



Week 7 FOMA Legislative Update

2026 Florida Legislative Session (February 23 – 27)

This week in the Florida Legislature — in both the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate — with a focus on the ongoing budget negotiations, leadership remarks, and why property taxes and other issues are driving a stalemate:

Budget Negotiations and Chamber Positions

As of this week, the Florida Legislature remains in budget negotiation mode without a final deal, roughly a month before the regular session is scheduled to adjourn. Both chambers have passed competing budget proposals: the House passed its \$113.6 billion budget, while the Senate approved its \$115 billion proposal. That leaves an approximate \$1.4 billion gap that negotiators now must resolve before any final spending plan can be sent to the governor.

House Speaker **Daniel Perez** has been highly visible in his remarks on the floor and to members, emphasizing that the House will not be rushed by what he calls an “artificial deadline” to reach a compromise. He told legislators this week that the outcome of negotiations will determine whether the session ends on time or extends well past the March 13 adjournment date — alluding to last year’s extended session on budget issues.

In contrast, Senate President Ben Albritton — while not offering fiery floor rhetoric this week — has begun naming budget conferees (the lawmakers who will hammer out the differences) and cast a more measured tone about closing the gap. The Senate tends to project confidence that “getting it right” outweighs moving too quickly, suggesting more negotiations and less headline-grabbing confrontation at least publicly.

While Gov. Ron DeSantis hasn’t made a highly publicized speech this week on the budget floor, his influence looms large because he proposed a larger \$117 billion budget in December — significantly above both chambers’ proposals. That places additional pressure on negotiators: they must not only reconcile the House and Senate figures but also consider components that the governor has championed. His top line also reflects priorities outside the current budget fight, such as teacher pay and Everglades restoration, as noted in his earlier proposal.

A key driver of the stalemate is property tax reform. Late last week and into this week, the House passed **HJR 203**, a constitutional amendment that, if ultimately approved, would begin phasing out most **non-school property taxes on homesteads starting in 2027** and could ultimately eliminate them entirely.

House Speaker Perez and other proponents have framed this as an aggressive affordability reform — possibly one of the most ambitious property tax proposals in U.S. legislative history. But the Senate has **not yet embraced the House’s version**, and so far hasn’t filed an equivalent plan. Some Senate leaders have publicly indicated they’re considering a more modest approach and suggest building greater consensus before finalizing a proposal.

Behind closed doors, House and Senate budget negotiators are now focused on reconciling the **\$1.4 billion difference** and aligning hard numbers for key priorities, but they’re also balancing internal caucus pressures. In the House, Speaker Perez is balancing conservative calls for deep tax cuts with concerns about public safety and local budgets. In the Senate, leadership is sensitive to local government concerns and wary of adopting an overly expansive tax cut that critics say could impair essential services. Both chambers face pressure from **Democrats to protect public services** and from **local officials worried about unfunded mandates** if property taxes are sharply curtailed.

As of this week’s proceedings (Feb 23-27), there is **no final budget deal yet**; leadership from both chambers has been publicly making their fiscal priorities clear; property tax reform remains a central and divisive element of the session; and **other budget components — healthcare, emergency funds, public safety, education — are complicating negotiations** as lawmakers approach the wrap-up of the regular 60-day session. The result is a **deliberative but contentious behind-the-scenes budget process**, with extended talks highly plausible.

Key Bills Heard This Week

- **Drug Prices and Coverage [HB697](#) and [SB1760](#) [SB1158](#) (Kincart-Johnson, Brodner and Grall)**
 - **During HHS this week, an amendment was introduced and accepted that included the removal of the MFN language for drug pricing. It further went on to: Exclude from coverage any plan exclusively serving PACE organizations, require consolidated appeals for multiple claims, and prohibit certain PBM reimbursement practices. Removes from regulatory oversight plans exclusively serving PACE organizations. Expands administrative appeals to allow consolidated multiple-claim actions for the same drug and day supply within a calendar month. Prohibits PBMs from disallowing a pharmacy to decline dispensing if reimbursement is below acquisition cost. Bars PBMs from reimbursing affiliated pharmacies at higher rates than nonaffiliated pharmacies.**
 - **The amendment was adopted and [HB697](#) passed 25-0 and moves to the Floor.**



- **Sickle Cell Disease Treatment of Pain Continuing Education — HB 353/ SB 844**
(This week, the senate bill was placed on Special order calendar and read 2nd and 3rd times, voted and passed 37-0 immediately certified to the House, in Messages. HB353 was placed on Calendar on 2nd reading Feb. 25 – the two versions are identical.)
- **Ambulatory Surgery Centers — HB 1207**
HB 1207 revises regulatory provisions applicable to ambulatory surgery centers. The bill establishes a daily fine for centers that fail to provide a required good-faith estimate on time and ties the effective date to final federal rule adoption.
Status: Reported favorably out of committee; awaiting House floor action.
- **Memory Care — HB 1295/ SB 1404**
HB 1295 and its companion, SB 1404, address standards and regulatory requirements for memory care services. Among the provisions is a mandate requiring any assisted living facility serving memory care residents to obtain a memory care license, along with updates to statutory definitions.
Status: Both HB 1295 and SB 1404 have been placed on the Calander on Second Reading
- **Uterine Fibroid Research Database — HB 1515/ SB 864**
HB 1515 and its identical Senate companion, SB 864, advance the creation or expansion of a uterine fibroid research database aimed at improving data collection, research coordination, and patient privacy. The bills were reported favorably at their final committee stops, with no expressed opposition.
Status: Both HB 1515 and SB 864 are on the Calendar on Second Reading.

BILL TRACKING

Scope of Practice and Professional Licensure

- **Big Beautiful Healthcare Frontier Act – HB 693 / HB 695 (Redondo)**
Filed as part of a Speaker-supported legislative package, these bills propose multiple scope-of-practice expansions across health care professions. *(Passed HHS FOMA placed card against and Placed on Calendar, on 2nd Reading February 26)*
- **Autonomous Practice by a CRNA – HB 375 / SB 462 (Giallombardo / Rodriguez)**
Permits certified registered nurse anesthetists to practice independently. *(PASSED HOUSE FLOOR – sent to Senate; Senate bill STILL has not been heard.)*
- **Advanced Practice Registered Nurse Autonomous Practice – HB 301 / SB 138 (Shoaf / Truenow)**
Expands autonomous practice authority for psychiatric advanced practice registered



nurses. PASSED HOUSE FLOOR – sent to Senate; Senate bill STILL has not been heard.)

- **Naturopathic Medicine – [HB 223](#) / [SB 688](#) / [SB 542](#) (Smith / Rodriguez / Garcia)**
Creates a licensure pathway for naturopathic practitioners. (Both bills were heard in Committee this week and passed. House bill on floor and placed on 2nd reading for next week; SB542 was not moving, but SB688 passed second committee stop, last stop is Senate Fiscal Policy March 2.)
- **Use of Professional Nursing Titles – [HB 237](#) / [SB 36](#) (Salzman / Sharief)**
Authorizes use of doctoral nursing titles while requiring clarification of professional role when using the term “doctor.” (PASSED HOUSE FLOOR this week; Senate passed two of three committee stops. Bill is still moving; late filed amendment to SB version might delay this bill moving through Rules committee, its last stop.)

LIKELY DEAD

- **Mobile Opportunity by Interstate Licensure Endorsement Act [SB154/HB151](#) (Harrell/Conerly)**
Expand ineligibility criteria for licensure by endorsement under the MOBILE Act to include nonaccredited dental program graduates. Revises the list of individuals ineligible for a health care license by endorsement under the MOBILE Act.
Adds a new provision making those who have not graduated from an accredited dental school or dental hygiene program ineligible for licensure by endorsement under chapter 466. (Senate passed the bill in its first committee this week, still has two stops to go; House has still not heard bill.)
- **Ambulatory Surgical Centers [SB1156/HB1207](#) (Trumbull/Oliver)**
Establish new licensure and regulatory requirements for ambulatory surgical centers under a newly created chapter separate from hospital regulations, strengthening standards, reporting, and oversight. (Both Senate and House heard the bills this week; Senate version was Temporarily Postponed last week; House version moves to its final stop. This bill was moving. Likely dead on Senate side.)
- **Autonomous Practice by Physician Assistants – [SB 668](#) (Truenow)**
Authorizes physician assistants to practice independently. (There is no House companion – this bill is dead)
- **Acupuncture – [HB 169](#) / [SB 672](#) (Alvarez / Calatayud)**
Updates statutory language governing acupuncture practice. (House bill placed on



Calendar, 2nd reading; Senate has not held first committee meeting. Bill is on life support)

- **Prescribing for Physician Assistants – [HB 683](#) / [SB 374](#) (Partington / Trumbull)**
Allows physician assistants to practice independently during a declared state of emergency. (House bill was heard this week and passed but the Senate is not moving the bill)
- **Chiropractic Medicine – [HB 439](#) / [SB 1524](#) (Cobb / Simon)**
Authorizes chiropractic physicians to possess, prescribe, and administer specified substances, including vitamins, dietary supplements, and epinephrine. (House Passed Floor and received; Sent to Senate Rules. Senate has not held first committee hearing.)

DEAD

- **Patient-directed Medical Orders [SB 312](#)/[HB369](#) (Rodriguez/Plasencia)**
Patient-directed Medical Orders: Revising definitions and defining the term “patient-directed medical order”; authorizing the execution of a patient-directed medical order for a specified purpose; requiring that certain health care services be provided to the principal regardless of the decision to withhold or withdraw life-prolonging procedures; authorizing physicians, physician assistants, and advanced practice registered nurses to withhold or withdraw life-prolonging procedures under certain circumstances without penalty; requiring the Agency for Health Care Administration to create and update a database for the storage of patient-directed medical orders, etc. (Bill is dead)

Pharmacy Practice

Multiple bills address pharmacy practice and pharmacist authority:

- **Drug Prices and Coverage [HB697](#) and [SB1760](#) [SB1158](#) (Kincart-Johnson, Brodner and Grall)**
 - **During HHS this week, an amendment was introduced and accepted that included the removal of the MFN language for drug pricing. It further went on to: Exclude from coverage any plan exclusively serving PACE organizations, require consolidated appeals for multiple claims, and prohibit certain PBM reimbursement practices. Removes from regulatory oversight plans exclusively serving PACE organizations. Expands administrative appeals to allow consolidated multiple-claim actions for the same drug and day supply within a calendar month. Prohibits PBMs from disallowing a pharmacy to decline dispensing if reimbursement is below acquisition cost. Bars PBMs from reimbursing affiliated pharmacies at higher rates than nonaffiliated pharmacies.**



- **The amendment was adopted and HB697 passed 25-0 and moves to the Floor.**

LIKELY DEAD

- **Pharmacy – [SB 1142](#) / [HB 1425](#) (Wright / Booth)**
Expands consultant pharmacy provisions to include clinics. *(House bill was heard in its first committee – no questions, no opposition. Passed 18-0)*
- **Administration of Medications by Pharmacists – [HB 407](#) / [SB 294](#) (Alvarez / Rodriguez)**
Authorizes pharmacists to administer medications for medication-assisted treatment and opioid addiction. *(Bills are on life support – House has not held its first committee meeting; Senate has not held its first hearing.)*
- **Practice of the Profession of Pharmacy – [HB 1021](#) / [SB 868](#) (Young / Sharief)**
Allows pharmacists to administer medications in Level I and Level II trauma centers. *(Bills are on life support – House passed bill placed on Calendar, 2nd reading; Senate has not held a committee meeting.)*

Wrongful Death and Medical Liability

- **Medical Negligence/Wrongful Death – [HB 6003](#) / [SB 1700](#) (Trabulsy / Grall)**
Removes the prohibition on recovery of noneconomic damages in certain medical negligence wrongful death cases involving adult children and parents. *(House version passed FLOOR and has been referred to Senate Rules; Senate bill has not been heard in its first committee.)*
- **Civil Liability for the Wrongful Death of an Unborn Child – [HB 289](#) / [SB 164](#) (Greco / Grall)**
Expands Florida’s Wrongful Death Act to allow parents of an unborn child to recover damages. *HB289 passed the house floor and has been referred to Senate Rules Committee. The Senate version is at its third and final stop, Rules Committee. These bills are moving.)*

Vaccines, Parental Rights, and Medical Conscience

- **Parental Rights – [HB 173](#) / [SB 166](#) (Kendall / Grall)**
Requires parental consent in various health care situations, including contraceptive information and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. *(House version placed on Calendar, 2nd reading this week; Senate bill has not been heard.)*



- **Medical Freedom/Vaccines – HB 917 / SB 1756 (Holcomb / Yarborough)**
Addresses vaccination discrimination, parental consent and disclosures, alternative vaccination schedules, pharmacist authority to dispense ivermectin, exemptions from immunization requirements, and related liability provisions. *(House version not moving; Senate at second of three committee stops. Bill is dying.)*
 - Ivermectin did make it into a Senate bill in committee this week, an amendment in CS/SB 1756 (often dubbed the Medical Freedom Act) would allow pharmacists to dispense ivermectin without a prescription under specific conditions. That amendment was adopted and the bill advanced out of the Senate Appropriations Committee this week.
 - Here's what's in the proposal:
 - CS/SB 1756 would create a provision allowing a pharmacist to provide ivermectin to anyone 18 or older without a prescription, as a behind-the-counter medication, until the FDA approves it for over-the-counter sale. Pharmacists would be required to give patients written information on indications, contraindications, dosage, and the importance of follow-up with their primary care physician before dispensing. The bill also protects pharmacists from civil or criminal liability for doing so.
 - Sen. Massullo's remarks: *In committee debate on this bill, Massullo — a physician and dermatologist — voted for the bill this time but expressed reservations about the ivermectin language, calling it a “red herring” and suggesting he wished it weren't included unless other parts of the measure were improved. He said he would vote against the bill on a final Senate floor vote unless changes were made, particularly regarding vaccine opt-in/opt-out information*

LIKELY DEAD

- **Advertisement of a Harmful Vaccine – SB408 / HB339 (Grall/Miller)**
Defines advertisement for vaccine promotions and impose liability on manufacturers for harm caused by advertised vaccines. *SB408 passed its first committee but is stuck in Health Policy committee. House had first of three committee hearings this week and passed its first stop; Bills are on life-support.)*
- **Medical Conscience – HB 551 / SB 670 (Black / Yarborough)**
Authorizes health care providers to bring a civil cause of action based on medical conscience protections. *(Bills are on life support – neither bill have been heard in their first committee.)*



- **Prohibited Sex-reassignment Prescriptions and Procedures [SB1010](#) / [HB743](#) (Yarborough/Melo)**

Prohibit health care practitioners from aiding or abetting in prohibited sex-reassignment prescriptions or procedures for minors and authorize the state to pursue civil actions and penalties. *(House bill placed on Calendar, 2nd reading this week; Senate version is at its second of three stops.)*

Patient Access to Records

- **Patient Access to Records – [HB 1309](#) / [SB 1140](#) (Booth / Grall)**

Requires medical records to be furnished within 14 days of request. *(Senate bill not moving; House version Received in Senate; Referred to Rules.)*

Health Insurance and Managed Care

Several bills propose reforms to insurance practices, managed care, and patient protection:

LIKELY DEAD

- **Managed Care Plans – [HB 531](#) / [SB 568](#) (Barnaby, Basabe / Harrell)**

Revises Medicaid managed care contract requirements, including limits on prior authorization reviews. *(Bills are on life support – neither bill have been heard in their first committee.)*

- **Insurance Claims Payments to Health Care Providers – [HB 1015](#) / [SB 1130](#) (Cassel / Massullo)**

Prohibits certain insurance payment practices, including downloading requirements. *(Bills are on life support – neither bill have been heard in their first committee.)*

- **Insurance Claims Payments to Health Care Providers – [HB 1023](#) / [SB 1198](#) (Black / Massullo)**

Addresses claim disputes, fees, and related insurance reforms. *(Bills are on life support – neither bill have been heard in their first committee.)*

- **Health Insurer Accountability – [HB 1097](#) (Berfield)**

Requires insurer credentialing within 30 days and includes prompt payment and retroactive denial provisions. *(No Senate companion – Bill is dying.)*

- **Step Therapy – [SB 70](#) (Harrell)**

Requires AHCA approval of certain drug products for Medicaid recipients with serious mental illness without step-therapy prior authorization. *(No House companion – Bill is dying.)*

- **Continuity of Care in Health Insurance Contracts – [HB 577](#) / [SB 114](#) (Woodson / Jones)**

Requires 60 days' notice to policyholders before termination of provider contracts. *(Bills are on life support – neither bill have been heard in their first committee.)*

- **Medicaid Providers [SB40/HB163](#) (Shareif/Robinson)**

Medicaid Providers; Requiring the Agency for Health Care Administration to include specified requirements in its contracts with Medicaid managed care plans; defining the term “outside of regular business hours”. *(Bills are on life support.)*

Other Legislation of Interest

- **Health Care Patient Protection – [SB 68](#) (Harrell (R-Stuart)) and [HB 355](#) by Rep. (Oliver (R-Punta Gorda))**

Requires AHCA, in consultation with the Florida Emergency Medical Services for Children State Partnership Program, to adopt rules that establish minimum standards for pediatric patient care in hospital emergency departments (ED). The bills require all hospitals with EDs to develop and implement policies and procedures for pediatric patient care in the ED, and to designate a physician, physician assistant, nurse, or paramedic to serve as the pediatric emergency care coordinator in the ED. Finally, the bills require all hospital EDs to conduct the National Pediatric Readiness Assessment in accordance with timelines established by the National Pediatric Readiness Project. *(This bill passed the House and is now in Senate Messages and referred to Fiscal Policy. Senate bill was placed on Calendar, 2nd reading.)*

- **Employment Eligibility – [HB 197](#) by Rep. Berny Jacques (R-Clearwater) [SB1542](#) Sen. Pizzo (D-Miami) and [SB 1278](#) Sen. Martin (R-Lee)**

Requires all private employers, rather than only those employing more than specified number of employees, use E-Verify system to verify new employee's employment. *(HB197 has passed the House and is currently in Senate Rules Committee. Neither Senate bills have had their first hearing.)*

- **Florida Health Choices Program – [SB 440](#) (Leek (R-St. Augustine)) and [HB 141](#) (Yarkosky (R-Clermont)) and [SB1460](#) (Martin (R-Lee))**

Rename the "Florida Health Choices Program" as "Florida Employee Health Choices Program" and revise purposes and components of the program. The bills revise eligibility

and participation requirements for vendors under the program, the types of health insurance products that are available for purchase through program, removes certain pricing transparency requirements, revise the structure of the insurance marketplace process under the program, remove the option for risk pooling under the program, and remove exemptions from certain requirements of Florida Insurance Code under the program. *(Bills on life support)*

- **Rural Communities – SB 250 (Simon (R-Tallahassee)) and HB723 (Abbott (R-Washington))**

A comprehensive package of legislative proposals to create opportunities for rural communities to expand education offerings, increase health care services, and modernize commerce. The bill invests in farm-to-market roads, requires the state land planning agency to give preference for technical assistance funding to local governments located in a rural area of opportunity, revises the conditions required for a county to be considered a fiscally constrained county, creates the Office of Rural Prosperity within the Department of Commerce, requires the Office of Rural Prosperity to administer the Renaissance Grants Program to provide block grants to eligible communities, creates the Public Infrastructure Smart Technology Grant Program within the Office of Rural Prosperity, expands the existing FRAME program to include medical doctors or osteopathic doctors who are board certified or board eligible in emergency medicine, establishes the Stroke, Cardiac, and Obstetric Response and Education (SCORE) Grant Program, appropriates additional funding to enhance Medicaid payments to reimburse rural hospitals similar to Medicare reimbursement, and creates the Florida Arterial Road Modernization Program within the Department of Transportation. *SB250 is now in House Messages and waiting on action by the Florida House.*

- **Sale and Purchase of Ivermectin – HB 29 (Holcomb (R-Springhill))**

Authorizes the sale and purchase of ivermectin suitable for human use as over-the-counter medication without prescription or consultation with a health care provider. *(Still no companion in the House – bill is dying. This language made it into SB1756).*

- **Protection from Surgical Smoke – SB162/HB93 (Davis/Woodson)**

Requires hospitals & ambulatory surgical centers to adopt & implement policies requiring use of smoke evacuation systems during certain surgical procedures.

(Amendment in HB93 to remove the mandate and make it adopt and implement policies to prevent where substantial likelihood of risk. This amendment appeased the hospitals and this bill should move forward. House version passed after amendment 25-0 and heads to the floor. The Senate version passed with the same amendment and heads to the floor. Both bills are identical.)



- **Temporary Certificates for Practice in Areas of Critical Need SB1480 HB809
(Burton/Benarroch)**

Allow continued practice by certain health care practitioners under temporary certificates in areas of critical need even if those areas lose their designation, provided specific conditions are met. *(Action this week in the House with their version being placed on special order calendar for March 3. Senate version retained on special order calendar on Feb. 19. These bills should pass both chambers.)*

- **Statewide Provider and Health Plan Claim Dispute Resolution SB1082/HB1449
(Grall/Busatta)**

Specifies additional circumstances excluding disputed claims from the statewide provider and health plan claim dispute resolution program. Adds claims involving services initiated under s. 395.1041 or 42 U.S.C. s. 1395dd that have been submitted for resolution through the federal independent dispute resolution process to the list of exclusions. Excludes claims for services rendered by out-of-network providers that have been submitted for resolution through the federal independent dispute resolution process. *(Senate bill in Rules, need bill to be placed on Agenda. House bill on Feb 26 passed in HHS Comm. 25-0 and placed on calendar 2nd reading, this will pass the House Floor)*



Looking Ahead – Week 8

Looking ahead to **next week (March 2–6, 2026)** in the **Florida Legislature**, both chambers are gearing up for a critical stretch as the regular session nears its constitutionally mandated adjournment **March 13** and the **50th legislative day (March 3)** passes. On the **Senate floor**, proceedings are scheduled to reconvene **Wednesday, March 4 at 10 a.m.** with the President’s call of the chair; next week’s calendar is expected to include continued **discussion of budget bills and fiscal priorities** as leadership works toward narrowing the House–Senate spending gap. The Senate may also take up other floor-ready measures that have cleared committees, including proposals like **SB 382**, which has already passed the Senate and awaits House action, and potentially **public safety–oriented bills such as pool safety legislation** or other measures that have progressed through committee. Meanwhile, in the **House chamber will meet on the Floor March 3-5 at 10 a.m.**, members will likely focus on **final committee work and placing major bills on the floor calendar** ahead of key deadlines, including adopting or advancing spending bills and conformity bills tied to appropriations. One significant carry-over from this week that could see Senate floor action early next week is the **House-passed FSU shooting response package (HB 757)**, now ready for consideration in the upper chamber. With budget negotiations still unresolved, both the House and Senate floors should see **continued debate around the state budget framework, property tax reform issues, and related fiscal policy bills** — though specific floor action depends on committee placements and leadership scheduling as the session accelerates toward its late-session crunch