordinance by January 1, 2026, establishing a process for reviewing and approving certified recovery residences, including a procedure for requesting reasonable accommodations from local land use regulations.
  - Stipulates specific timelines and requirements for the ordinance, such as written application processes, final determinations within 60 days, and consistency with federal fair housing and disability laws.
  - Restricts the ordinance from imposing public hearings beyond the minimum required by law and permits revocation of an approved accommodation if certain conditions are not met.
  - Clarifies that the personnel-to-resident ratio applies only when residents are present at the recovery residence, and expands the allowable maximum number of residents under certain workforce and supervision ratios.
- Effective Date: 7/1/2025





### **SB 1080 - Local Government Land Regulation**

- Strengthens and streamlines local government permitting processes, establishes refund requirements, tightens school impact fee conditions, and revises procedures for impact fee increases and comprehensive plan amendments.
  - Requires counties and municipalities to specify minimum information needed for development permit or order applications and establishes shorter, definitive timelines for application review and approval.
  - Defines “substantive change” as increases of 15% or more in proposed density, intensity, or square footage, resetting review timeframes if such changes occur.
  - Mandates refunds for applicants when local governments fail to meet specified review or approval deadlines, with exceptions for applicant-caused delays and extraordinary circumstances.
  - Prohibits school districts from imposing alternative fees in lieu of impact fees without meeting statutory requirements and places the burden on districts to justify such fees in any legal challenge.
  - Clarifies that local government fees collected for building permits must be used strictly for enforcing the Florida Building Code and related permit processes.
  - Raises the voting threshold to require a unanimous vote for substantial impact fee rate increases, applies phased-in implementation of any increases, and restricts frequency of future rate hikes.
  - Requires timely adoption and transmittal of comprehensive plan amendments, deeming amendments withdrawn if not adopted within specified deadlines.
- Effective Date: Except as otherwise expressly provided in this act, this act shall take effect October 1, 2025

### **SB 1386 - Assault or Battery on a Utility Worker**

- Enhances penalties for assaulting or battering utility workers engaged in critical infrastructure duties and aligns references to these protections across related statutes.
  - Defines “utility worker” to include marked employees or contractors for utilities supplying electricity, gas, water, wastewater, telephone, or communications services.
  - Adds utility workers engaged in critical infrastructure work to the list of persons whose assault or battery offenses are subject to reclassification and mandatory minimum sentencing.
  - Updates cross-references in arrest procedures, fingerprinting requirements, and background screening provisions to include utility workers among protected occupations.
- Effective Date: 10/1/2025



### **SB 1730 - Affordable Housing**

- Expands local government requirements and restrictions to encourage and streamline affordable housing development across commercial, industrial, and religious institution properties and establishes a state policy supporting housing for certain public and hospital employees.
  - Allows counties and municipalities to approve affordable housing developments on parcels owned by religious institutions, regardless of underlying zoning.
  - Requires local governments to permit multifamily and mixed-use residential developments in commercial, industrial, and flexibly zoned areas without special approvals, provided a portion of units are affordable.
  - Prohibits restrictions on density, floor area ratio, or height below the highest allowed standard and streamlines administrative approval of qualifying projects.
  - Bars local governments from enforcing certain building moratoria, imposing undue parking requirements, or requiring excessive nonresidential components in mixed-use developments.
  - Requires prioritized court review of enforcement disputes and provides for attorney fee caps for prevailing parties.
  - Mandates annual reporting to the state on qualifying affordable housing projects and any related litigation.
  - Creates a policy enabling affordable housing preferences for employees of hospitals, health care facilities, and governmental entities under certain funding programs.
- Effective Date: 7/1/2025

### **HB 4007 - Compensation for Health Care Services for Inmates in Martin County**

- Establish uniform compensation caps for health care and emergency medical transportation services provided to inmates in Martin County by non-contracted providers.
  - Defines key terms such as air ambulance, ambulance, emergency medical transportation services, and health care provider.
  - Caps compensation for medical services at 110 percent of Medicare rates (or 125 percent for providers reporting negative operating margins) if there is no contract with Martin County.
  - Allows a higher rate of 175 percent of Medicare for trauma centers treating trauma alert inmates if they are not contracted with Martin County.
  - Limits emergency medical transportation compensation to 110 percent of Medicare rates if there is no contract with Martin County.
  - Exempts medical services provided at a hospital operated by Martin County from these restrictions.
- Effective Date: upon becoming a law