



# CAPITOL UPDATE

## The 2019 Legislative Session has begun!

Although organizational meetings for the 2019 Legislative Session were held in November and December of 2018, the 2019 legislative season officially began during this past week. While the focus was primarily on the inauguration of the new members of the Florida Cabinet, including Governor DeSantis, both the Senate and House held several policy meetings and briefings that addressed a variety of topics including, but not limited to Hurricane Michael impacts, school safety, and the Florida economy.

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### Environmental Policy:

#### *Governor DeSantis Issues Executive Order on Water Policy*

On January 10, 2019, Governor DeSantis announced major water policy reforms through the issuance of Executive Order 19-12. The summary released by Governor DeSantis, highlights the following points:

- \$2.5 Billion over the next four years for Everglades restoration and protection of water resources (a \$1 Billion increase in spending over the previous four years and the highest level of funding for restoration in Florida's history).
- The Establishment of a Blue-Green Algae Task Force, charged with focusing on expediting progress toward reducing the adverse impacts of blue-green algae blooms now and over the next five years.
- Instruction to the South Florida Water Management District to immediately start the next phase of the Everglades Agricultural Area Storage Reservoir Project design and ensure the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers approves the project according to schedule.
- The Creation of the Office of Environmental Accountability and Transparency charged with organizing and directing integrated scientific research and analysis to ensure that all agency actions are aligned with key environmental priorities.
- The Appointment of a Chief Science Officer to coordinate and prioritize scientific data, research, monitoring and analysis needs to ensure alignment with current and emerging environmental concerns most pressing to Floridians.

Additionally, key points of the order that will potentially involve county participation include:

- Direct DEP to establish a septic conversion and remediation grant program with a local government match requirement.
- Continue DEP's red tide emergency grant program to support local governments to clean up their beaches and coastal areas to minimize the impacts of red tide to residents and visitors.
- Engage local governments, industry, universities and water management districts to identify and research all viable alternative water supply sources and provide an assessment of funding needs critical to supporting Florida's growing economy. DEP should take all necessary steps to establish recurring funding for an alternative water supply grant program to help communities plan for and implement vital conservation, reuse and other alternative water supply projects.
- Engage local governments, industry, citizens and other stakeholders through a targeted education and outreach campaign that will focus on the importance of conservation and reuse efforts and encourage Floridians to implement essential conservation and reuse efforts in their homes, businesses and communities throughout Florida.

To read the full press release and view the entire contents of the executive order click [here](#).

**FAC Contact:**

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## NEWS ARTICLES ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

[DeSantis offers 'bold' plan to address water woes](#)

# DAILY COMMERCIAL

## Emergency Management & Hurricane Michael

Several Senate committees held hearings on Hurricane Michael's impacts and the response efforts of the public and private sectors. Though the presentations focused on Hurricane Michael, many also served to highlight unresolved issues from other events.

On Monday, after an overview of the Best Management Programs (BMP), the Senate Agriculture Committee- made up of Chair Albritton, and Senators Gainer, Montford, Broxson, and Rader- heard first-person accounts of the damage that Hurricane Michael brought to Northwest Florida's oyster, beekeeping, cattle, and timber industries.



*Laura Youmans, Legislative Counsel at FAC, met with Senator George Gainer to discuss Hurricane Michael recovery efforts.*

Dr. Angie B. Lindsey presented on behalf of the UF/IFAS Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN). Her [presentation](#) mentioned the following:

EDEN is a network of federal agency and state land grant institutions that serve as a resource for disaster preparedness education. Dr. Lindsey reported on the significant economic impact of the storm:

- The top five counties in terms of agricultural losses were Jackson (\$51 million), Gadsden (\$15 million), Suwannee (\$14 million), Calhoun (\$11 million), and Santa Rosa (\$6 million).
- A total of 2.809 million acres of forest land area was damaged valued at \$1.289 Billion.
- Aquaculture product loss for 2018 -2019 is estimated between 80 – 100% along impacted coastal communities.
- Total losses for crops and animals/animal products were estimated at \$138 million, including \$80 million for field crops, \$32 million for specialty crops, and \$26 million for animals/animal products. (as of 11/12/2018)

She said that for future events, EDEN has identified several areas of operations that should be strengthened:

- Plan for when IFAS faculty & staff are GREATLY impacted
- UF/IFAS Disaster Fund & possibly "stockpiling" supplies throughout the year
- Develop efficient & effective communication strategies before and after disasters
- Develop alternatives to on-line tools
- Host a state-wide drill prior to next hurricane season to ensure roles, responsibilities, and timing

Senate Banking and Insurance, chaired by Sen Broxson received briefings from the Florida Office of Insurance Regulation. According to their data roughly 70% of all claims have been closed as of December 28 and the total estimate claims losses is about \$4.65 billion. OIR has issued Emergency Order (234790-18-EO) on October 15, 2018 which freezes rate increases and other provisions. The Office also issued Informational Memorandum (OIR-18-01M) on December 19, 2018 informing Florida insurance customers of existing regulations requiring that undisputed claims amounts be paid within

90 days of the claim being made.

Chaired by Senator Flores, representing Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, the Senate's Community Affairs Committee was provided with an overview of the Florida Building Code. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the buildings constructed under the newer building codes fared substantially better during Hurricane Michael and that damage in the Keys would have been worse during Irma without the stronger Post-Andrew codes. The Florida Building Commission expects to release its final report on recommendations from Hurricane Michael in June 2019. The Florida Housing Corporation also provided a report on their Hurricane Michael Response and Recovery Efforts, which includes SHIP funding for local government. Information on available disaster response resources can be found on the dedicated page at [www.floridahousing.org](http://www.floridahousing.org).

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## Public Safety:

### *The Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD) Public Safety Commission*

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas (MSD) Public Safety Commission delivered its mandated report to the legislature and Governor on January 2. The major recommendations include arming teachers, increased school security, and improved law enforcement response.

The Commission also voted in favor of allowing teachers to carry guns in schools if they pass background checks and training. Such a change would require the state Legislature's approval. Senate Bill 7026, passed after the MSD shooting, allowed school systems under a guardian program to arm certain school employees, such as security guards, administrators or librarians, but not teachers. The only dissenting vote to expand the guardian program was Commissioner Max Schachter. When asked about the proposal to arm teachers, Senate President Bill Galvano stated he was open to the concept.

The Commission further recommended that school districts have the right to establish armed guardian programs without the approval of the county sheriff. Under current law, a guardian program requires approval of both the sheriff and the school board.

Other recommendations that the Commission gave that are potentially relevant to Florida's Counties include:

1. Every Florida county should be required to have a major incident unified command inter-local agreement that establishes the protocols for a unified command structure.
2. Florida law should require that all primary 911 call centers have the ability to directly communicate via radio with the first responder units for which they are receiving the 911 calls.
3. All public safety agencies should work toward consolidation of 911 call centers and eliminate the 911 call transfer process.
4. The City of Parkland should require that Broward County Regional Communications receive all cellular and landline 911 calls originating in the city of Parkland.
5. All law enforcement agencies in Broward County, and every county in Florida, should operate on a single computer aided dispatch (CAD) system.

To view the entire contents of the report click [here](#).

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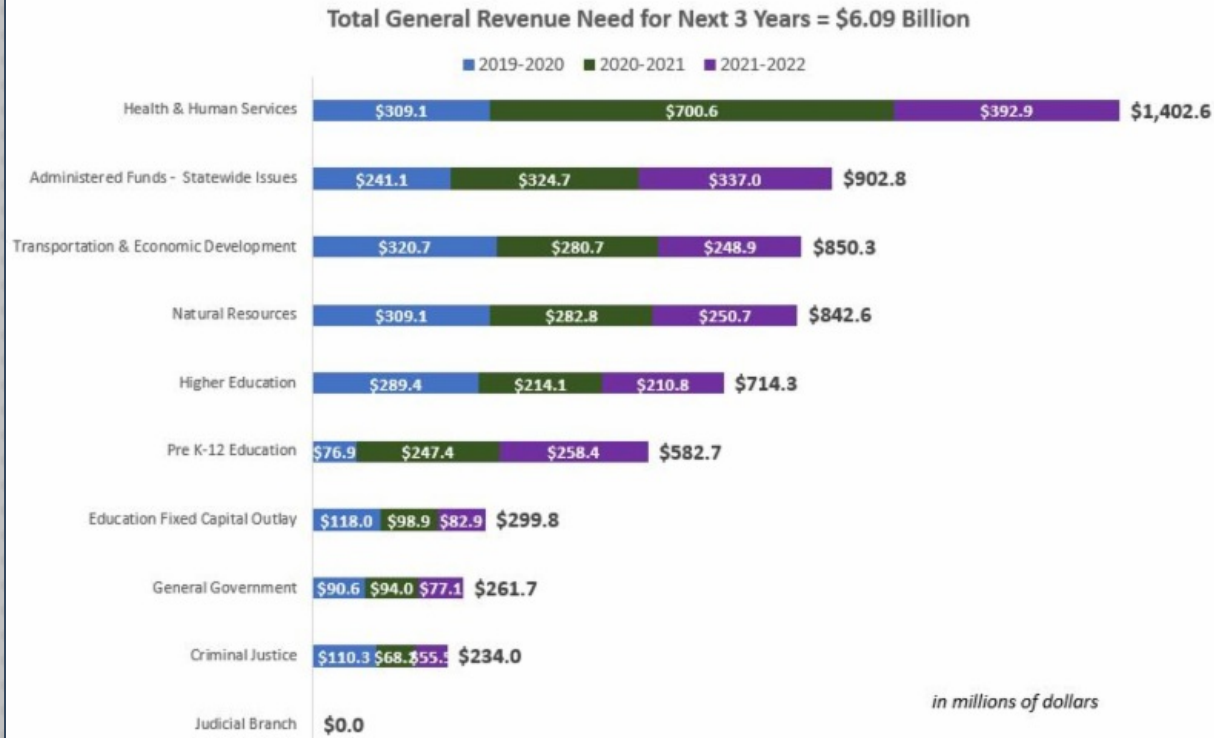
## NEWS ARTICLES ON PUBLIC SAFETY

[Stoneman Douglas commission calls for arming teachers, more school security spending in first report to state leaders](#)



# Financial Outlook

Amy Baker, Coordinator for the Legislature’s Office of Economic & Demographic Research (EDR), [presented the Long Range Financial Outlook to the House Appropriations Committee on Tuesday](#). The presentation began by noting that the state and national economies are largely recovered, or back to normal, on nearly all measures. By July of 2019, the current economic expansion will be the longest in recorded history at 10 years and 1 month. While a good economy helps the State’s sales tax collection and General Revenue balance, the most recent sales tax forecast “relies heavily on strong tourism growth,” and assumes no disruptive events such as disease outbreaks or natural or manmade disasters. Furthermore, a strengthening dollar makes international travel to the U.S. more expensive.



Regardless of impacts to the general revenue balance, however, the State has both critical and other high priority needs that require funding. These needs are estimated to total \$6.09 billion over the next three state fiscal years, with health & human services comprising the largest portion at just over \$1.4 billion.

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