

Capital Report

January 4, 2019

Advisers to Governor-elect Ron DeSantis want greater action on school safety. Shawn Mulcahy reports this comes after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission released the first draft of its report.

Governor-elect Ron DeSantis officially takes office on Tuesday. DeSantis stuck with Fox News as his media outlet of choice during the campaign. And he largely stayed quiet during the election recount. Since then, his transition teams have been crafting policy plans. He's announced new state agency chiefs that political observers call qualified candidates. He's even crossed the aisle to hire Democrats to lead Florida's Department of Emergency Management and Department of Revenue. And unlike his predecessor Rick Scott, DeSantis says environmental issues will be among his priorities. Florida Public Radio's Gina Jordan talks with Carol Weissert, professor of political science at Florida State University, about the change in DeSantis since the campaign.

In the coming session, Florida's Legislature will consider a bill aiming to eliminate "gun-free zones" on college campuses. Ryan Dailey reports for state lawmakers, the issue has come up before.

As the incidence of human trafficking in Florida keeps growing, Tom Flanigan reports a coalition of human rights advocates and business groups is working together to reverse the trend.

After complaints of inhumane treatment in women's correctional facilities throughout Florida, one lawmaker is calling for a change. Blaise Gainey has more.

Senator Bill Nelson's nearly three-decade-long political career has come to an end. After a contentious election and chaotic recount, Governor Rick Scott will take over as Florida's Senator this month. WMFE's space reporter Brendan Byrne looks back at Nelson's time on Capitol Hill and the lasting impact on the space industry. (28:58)

January 11, 2019

Shawn Mulcahy and Tom Flanigan review the very busy first week of Florida's new governor and (mostly) new state cabinet.

Although Florida voters approved medical marijuana a few years ago, a legal battle has raged ever since on whether the medicine can be smoked. As Blaise Gainey reports, a new governor and mostly new cabinet may be significantly changing the dynamic of those arguments.

Amid the U.S. Government shutdown now going on 20 days, federal employees and their agencies in Florida are feeling it in different ways. As Ryan Dailey reports, the question of when the shutdown will end is dominating the minds of many.

A law that went into effect last July requires medical providers to check a statewide database before prescribing opioids for patients. Now, lawmakers are being asked to consider an exemption for doctors who care for terminally ill patients. Florida Public Radio's Gina Jordan reports a Senate panel got an overview of the law this week -- and its impact so far.

On the same day that Governor Ron DeSantis and the state's three cabinet members were sworn into office, more than a million Floridians became eligible to vote for the first time since their felony convictions. John Davis from member station WGCU in Fort Myers says that's the consequence of Amendment Four, which passed overwhelmingly in the November election.

Conor McBride is serving 20 years at Wakulla Correctional Institution for killing his fiancée, Ann Grosmaire (grow-MAYER), when they were both 19. It could have been a life sentence, but her parents asked the state attorney for less time. And as Margie Menzel reports, their embrace of restorative justice is spreading. (28:58)

January 18, 2019

Governor Ron DeSantis wants the Florida Legislature to change the current law on smoking medical marijuana. Ryan Dailey reports DeSantis is asking courts to hold off on a decision in the lawsuit challenging a smoking ban. Now even some critics of DeSantis like Parkland parent and gun safety advocate Fred Guttenberg and former Democratic Congresswoman Gwen Graham are applauding the move.

And while we're on the subject of constitutional amendments...

Victims' rights protections under Marsy's Law are now enshrined in the Florida Constitution. But many state agencies are struggling to interpret the broad language, most recently law enforcement. Shawn Mulcahy reports.

The newest member of the powerful state board that regulates education in Florida is singularly focused on ousting the superintendent of the state's second-largest school district. Less than 48 hours before leaving office, then-Gov. Rick Scott tapped Andrew Pollack — whose daughter, Meadow, was killed in the Parkland school shooting — for the State Board of Education. Jessica Bakeman with member station WLRN, spoke with Pollack this week.

Hurricane Michael tore apart Northwest Florida in October leaving more than 20 million cubic square yards of debris. As Blaise Gainey reports, moves were made at both the state and federal levels to try and help recovery efforts.

Florida's Bright Futures scholarship program may be getting a 25-million-dollar boost. Lawmakers will consider a request next week by the Department of Education to increase funding due to higher-than-expected student participation. The program got \$520-million dollars this year for merit-based scholarships to high school students who attend a Florida college or university. The requested increase comes as student loan debt has jumped in Florida in recent years. Orlando, Tampa, and Miami are among the top cities nationally that had the biggest jumps. A study released last month by the credit reporting agency Experian finds that Florida's student loan debt is growing at a faster pace than all other states. Even so, a separate study by the personal finance website WalletHub last summer shows Florida graduates have less student loan debt overall than the rest of the country. So why are Florida graduates amassing more debt these days — and are they worse off because of it? Florida Public Radio's Gina Jordan spoke with Mark Kantrowitz (KANN-troh-witz), publisher and Vice President of research at Saving For College dot com. (28:57)

January 25, 2019

Florida's Commission on Ethics today found probable cause to begin an investigation into possible state ethics violations by former Tallahassee mayor and Democratic candidate for Florida governor Andrew Gillum. Probable cause does NOT mean Gillum is guilty, rather it allows the commission to investigate the four issues brought before it. Robbie Gaffney was at today's commission proceeding and files this report.

Florida Secretary of State Mike Ertel (er-TELL) resigned after the Tallahassee Democrat published pictures of him in black face from years ago. As Shawn Mulcahy reports, Jennifer Kennedy is serving in the interim.

Authorities have confirmed the name of a fourth woman killed during that attack. The Highlands County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post Friday that 31-year-old Jessica Eileen Noreen Montague of Avon Park died Wednesday at the SunTrust branch in Sebring. Montague was one of four bank employees killed, along with one customer. Sheriff's Office spokesman Scott Dressel said a fifth bank employee was in a back breakroom when the attack began. He said the employee ran out a back door after hearing gunshots and also contacted law enforcement. Stephanie Colombini visited Sebring and says the people there never thought this could happen to them.

Although not very large in terms of geographic spread, Hurricane Michael brought a powerful blow to the panhandle. Since, communities in the target area have been struggling to find funds to pay for the debris cleanup, even with help from the federal government. As Blaise Gainey reports the announcement that the feds will be providing more funding has removed some of the burden on local governments.

Discussions concerning hot topics in Florida public education are underway ahead of the coming Legislative Session, from school safety to leadership positions. Ryan Dailey gives a look back at this week's developments.

Lawmakers are being asked to consider two competing proposals surrounding access to dental care. One would allow mid-level practitioners to be licensed, while the other would provide incentives to would-be dentists. Florida Public Radio's Gina Jordan reports. (28:58)

February 1, 2019

Governor Ron DeSantis has rolled out his budget proposal for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Shawn Mulcahy reports it follows through on key campaign promises like environmental protection, education and infrastructure.

The longest partial government shutdown in history is over, but economic analyst Hank Fishkind says some of its effects on our state and our region will be permanent. Fishkind tells WMFE's Nicole Darden Creston about the short-term and long-term consequences he sees for the Sunshine State. He starts the conversation with another dubious distinction of the recent shutdown.

Governor Ron DeSantis says he wants to get rid of all remnants of Common Core standards in Florida's public schools.

Gina Jordan has more on the governor's executive order.

State Senate President Bill Galvano this week said legalizing sports gambling in Florida is on his priority list. Ryan Dailey recently spoke with Marc Dunbar, an attorney who has dealt with gambling laws for 25 years, to get his thoughts on what that might mean for the state.

Hurricane Michael caused lots of destruction to Florida's gulf coast. Till this day trees are left uprooted and snapped in half, buildings totaled or covered in tarp, and some houses flattened. Business owner David Smith who owns Smith Motorworks whose building survived in Panama City told his story to our reporter Blaise Gainey.

Despite rumors he may run, former Tallahassee Mayor, and recent Democratic candidate for Florida governor, Andrew Gillum has signaled he plans to spend the 2020 election cycle as a spectator. Better make that “commentator.” Meanwhile, Gillum is facing a hearing into several ethics complaints made against him and in the meantime has taken a new job. Regan McCarthy has more..... (28:58)

February 8, 2019

Governor Ron DeSantis is proposing changes to the state’s Best and Brightest program that he says will result in sizable bonuses for highly rated teachers. Ryan Dailey reports this comes amid a teacher shortage that has made recruitment a necessity.

Turning around a troubled school isn't easy, and Florida lawmakers have tried many formulas over the years. On Thursday, the House PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee learned how one approach has increased graduation and income rates while driving down crime and other social ills. Margie Menzel reports.

Under a pair of bills going before the Florida legislature this session, women could be charged with a third degree felony if they get an abortion after a fetal heartbeat is detected. Kevin Del Orbe [del-OR-bay] has more

A non-euphoric strain of cannabis is being sold in stores across Florida. It’s available as oils, edibles, and even flower. But as questions about the legality of it linger, CBD remains in limbo. Blaise Gainey has more.

Final invoices are going out this week to SunPass customers who got caught in a billing backlog. The problem began with a trouble-plagued update to the state’s toll road system. Gina Jordan reports issues that have bedeviled a SunPass contractor since last June still haven’t been completely worked out.

Officials from Mexico Beach and Port Saint Joe say it will take many more months to clear debris from the once pristine shore. After hurricane Michael, the priority is shifting from recovery to rebuilding, but Robbie Gaffney reports some residents are still in need of assistance. (28:57)

February 15, 2019

Thursday’s joint meeting of the Florida House Judiciary Committee and Criminal Justice Subcommittee brought up questions about the logistics of implementing Florida’s new Amendment 4. Ryan Dailey reports election supervisors still have questions.

After Florida’s Constitution Revision Commission bundled its proposals on the November ballot—often linking seemingly unrelated items, like indoor vaping and offshore drilling—lawmakers want some changes. Regan McCarthy reports on two bills. One would limit the commission to making single subject proposals and the other would get rid of the board completely.

As Florida lawmakers grapple with changes to the state’s medical marijuana rules, others are questioning how hemp fits into the picture. Hemp is a marijuana plant, but is low in THC—meaning it doesn’t get people high.

Instead, people say the CBD from the plant can have significant health benefits. But the two products come plants that look and smell the same—making regulation and enforcement difficult and leaving hemp use and sales in something of a legal grey area. Florida Public Radio's Blaise Gainey spoke with Cannabis legal expert Michael Minardi and Alex Petrick who manages Natural Life, a shop in Tallahassee that sells CBD products.

Jim Murdaugh, the president of Tallahassee Community College, will be spending a lot of time at the Florida Capitol over the next few months. That's because he's the top governmental advocate for the state's twenty-eight colleges and he shared his Session outlook with Tom Flanigan.

One year after the Parkland massacre that left 17 dead, and many more wounded, pain and grief clouded the usually-cheery Valentine's Day. Communities across the state took a moment to remember the lives lost. But Shawn Mulcahy reports advocates also made their voices heard once again. We want to express our deepest appreciation to member stations WLRN in Miami and WGCU in Fort Myers for their sonic contributions to this report.

This evening at 9 public television stations across Florida will air an award-winning documentary called "Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope." It's being shown partly to honor the victims and survivors of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas tragedy. And it's partly an attempt to prevent violence and other trauma from metastasizing into mental or physical illness. Margie Menzel reports. (28:58)

February 22, 2019

Florida Senate Republicans are pushing a new scholarship program that expands school choice. But Ryan Dailey reports if it passes, the program could end up in court.

The deadline is nearing for the Florida legislature to put a bill allowing patients to smoke medical marijuana on the Governor's desk. Both Chambers have been moving quickly to finish in time but still are not in agreement with one another. Now both sides are expecting to file other bills to address the things they can't come to agreement on before time runs out. Blaise Gainey has the details.

Florida was among the first states to pass mandatory minimum drug sentencing laws in 1979. The Legislature loosened those requirements in 1993, then reinstated them 6 years later. Now, a sweeping proposal of criminal justice reforms in Tallahassee would again make changes. Gina Jordan reports the legislation was bolstered this week by the release of a study showing Florida should reconsider its policy on drug sentences.

Two bills in the Florida legislature would add workplace protections for LGBTQ individuals, but activists say one could be a step forward while the other could be a step back. Robbie Gaffney has more.

The courts say the signatures on Florida vote-by-mail ballots don't have to exactly match the signatures on file. Part of the reason is it depends on who did the signing. Now state lawmakers will have to make the appropriate legal changes. Shawn Mulcahy talks with Tom Flanigan about it.

The Florida governor who pushed the enactment of the Florida Prepaid program for college funding talks about why it's still a good idea more than 30 years after its creation. (28:58)

March 1, 2019

As health care continues to take up a larger and larger slice of the state's budget, House Speaker Jose Oliva has set his eyes on market reform. Shawn Mulcahy has more on the battle over health care privatization, affordability and access.

Heading into the legislative session, state lawmakers on either side of the aisle aren't seeing eye-to-eye on education. Ryan Dailey reports school choice and school safety remain polarizing issues.

The Republican-controlled Legislature will be tasked with an unexpected job: deciding whether to allocate funds for environmental causes championed by the governor. The environment wasn't a priority under former Governor Rick Scott. Florida's new governor Ron DeSantis is taking a different approach - and raising eyebrows - as he seeks massive dollars to clean up the state's water ways. Gina Jordan reports the Legislature may not be quick to go along with his funding request.

With government at all levels seemingly not up to the task of fully restoring the North Florida communities devastated by Hurricane Michael this past October, a group called "Rebuild 850" is trying to address as many needs as it can. Tom Flanigan spoke with some of the organization's leaders.

Florida Senate President Bill Galvano is paving the way for a new transportation plan as the legislative session kicks into gear. But as Regan McCarthy reports a bumpy road could lie ahead.

Florida's insurance industry has tried for years to reign in a practice known as assignment of benefits—where a property owner signs over payment of a claim directly to a contractor or service provider. Lynn Hatter reports the fight is back. This time, spearheaded by state Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis. (28:57)

March 5, 2019

Governor Ron DeSantis emphasized "bold action" during his first-ever State of the State address to the Legislature. Tom Flanigan reports.

Florida's House and Senate leaders set the tone for the 2019 Legislative Session Tuesday with their opening remarks. Ryan Dailey was on hand to hear how President Bill Galvano and Speaker Jose Oliva kicked things off.

Senate President Bill Galvano's transportation bill passed its first committee today. But that passage was anything but smooth sailing as the measure was met with strong opposition. And, as Blaise Gainey tells us, Governor Ron DeSantis is also opposed to that part of the plan that would mean more toll roads to be built in Florida.

Firefighters are at a greater risk of developing cancer than most other professionals, according to federal research. They're also at greater risk from dying from it. But cancer isn't explicitly part of their insurance coverage. South Florida Senator Anitere Flores wants to change that. And as Lynn Hatter reports, momentum is building to do it this year in the Florida legislature.

Since the end of the shuttle program in 2011, Florida has worked to court private space business to fill the gap. Now, other states like Georgia, Texas and Colorado are looking to capitalize on the private space boom. WMFE's space reporter Brendan Byrne reports on how stakeholders along with the Governor and Legislature are hoping to hold on to Florida's dominance in the space industry.

And now Gina Jordan gives us a preview of some expected highlights during Day Two of the lawmaking session.

After years of failure, Florida is trying again to address insurance reform this session. It's targeting a practice known as assignment of benefits. Morgan Martin has more. (28:58)

March 6, 2019

The omnibus education bill aiming to create another state scholarship program got a green light from the Senate Education Committee. Ryan Dailey reports the measure got by on a party-line vote.

The Florida Supreme Court is weighing whether a 2017 change in the state's Stand Your Ground law should apply retroactively. Lynn Hatter reports a woman claiming she shot a person at a Miami nightclub in 2015 in self-defense says the change should apply in her case.

Florida Democrats have introduced their own budget and say it primarily aims to help working class citizens. This counters Governor Ron DeSantis's budget of \$91.3 billion. Casey Chapter tells us more.

Facing heavy pressure from Governor Ron DeSantis, lawmakers appear likely to end a ban on smoking medical marijuana in the first two weeks of session. The ban stems from a 2017 medical-marijuana law that was found unconstitutional by a circuit judge. DeSantis has threatened to drop an appeal if the Legislature does not eliminate the ban. However, as Blaise Gainey reports, lawmakers are using the attention to address other medical-marijuana regulatory issues that have led to lawsuits.

Hemp in Florida is one step closer to legality. Shawn Mulcahy reports a measure legalizing hemp production passed its first legislative hurdle Wednesday.

Lawmakers have several important meetings on their collective calendar for tomorrow and Gina Jordan takes a look.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers and organizations want to make distracted driving a primary offense. Gabrielle Bolden reports. (28:58)

March 7, 2019

As The Florida House is moving forward with a big healthcare agenda at the direction of Speaker Jose Oliva. But as Lynn Hatter reports that agenda is setting up clashes with some healthcare providers who say it could lead to worse, not better care.

A bill that would create an elective Bible study course in public high schools has cleared the House Pre K-12 Quality Subcommittee. Ryan Dailey reports its sponsor is adamant her measure is constitutional.

On the very first day of this Legislative Session, Governor Ron DeSantis talked about improving Florida's water quality. Toxic algae once again fouled Central and South Florida waterways resulting in one of the longest outbreaks in years. In addition, the governor has promised additional funding to continue Everglades restoration efforts. But as WMFE's Amy Green reports, some are wondering about other troubled waterways.

In hopes of meeting Governor Ron Desantis's March 15th deadline to repeal a ban on smoking medical marijuana, lawmakers in the senate have sent their bill to the Florida House. Bu not without making a few changes first. Blaise Gainey has more.

Lawmakers are working to tamp down on the state's reputation as one of the worst places for litigation. Regan McCarthy reports a tort reform measure is moving forward in the House.

Here's Gina Jordan with a preview of tomorrow's somewhat minimalist action at the Florida Capitol.

After hours of listening to public policy debates and political posturing as well as racing all over the Capitol, one might be tempted to slip away to a friendly tap room and hoist a cold one. But the best place to do that hoisting may be hundreds of miles from Tallahassee.

A Southwest Florida tap room was just named the best beer bar in the state. WGCU's Rachel Iacovone (YAH-ku-VOAN-ee) takes us inside. (28:58)

March 8, 2019

The Capital Report reporters, Blaise Gainey, Lynn Hatter and Ryan Dailey, discuss some of the highlights of this week in the 2019 Florida Lawmaking Session.

Former North Florida Congresswoman Gwen Graham and former Florida Emergency Management Director Bryan Koon talk about Hurricane Michael recovery efforts in the Panhandle under the auspices of a partnership called "Rebuild850."

Tom Flanigan reports state lawmakers are moving ahead with hurricane recovery funding in excess of \$300 million.

A pair of Senate and House Bills looks to address maternal deaths from what legislators say are preventable complications during pregnancy. Ryan Dailey reports women of color die in childbirth at significantly higher rates than white women.

Gina Jordan looks ahead to the first full week of action at the Florida Capitol.

While cities say they're excited about new transportation options associated with so called "micro-mobility devices," some are worried the state is trying to scoot by with yet another home rule exemption. Regan McCarthy has more.. (28:58)

March 11, 2019

The 2017 death of a Florida State University fraternity pledge is prompting state lawmakers to consider a change in the state's hazing law. Spearheading the effort are the parents of Andrew Coffee along with Democratic State Senator Lauren Book. Lynn Hatter has more.

A bill that looks to prevent the creation of sanctuary cities for undocumented immigrants in Florida makes a key committee stop Tuesday. Ryan Dailey reports a coalition of House and Senate Democrats says they'll fight 'tooth and nail' to stop it from passing.

The Florida Senate is one step closer to approving a ban on fracking. But the bill that left the committee looks dramatically different than environmental advocates had hoped. Shawn Mulcahy has more.

The Florida House is weighing funding for building projects at public universities across the state. While these meetings happen every year, Casey Chapter reports they are under more scrutiny now.

Some of Florida's top female attorneys were meeting in Tallahassee today (Monday). Tom Flanigan reports a main focus was providing legal help to children in troubled circumstances.

Former Tallahassee Mayor and Democratic Gubernatorial candidate Andrew Gillum has an announcement coming this March. Gabrielle Bolden reports.

Tomorrow is Tuesday and there's a full day's schedule at the State Capitol as we hear from Gina Jordan.

Plastic surgery has become more and more common and some believe it enhances a person's looks. But like most surgeries not everyone ends up going as planned. In some situations, it can result in death. Blaise Gainey reports that Miami Republican Senator Anitere Flores presented a bill today that she believes will save lives. (28:58)

March 13, 2019

Two days ahead of the governor's deadline, Blaise Gainey tells Tom Flanigan that the Florida House and Senate have agreed on medical marijuana legislation.

Florida lawmakers are one step closer to adding a work requirement for Medicaid eligibility. Shawn Mulcahy has more.

Advocacy groups, formerly incarcerated people and those with family members who are serving time held a rally at the Capitol Wednesday. Ryan Dailey reports they came together to petition lawmakers for reforms to a criminal justice system they say is broken.

Are Florida's public universities promoting intellectual freedom? Some state lawmakers don't think so, and they want to survey schools on the issue. Lynn Hatter reports it's part of a broader bill aimed at tweaking the way the schools are run and funded.

Tomorrow will essentially be the final full day of legislative activity this week, as the weekend approaches. Gina Jordan has this preview.

Community Redevelopment Agencies, known as CRAs have come under fire as some question whether the agencies are really doing what was intended when they were created. Regan McCarthy has more... (28:58)

March 14, 2019

Supporters and opponents of Republican Senator Dennis Baxley's Fetal Heartbeat Bill had a showdown of sorts Thursday in the Capitol. Ryan Dailey reports Baxley wants an opportunity for the bill to get a committee hearing, and its detractors hope the measure never gets there.

Lawmakers are considering a plan to get rid of Florida's Constitution Revision Commission. That after some say the board is out of control. Blaise Gainey reports.

Both the Florida House and Senate are moving ahead with a major priority of Governor DeSantis; to cut the student wait list for a program that provides vouchers for private schools. But, as Lynn Hatter tells Tom Flanigan, the legislative proposals go well beyond simply building on the current program.

As Florida's 2019 legislative session gets underway, arts and cultural organizations are working to persuade lawmakers to reinstate funding. After several years of decline, funding for the Division of Cultural Affairs took a nosedive in 2018 when lawmakers slashed it by 90 percent. WMFE's Nicole Darden Creston reports on the efforts to get that money back.

As we mentioned on yesterday's Capital Report, Fridays – at least during the first month or so of each Florida lawmaking session – aren't exactly frantic times at the Capitol. To further expand on that observation, here's Gina Jordan.

A number of bills that would make changes to Florida's alcohol rules are moving through the legislature. As Regan McCarthy reports many of them make exceptions to the state's three tier system that separates manufactures, distributors and vendors. (28:58)

March 15, 2019

Smokeable medical marijuana and expanded private school vouchers. Those were two of the more controversial measures that were fast-tracked by lawmakers during this second week of the 2019 lawmaking session. Blaise Gainey and Lynn Hatter talk it over with Tom Flanigan at the Capital Reporters' Roundtable.

Florida Lieutenant Governor Jeanette Nunez talks about her priorities and determination to be a very active and involved partner with Governor DeSantis.

The government watchdog group TaxWatch has released its assessment of the Florida College System. The organization's research found the schools do raise wages for their graduates as well as boosting the state's economy. Kevin Del Orbe [del-Or-bay] reports.

A bill looking to exempt municipal utility customers' usage data from public record has cleared its final committee stop in the Florida House. Ryan Dailey recently spoke with Florida Municipal Electric Association director Amy Zubaly (Zoo-bih-LEE) about why her organization supports what she sees as a measure for consumer protection.

Gina Jordan provides us with a preview of next week's legislative action.

Florida lawmakers are looking for a reliable source of funding to help the struggling Apalachicola Bay area. Regan McCarthy has more.... (28:58)

March 18, 2019

Stories of high-priced prescription drugs and mothers having to choose whether to buy medicine or food are staples of the prescription drug price debate. Governor Ron DeSantis is responding to those issues by proposing the state import medications from other countries. But as Blaise Gainey others aren't on the same page.

The Florida House is tackling healthcare reform. Efforts in the past have yielded incremental results, but Lynn Hatter reports that's not stopping House Speaker Jose Oliva, even as it sets up a potential clash with the Senate.

A bill to provide no-interest loans to farmers whose crops are impacted by natural disasters has cleared its first Senate committee. Backed by Republican Senator Ben Albritton, the measure is intended to help farmers whose livelihoods have been threatened by Hurricane Michael. Ahead of its first committee stop, Ryan Dailey spoke with the Florida Farm Bureau's head of legislative affairs Adam Basford, and a Holmes County farmer whose crop was decimated by the hurricane.

Florida Senate President Bill Galvano is the driving force behind a new transportation plan coming up for another committee discussion in the Senate Tuesday. But as Regan McCarthy reports the measure could face a bumpy road in the House.

Fifty people have been indicted following a college admissions scandal, involving universities across the country. As WGPU's Rachel Iacovone reports, in Southwest Florida, professionals from both sides of the admissions process are speaking out. (28:58)

March 19, 2019

Public commenters gave lawmakers an earful today when the implementing bill for 2018's Amendment 4 came up in a House committee meeting. The amendment allows certain felons to vote, but the argument has been which felons can't vote. Blaise Gainey reports.

Florida lawmakers are considering a plan to deregulate a number of professions including barbers, nail specialists, geologist and interior designers. Regan McCarthy has more....

An effort to preempt local occupational and professional licensing standards is bringing together strange bed fellows. Environmentalists, LGBTQ advocates, cities and counties and even the professionals themselves are opposed to the effort whose sponsor says, he's just trying to standardize state rules.

The Senate has unveiled its 2019-2020 Education spending proposal. That includes a b\$1.1 billion increase over the current fiscal year. The Florida Education Association says its encouraged by the move. Meanwhile, the House continues to refine its plan to create a new scholarship program to send kids to private school. Lynn Hatter speaks with WFSU Public Media Reporter Ryan Dailey about the latest in state education policy.

And here's Gina Jordan with a look at what's going on tomorrow at the state Capital.

Finally tonight, Tuesday was Coding Day at the Capitol. Gina Jordan has more on the initiative to promote computer science education. (28:58)

March 20, 2019

A House proposal would fine local governments and law enforcement agencies for not cooperating with federal immigration enforcement. As Blaise Gainey reports immigrant advocates say the bill is overbearing and goes too far.

A bill moving through the Florida House would make changes to the work requirements for people who receive public assistance. The bill's Republican sponsor says the goal is to ensure children aren't punished for their parents' actions. But Democrats say the devil is in the details. Regan McCarthy has more....

The Florida House of Representatives has rolled out its proposed K-12 education budget for the coming fiscal year. Ryan Dailey spoke with Florida Education Association president Fedrick Ingram, who says the House should follow the Senate's lead with respect to a funding proposal.

It's been months since Hurricane Michael struck the Panhandle, carving a swatch of damage from the Gulf to the Georgia State Line. Recovery is expected to take years, even a decade or more and schools are feeling the pressure. Bay County Superintendent Bill Husfelt recently spoke before the state board of education, outlining some of the problems that have cropped up in the wake of the storm.

Finally tonight, A bill requiring minors to get a parent's consent for abortions passed a House committee this week. Gina Jordan reports the debate was mostly civil, but some audience members had to be escorted out. (28:58)

March 21, 2019

Just over a year since the Parkland school massacre, a comprehensive response on how to best prevent a future tragedy remains a work in progress, at least in the Florida Legislature. Before a key committee today (Thursday) the question boiled down to this: Would parents be comfortable with placing their children's safety in the hands of an armed teacher with eight hours of active shooter training? Although some insisted the answer to that question would most likely be "No!", lawmakers kept moving in that direction as we hear from Blaise Gainey.

State lawmakers appear heading toward abolishing the state's Constitution Revision Commission. This after the latest incarnation of the group was roundly criticized for being overtly political. Lynn Hatter reports the effort has generated a rare point of bipartisanship between lawmakers and advocacy groups who don't normally agree on anything.

Florida lawmakers say they're making mental healthcare a priority, especially in the aftermath of the Parkland school shooting last year. Part of that effort includes early detection of mental health issues and providing support through peer specialists. Regan McCarthy has more.

Florida children on the autism spectrum who are also on Medicaid may find themselves waiting longer for – or even being denied – the special services they depend on. We get that story from Health News Florida's Daylina Miller.

Longtime lobbyist and familiar face in the Capitol Barbara DeVane has seemingly seen it all during the decades she's spent in the Process. But until this week, DeVane says she had never been asked to leave a committee meeting. Ryan Dailey recently spoke with DeVane about an exchange with a legislator that led to her being asked to leave. (28:58)

March 22, 2019

In the shattered remnants of the old Florida Department of Commerce came a number of public-private partnerships back in the mid-1990s. One of them, the tourism marketing corporation called Visit Florida. In recent years, that organization has attracted more and more general revenue help from the Florida Legislature. But now there's a possibility both that money and the organization itself could be coming to an end. Unless, as Blaise Gainey tells us, the Florida House and Senate can reach some agreement to keep the corporation in business beyond its sunset date in October.

Differences abound between the House and Senate education budgets, but Ryan Dailey reports at least a few public educators are finding reasons to be hopeful.

The head of the FBI between 1993 and 2001 is not a big fan of imported prescription drugs because of what he says is the potential for counterfeit medications to infiltrate the distribution chain. Louis Freeh shares his concerns with Tom Flanigan.

The Florida legislature could shield video, audio, or images of death from mass violence from the public record. Robbie Gaffney has more. (28:58)

March 25, 2019

Lawmakers in the Senate today (Monday) passed a bill that would implement Amendment 4, which allows certain felons to vote. But as Blaise Gainey reports proponents of the amendment argue it's self-enacting and the bill that passed not only isn't needed but also may not meet constitutional muster.

Some Florida lawmakers say it's too easy to change the state's constitution. They want to raise the bar in an effort to keep what they say are policy changes out of document that lays the ground work for Florida's government. Regan McCarthy has more....

Legislation allowing less-expensive Canadian prescription drugs to be imported for sale to Floridians is moving forward in the Senate. Ryan Dailey reports those who oppose the measure have questions about vetting drugs coming in.

There's a proposal in the state legislature that could make it easier for injection drug users to trade dirty needles for fresh ones -- preventing the spread of HIV and Hepatitis C. A trial project in Miami Dade County is the only legal needle exchange in Florida. The bill would let the other counties to create something similar. WLRN's Sammy Mack has been following the needle exchange and the people who use it:

A measure establishing a state hemp industry is making its way through the Florida Senate. Shawn Mulcahy reports the measure received critical backing from the Agriculture Committee Monday [today].

As the mid-point of this year's Florida lawmaking session comes into view, the pace is starting to pick up at the Capitol. Gina Jordan has a preview.

Since Florida essentially stripped an incentive program from the state's Film Commission, the state has seen fewer movie and TV productions within its borders. Now, as we hear from Gabrielle Bolden, advocates for those productions are trying revive Florida's incentive programs. (28:58)

March 26, 2019

Florida lawmakers say they want to crack down on human trafficking—specifically sex trafficking. And the legislature is considering increasing penalties on those who solicit for prostitution. Lynn Hatter reports bills now on the move would tackle both issues simultaneously.

In November voters in Florida restored voting rights for felons who have completed their sentence and did not commit a murder or sexual offense should be restored. Now 4 weeks into session lawmakers are trying to pass legislation that is meant to help execute what the voters asked for. Blaise Gainey sat down with clemency lawyer Reggie Garcia in an attempt to better define exactly what it was that voters approved.

A bill to replicate Miami's needle exchange program statewide is inching closer to passing the Florida Legislature. Ryan Dailey reports it cleared its first committee hurdle Tuesday in the House.

Florida lawmakers are looking to raise the smoking age from 18 to 21. Morgan Martin has more on why the bill has gained attention in the senate.

This is Children's Week at the Florida Capitol. That also involved a meeting of the Florida Children & Youth Cabinet this week to talk about children's needs, from mental to dental health. Casey Chapter tells us more.

Significant bill action is taking place at the Capitol this week as Gina Jordan gives us a look ahead.

Florida lawmakers are once again pushing to update how official documents like wills are notarized. Regan McCarthy has more..... (28:58)

March 27, 2019

A bill exempting recordings of mass shootings from the public record cleared the Senate Wednesday [today]. Shawn Mulcahy reports the House version is headed to that chamber's floor.

The Florida League of mayors brought municipality heads to the Capitol Wednesday to oppose preemption bills this legislative session. Ryan Dailey reports about 30 mayors also met with Attorney General Ashley Moody to discuss Florida's mental health system.

Over the years DNA testing companies have been becoming more and more popular. One such firm is FamilyTreeDNA. It offered its customers a chance to discover their heritage, and possibly find living relatives after taking a DNA test. But then, without client consent, the company shared genetic data with the FBI. And some other DNA Testing companies have shared unauthorized client info with pharmaceutical companies. Florida's Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis thinks that's wrong. He thinks DNA should be treated like a medical record. He shared his concerns with Blaise Gainey.

Some college students are pushing Florida lawmakers to allow immigrant students access to state financial aid. Gabrielle Bolden has more.

The Florida legislature is moving forward with a bill that aims to make first responders more efficient. Casey Chapter tells us more.

Tomorrow is this week's last full day of Capitol activity as lawmakers typically take off Friday afternoon for the weekend. Let's check in with Gina Jordan.

Most lawmakers agree something should be done about the Constitution Revision Commission—the group that meets once every 20 years and can send proposed amendments straight to the ballot for voter approval. But Regan McCarthy reports lawmakers aren't all in agreement when it comes to what should be done. (28:58)

March 28, 2019

Legislators want to close a loophole they say bad actors are exploiting, ultimately leading to insurance rates increasing across the state. A bill heading to the House floor would address the issue. Blaise Gainey reports, lawmakers and the Chief Financial Officer of Florida are now focused on stopping those so-called bad actors.

A panel of Florida lawmakers has passed a bill intended to make sure the people behind citizen initiatives to amend the state constitution are Florida citizens. But as Regan McCarthy reports opponents say the measure infringes on free speech and democracy.

A committee bill in the Florida house looking to make sweeping changes to the state's election laws has cleared a key committee stop. Ryan Dailey reports a number of them would modify the state's vote-by-mail procedure, which sparked a partisan debate about voter access.

Florida lawmakers approved a series of new laws last year cracking down on telemarketers. Those laws went into effect last summer, and addressed everything from unwanted voicemails to allowing phone companies to preemptively block robocalls. And yet, Lynn Hatter reports, the bad calls are still happening.

Not all the action is taking place in Tallahassee this week. President Donald Trump is visiting Lake Okeechobee tomorrow (Friday). The trip to the troubled lake comes as top Republican leaders in the state say the president's proposed spending on Everglades restoration is not enough.

Lake Okeechobee is among the state's most significant natural resources, and as WMFE's environmental reporter Amy Green explains there's debate after last year's toxic algae blooms over just how much water the lake should hold.

Florida's statewide Guardian Ad Litem program represents kids who through no fault of their own wind up in legal proceedings. An ongoing problem is that the guardians don't look anything like the young people they are representing. Now, as Tom Flanigan reports, the program is teaming up with Florida A&M University to help rectify that racial and cultural disconnect through a long-term research and outreach effort. (28:58)

March 29, 2019

A measure moving through Florida's House and Senate looks to add student immunization records to the Department of Health's existing database. Ryan Dailey reports amendments to the bill would let parents opt out of being listed on the registry, but critics are still skeptical on whether their privacy is protected.

Mental health has been a frequent topic at the capital following more tragic news from Parkland. Two students who survived last year's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School massacre took their own lives over the past two weeks. The Tampa Bay Times/Miami Herald bureau reports that while the Legislature allocated \$69 million for student mental health after the tragedy, almost none of it went to suicide prevention. But as Margie Menzel reports, some lawmakers have begun to study prevention programs.

Florida has multiple ways to change the state's constitution. But Regan McCarthy and Shawn Mulcahy say lawmakers seem determined to change the rules of the game when it comes to future modifications of Florida's foundational document.

Lawmakers are off for the weekend and Gina Jordan gives us some insights on what might happen when they reconvene.

Last year President Donald Trump announced he would open more of the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic to offshore oil and gas exploration. Florida responded by seeking a waiver from the policy. Voters responded too—by passing a ban on offshore drilling in state waters. Yet, advocates for offshore drilling, along with the group Explore Offshore, remain undeterred. Lynn Hatter spoke with former VA Secretary Jim Nicolson and the Florida Petroleum Council's David Mica about the nation's energy future, and why they believe offshore drilling should be on the table. (28:58)