

Good Afternoon,

Since many reporters have indicated they are working on session wrap-up stories today, I am releasing an embargoed copy of President Passidomo's end-of-session comments for your use in end-of-session stories. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best,
Katie

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President Passidomo Marks the Conclusion of the 2023 Legislative Session

Tallahassee—Florida Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (R-Naples) today marked the conclusion of the 2023 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature, the 125th Regular Session since Statehood in 1845. President Passidomo joined House Speaker Paul Renner (R-Palm Harbor) and other legislators for the traditional Sine Die “Hankie Drop,” a ceremony marking the conclusion of session for at least 100 years. The presiding officers also joined Governor Ron DeSantis to discuss the conclusion of the session.

“We began session in the aftermath of a destructive hurricane season on the heels of two special sessions needed to help stabilize Florida’s freefalling property insurance market. While these issues alone could have easily monopolized the last 60 days, I am proud that with the tireless work of our Senators, and strong partnerships with the Florida House and Governor DeSantis, we are concluding today having passed significant legislation in nearly every area of public policy, along with a balanced budget, meaningful tax relief for families and seniors, and historic reserves.

“This was truly the session of the Florida family as we tackled kitchen-table issues important to growing families and seniors. School choice is now a reality for every child, in every family. Education dollars follow the child, and the parents – not the government – decide where they are spent. With our Live Local Act, more Floridians can afford to live close to good jobs, where they can raise their families in the heart of the communities they serve. Insurance and litigation reforms with strong protections for consumers, coupled with permanent tax relief on key items will help eliminate hidden costs that increase the price of goods and services, keeping Florida

affordable for those at every income level and stage of life. We passed strong legislation to support unborn babies and parents, with safeguards to protect the innocence of childhood and let kids be kids. And, by expanding Florida's iconic wildlife corridor, current and future generations of Florida families will have the opportunity to experience the wonder and beauty of Florida's heartland.

“From workforce housing, to school choice, to insurer accountability, to public safety, we listened to our constituents, incorporated ideas and feedback from our communities, and made our mark with historic reforms to keep our state affordable and her people free.”

President Passidomo offered further comments below on several of the many successful initiatives championed by the Florida Senate during the 2023 Legislative Session.

- Information on the [Hurricane Resiliency Plan](#) passed this session as well as **\$4 billion in state investments in hurricane recovery** is available [here](#).
- Information on [historic tax relief](#) measures for Florida's families and businesses is available [here](#).
- Additional information on Florida's [balanced budget](#) and key investments in infrastructure, education, & historic reserves is available [here](#).

Live Local Statewide Workforce Housing Strategy

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 102, Housing, by Senator Alexis Calatayud \(R-Miami\)](#), was signed into law on March 29. The legislation, entitled the Live Local Act, contains a comprehensive, statewide workforce housing strategy designed to increase the availability of attainable housing options for Florida workers who seek to live in the communities they serve.

“Floridians are ready to live local, and to spend less time commuting and more time building their lives and raising their families in the heart of the communities they serve. As I travel the state, availability of workforce housing is a top issue on the minds of hardworking Floridians and retirees in every community I visit. With this comprehensive legislation, we are shutting down affordable housing stereotypes and creating attainable housing options needed by the majority of our workforce, the backbone of Florida's economy,” **said President Passidomo.**

“The biggest housing concern we hear from young people is that there is no place for them to raise their own families in communities they grew up in, where their extended families have lived for generations. To me, that is a tragedy. This bill is going to help bridge that gap, improving options for both homeownership and affordable rental units in communities across our state,” **said Senator Calatayud.**

“The Live Local plan is the product of discussions with stakeholders over many years. With their advice and input, we are tackling this complex issue from all angles –incentivizing private sector investment, funding both the SHIP and SAIL programs at historically high levels, providing new avenues for solutions in zoning, encouraging more mixed-use developments in latent commercial areas, and enhancing public access to information about expedited permitting and public property that may be suitable for workforce housing,” **continued President Passidomo**. “In total, I am confident our legislation will improve housing options for Floridians at all income levels and stages of life, so that families don’t have to spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing, and can have the margin needed to save and build the rest of their lives.”

“Through the Missing Middle, for the first time we are offering owners of substantially renovated or recently constructed units the chance to qualify for a tax exemption when they turn market rate units into affordable rentals for our low and moderate income Floridians. This innovative approach will address the current problem of rising rents in a meaningful way that young families, working professionals, and our seniors can begin to see right away,” **continued Senator Calatayud**. “Here in the free state of Florida, we respect the dignity of work and what a paycheck means for a family. Because all work is important to Florida’s economic development, and every Florida worker is essential to sustaining Florida’s communities, Live Local expands our Hometown Heroes program, so that all of our constituents who work for a Florida company have the opportunity to purchase a home of their own.”

Expanding Access to Florida’s Wildlife Corridor

[Senate Bill 106, Florida Shared-Use Nonmotorized Trail Network, by Senator Jason Brodeur \(R-Sanford\)](#) expands access to Florida’s iconic Wildlife Corridor. The bill, signed into law by Governor DeSantis on April 11, connects the corridor to Florida’s Greenways and Trails System and the SUN Trail Network, as well as recreational pathways to heritage small towns across Florida.

“Our wildlife corridor provides a unique opportunity to experience the wonder and beauty of Florida’s heartland. With this legislation we have the chance not only to preserve this natural resource for future generations, but to expand access so more Floridians can walk, run, and bike from trail town to trail town, taking in all our great state has to offer,” **said President Passidomo**. “I envision Florida’s Wildlife Corridor as a top destination for recreational tourists from across the country and around the world. As I have said before, I believe this will be Florida’s Central Park – a legacy we can be proud to leave for future generations of Floridians and visitors to enjoy.”

“SB 106 includes \$200 million to connect the corridor to our trail system so more people across our state and around the world can experience Florida’s unique natural habitat,” **said Senator Brodeur**, who serves as Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Agriculture,

Environment, and General Government. “This significant expansion of access to Florida’s iconic Wildlife Corridor will provide even more options for families, athletes, and adventure seekers to experience old Florida at its finest, safeguarding more of our wetlands, farmlands and ranchlands, while improving the visibility of our quaint, legacy trail towns across Florida’s heartland.”

Enhancing Public Safety, Codifying Constitutional Right To Keep And Bear Arms

[Senate Bill 150, Public Safety, Senator Jay Collins \(R-Tampa\)](#), was signed into law on April 3. This robust public safety package codifies the constitutional right of citizens to keep and bear arms and expand tools available to law enforcement and educators working to keep our communities and schools safe.

“Under the leadership of Governor Ron DeSantis, here in the free state of Florida, government will not get in the way of law-abiding Americans who want to defend themselves and their families,” **said Senator Collins**, a retired U.S. Army Green Beret. “I’ve been blessed to serve shoulder to shoulder with brave men and women willing to put their lives on the line in defense of our constitutional freedoms. I’ve also been deployed to countries where oppressed people have lived their entire lives under tyrannical regimes with no ability to safeguard their loved ones. We have an obligation to respect their sacrifice by protecting our God-given and Constitutional rights here at home.”

“I stand with Governor DeSantis, Speaker Renner, and Senator Collins, decorated members of our military, who along law enforcement leaders from across the state, agree that eliminating the need for a concealed weapons license in the state of Florida will help more Floridians better protect themselves and their families,” **said President Passidomo**. “This comprehensive legislation ensures our laws respect the constitutional rights of law-abiding Floridians while at the same time incorporating valuable tools recommended by law enforcement that will increase the safety of our schools and communities.”

Historic School Choice, Parental Empowerment Legislation

[House Bill 1, Education, sponsored in the Senate by Senator Corey Simon \(R-Tallahassee\)](#), Chair of the Senate Committee on Education Pre-K-12, was signed into law on March 27. HB 1 contains a comprehensive package of innovations that promote parental involvement and customized K-12 education in Florida. The legislation empowers parents to guide their children’s education by providing for an Education Savings Account for every student in the K-12 system. Incorporating recommendations from the Florida Association of District School Superintendents, the bill also takes the first step towards reducing onerous and excessive regulations on public schools.

“This legislation is a transformational opportunity to make it clear that the money follows the child, and parents have a right to guide their child’s education as they see fit. We recognize that parents are a child’s first and best teachers. A street address or level of income should never replace the vital and irreplaceable role of a parent to decide what academic experience best fits the needs of their child,” **said Senator Simon**. “This bill is about access and opportunity for all students and every family in our state. I am thankful and blessed that my mother worked so hard and made many sacrifices to make certain I had the opportunity to attend a good school. Not all students are so lucky, but that changes now, and it changes because here in the free state of Florida, with the visionary leadership of Governor DeSantis, we are going to stop funding systems and start funding students.”

“The goal of making school choice a reality for every child across our great state has been a long time coming, and with the steadfast resolve and leadership of Governor DeSantis, Speaker Renner, Senator Simon, Rep. Tuck, and many others, school choice is here for every Florida family,” **said President Passidomo**. “Additionally, this bill reduces some of the outdated, unnecessary, and quite frankly, burdensome regulations public schools have to abide by. By reducing red tape that burdens our traditional public schools, these institutions, which have served our communities for generations, will have a meaningful chance to compete right alongside other school choice options.”

Career and Technical Education, Work-Based Learning Opportunities for Grades 6-12 [SB 240, Education, by Senator Travis Hutson \(R-St. Augustine\)](#), furthers ongoing legislative initiatives that promote career and technical education (CTE), with a focus on work-based learning linked to local employment opportunities for Florida students in Grades 6-12.

“More than a decade ago, Florida began the transformation to link education to the realities and opportunities of the economy. Under the leadership of Senate President Don Gaetz and House Speaker Will Weatherford, in 2013 the Legislature passed the Career and Professional Education Act, which began the process of promoting industry certifications in K-12 education, with financial incentives for schools that help students learn skills that directly lead to jobs,” said **President Passidomo**. “A decade later, under the leadership of President Wilton Simpson and Speaker Chris Sprowls, Florida transformed our workforce system, making it easier for consumers to access services and career planning, and to register for job training. This legislation builds on this tremendous progress by creating additional partnerships between local schools and businesses, expanding opportunities for students to gain on-the-job experience in meaningful, high-paying fields needed in our growing communities.”

“In 2008, only 803 students in the entire state of Florida earned national industry certifications in our high schools. Last year, over 100,000 students earned these valuable work-based credentials across 17 Career and Technical Education Pathways, covering everything from Architecture and

Agriculture, to Tourism and Technology, to Manufacturing and Marketing,” **said Senator Hutson**. “This legislation builds on these in-demand, widely successful programs, by creating regionally-targeted links between work-based learning and real jobs in high-demand fields. There is a clear connection between engagement in CTE and graduation, as students who take several related CTE courses have a nearly 100 percent graduation rate. Again, we are taking that amazing record one step further, creating more avenues to both college credit and professional credentials that will help CTE students have a head start as they pursue college and career opportunities after high school.”

Increasing Consumer Protection and Insurer Accountability

[Senate Bill 7052, Insurer Accountability, sponsored by Senator Travis Hutson \(R-St. Augustine\)](#), contains various provisions intended to increase consumer protection and insurer accountability in Florida.

“A healthy insurance market results in a wide array of consumer choices, competition on price and coverage options, and insurers that are financially strong and able to promptly pay the full value of claims. Unfortunately, due primarily to excessive litigation, Florida’s insurance market has grown increasingly unhealthy. Many property insurers have gone insolvent, left the state, or reduced their willingness to write new policies,” **said Senator Hutson**. “This Legislature and Governor have taken aggressive action to solve this problem, passing major property insurance legislation in 2021 and 2022, and then passing major legal reforms that affect most lines of insurance. The goal of all of this activity has not been to benefit the insurance industry but rather to benefit policyholders. However, we have no desire to go from a system that enriches trial lawyers, to a system that incentivizes insurance companies to use the law to avoid paying claims that should be paid.”

“Over the last several years, during regular and special sessions, we have worked on reforms to strengthen the property insurance market in our state so policyholders have access to quality, affordable, private market property insurance. Ultimately, every homeowner needs property insurance that is reliable and affordable. When disaster strikes, we want to make sure impacted Floridians can successfully navigate the claims process and be compensated for losses in a timely manner,” **said President Passidomo**. “This legislation continues our efforts to balance fair costs and protections for consumers, while strengthening state review and analysis of the insurance market, so that bad actors can be held accountable. I commend Senator Hutson for his diligence in bringing stakeholders together to put forward a strong and meaningful insurer accountability package that enhances consumer-friendly provisions of current law and increases transparency between homeowners and insurance companies.”

Heartbeat Protection Act

[Senate Bill 300, the Heartbeat Protection Act, by Senator Erin Grall \(R-Vero Beach\)](#), was signed into law on April 13. The legislation protects innocent, unborn life by prohibiting abortions after six weeks gestation, with exceptions for women who are victims of rape, incest and human trafficking, or whose baby has a devastating diagnosis of a fatal fetal abnormality.

“For decades now, Florida has been a nationwide leader in defending the rights of the unborn. The Heartbeat Protection Act will make Florida a beacon of hope for those who understand that life is sacred and must be protected,” **said Senator Grall**. “This bill represents an unprecedented opportunity to protect innocent life, and to stand with the brave moms who choose life for their babies. For 50 years, it was legal in this country to kill unborn children, and during that time, abortion has touched every single one of us. We have to grieve for what we have done as a country. This bill makes certain our laws reflect the strongest protections for innocent life.”

“The Heartbeat Protection Act builds on Florida’s strong track record of protecting the most vulnerable, especially the unborn, and strengthens state efforts to promote adoption, and support families, with significant resources to benefit infants, young children, and parents, which we hope will encourage more Floridians in difficult and unplanned situations to choose life for their babies,” **said President Passidomo**. “Our bill also includes strong and clear exceptions for rape, incest, and human trafficking, in addition to those already available for the life of the mother. We also clarify the existing exception for the horrible situation when parents are facing the heartbreaking diagnosis of a fatal fetal abnormality.”

Comprehensive Legal Reforms

House Bill (HB) 837, Civil Remedies, sponsored by Senator Travis Hutson (R-St. Augustine), was signed into law on March 24. The bill reforms Florida’s tort laws to decrease frivolous lawsuits, while protecting the rights of Floridians who suffer a loss.

“For too long Florida families have shouldered the hidden cost of lawsuit abuse as Florida’s litigation environment has cost jobs and driven up the cost of goods and services. This legislation contains the most meaningful and robust reforms in decades, making numerous changes to Florida’s arduous civil system that will provide transparency to jurors, shorten the time people toil away in civil court, and eliminate unfair practices that bad actors have abused. This bill protects the rights of Floridians who suffer a loss, while providing a solutions to cut down on frivolous lawsuits and prevent predatory practices that prey on hardworking Floridians,” **said Senator Hutson**.

“When a horrible accident or incident occurs and people suffer a loss, they should be compensated quickly and fairly. The vast majority of attorneys work very hard to provide sound legal representation for Floridians in these difficult circumstances. Unfortunately, there are a few bad actors who are in the business to draw out civil cases as long as possible, collecting more

and more fees from insurance companies. Litigation drives up the basic costs of goods and services for everyone across all areas of industry and commerce. Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis, we have taken many steps to help keep Florida affordable for growing families and seniors. This legislation further those efforts striking the right balance and protect the rights of Floridians who suffer a loss, while at the same time safeguarding everyone else against the hidden costs of prolonged litigation,” **said President Passidomo.**

Protecting Children

“Last session we defended and expanded parental rights in education, and the feedback from parents and teachers who appreciate appropriate guardrails on social issues being taught in schools is overwhelmingly positive. This year, we expanded on that good work,” **said President Passidomo.** “Parents have the right to raise their children as they see fit, and government intervention should be a last resort. Unfortunately, all too often we are hearing about treatments for gender dysphoria being administered to children, often very young children. That’s just wrong, and we need to step in and make sure it isn’t happening in our state.”

“This legislation sends a strong message that Florida is a safe place to raise children. We need to let kids be kids, and our laws need to set appropriate boundaries that respect the rights and responsibilities of parents, while protecting children. As lawmakers, we have to draw the line when drastic, life-altering gender dysphoria therapies and surgeries are mutilating young children. Whether it is a business that knowingly admits children to view performances meant for an adult audience, or schools that allow pornographic instructional materials, we must take a strong stand for child safety,” **said Senator Clay Yarborough (R-Jacksonville).** “Teachers should be able to spend their time focusing on skills that help a child succeed in life, not delving into every social issue or being forced to use language that would violate their personal convictions. This legislation not only protects our students and safeguards the rights of parents, but also protects teachers by striking the right balance between what is appropriate to teach in the home and what is taught in school.”

- **HB 1069, Child Protection in Public Schools,** by Senator Yarborough prohibits classroom instruction by school personnel or third parties on sexual orientation or gender identity in Pre-K through Grade 8, and expands the role of parents in reviewing and approving instructional materials, with a clear process when a parent wants to object to specific content. The bill also protects students and teachers from being required to use language that violates their personal convictions. Specifically, the bill prohibits a school from requiring, as a condition of employment, that a teacher refer to a student or another teacher by a pronoun that does not correspond to that person’s sex. Similarly, students cannot be forced to refer to a teacher or to other students by pronouns that do not correspond to the person’s sex.

- **SB 1438, Protection of Children**, by Senator Yarborough authorizes the Department of Business and Professional Regulation to fine, suspend, or revoke the license of any public lodging establishment or public food service establishment if the establishment admits a child to a live adult performance that depicts or simulates nudity, sexual conduct, or lewd exposure.
- **SB 254, Treatments for Sex-Reassignment**, by Senator Yarborough protects children from being subjected to sex-reassignment prescriptions and procedures. Exceptions are provided for patients with genetic or biochemical disorders as well as those with certain injuries or illnesses.

For more information, please visit www.FLSenate.gov.

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