



CAPITOL UPDATE

Gov. DeSantis Announces Additional Reimbursement Assistance

Last Thursday, Governor Ron DeSantis announced additional reimbursement assistance for communities impacted by Hurricane Michael.

Specifically, current law provides that, following a Presidential disaster declaration, the federal government shall reimburse counties and cities 75% of the costs for debris removal and emergency response work. However, the law also gives the President discretion to increase the federal contribution to as much as 100%, when warranted.



Following Hurricane Michael, the President authorized 100% reimbursement for these expenses for a 5-day period. Since that time, Governor DeSantis, working with the State Coordinating Officer, has visited the impacted counties on two occasions to assess the needs of these areas. Based upon these visits, and after speaking with community leaders, Governor DeSantis took appropriate action and requested that the President authorize 100% reimbursement for the first 45 days following the storm's landfall. On January 23, 2019, the President approved the Governor's request.

To read more about how the additional reimbursement assistance will impact counties, please [click here](#).



Wakulla County Commissioner and FAC 2nd Vice President, Ralph Thomas, introduces himself to Governor Ron DeSantis.



Jackson County Commissioner, Clint Pate, meets with Florida's Chief Financial Officer, Jimmy Patronis.

FAC Contact:

For additional information, please feel free to contact Laura Youmans via email at lyoumans@fl-counties.com.

NEWS ARTICLES ON HURRICANE MICHAEL

[DeSantis: 100-percent FEMA reimbursement for storm debris removal upped to 45 days](#)

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Health & Safety Update:

House and Senate Receive Presentations on School Safety

The Education Committees in both the House and Senate heard presentations on school safety this week. In the Senate, Sheriff Bob Gualtieri (Pinellas County) and appointed Chair provided a presentation on the recommendations from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Commission (MSDPSC - created by SB 7026).

During his presentation, Sheriff Gualtieri gave a brief overview of the 482-page initial report; highlighting key findings and that some of the recommendations from the commission will require action by the legislature. The commission determined that the Department of Education lacks oversight authority and, in many areas, it is a repository for information without any enforcement authority.

The MSDPSC proposed three harm mitigation concepts that could be implemented in all Florida schools to enhance school safety – identify the threat, communicate the threat, and react to the threat. These recommendations require legislative action.

To read more about MSDPSC's proposed amendments and the additional presentations, please [click here](#).

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Growth, Agriculture, Transportation & Environment Update: *House Receives Presentations from DEP & FWC on Algal Blooms*

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Appropriations Subcommittee heard a presentation from Thomas Frick, Director of the Division of Environmental Assessment and Restoration. Mr. Frick's presentation focused on harmful algal blooms (HABs) giving an update across the state as a result of former Governor Rick Scott's 2018 Executive Orders to address Algae Blooms and Red Tide. His presentation specifically provided a status report of algal blooms in Clay, Duval, Putnam, St. Johns, Charlotte, Hendry, Highlands, Lee, Martin, St. Lucie, Broward, and Palm Beach counties.

Gil McRae, Director of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, followed Mr. Frick's presentation giving an update on red tide. While the red tide season began in November 2017 and spread south to Collier and north to Sarasota and Manatee counties by June/July 2018, to date, blooms are currently patchy from Manatee to Collier counties. Additionally, given the scope and scale of the event, additional support was required by the Red Tide Emergency Response Team for monitoring and analysis. Also, there are now proactive funding measures for red tide control trials, monitoring, and hatcheries to increase production of fish for stocking once the red tide has subsided.

To read a more in-depth summary of each presentation, please [click here](#).

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NEWS ARTICLES ON RED TIDE

[Red tide, algae blooms: Reducing nutrients is best way to prevent pollution, say DEP, FWC](#)



Financial, Tax & Administration Update: *Commissioner Bill Truex Participates on Panel on behalf of FAC*



On Tuesday, January 22nd, the House Commerce Committee held a panel on lowering the costs of construction through efficient and uniform building code enforcement, where representatives from local governments and industry were invited to share suggestions to improve efficiencies and reduce regulatory costs for the industry.

Local government representatives, including Charlotte County Commissioner Bill Truex on behalf of FAC, discussed the following:

- recruitment and retention of plan examiners as well as building officials and inspectors,
- supporting technical schools with programs related to building code enforcement, and
- the outdated application and licensing processes for plans examiners, officials and inspectors.

Also mentioned was the need for full access to Florida Building Code changes at each code cycle with Florida-specific interpretations to aid in consistency of interpretation across jurisdictions.

To read more, [click here](#).

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House Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee heard two bills of interest to counties:

The first, [HB 127](#), Permit Fees by Representative Williamson would require county building departments to post a fee schedule on websites and would also require the creation and posting of a building permit and inspection utilization report. The building permit and utilization report would include information about the building department's revenue and expenditures. Current law limits the use of fees and fines generated by the building department to those functions related to enforcing the Florida Building Code. Ch. 125.56 (4)(b) currently requires counties to post each type of building permit application on its website and to allow applications to be submitted electronically, though payments, attachments, or drawings may be required to be submitted in person at the discretion of the building official. The bill was voted out of committee unanimously.

The committee also heard [HB 145](#), Vegetable Gardens, by Representative Fetterhoff. As amended, this bill would preempt local governments from regulating vegetable gardens on residential properties. The bill does not preempt regulations of general nature that may affect vegetable gardens, such as fertilizer use. During committee the sponsor indicated that easements and setbacks would also not be impacted. The term "vegetable garden" was expanded by an amendment to include a plot of ground where herbs, fruits, flowers, or vegetables are cultivated for human ingestion. The bill passed committee by a vote of 13-1.

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FAC Data Point:

Know More on Building Permit and Impact Fees

Under home rule powers guaranteed through Florida's Constitution, local governments may impose proprietary fees, regulatory fees, and special assessments to pay the cost of providing a facility or service, or to pay the cost of regulating an activity. Building permit fees and impact fees are both a type of regulatory fee.

According to the [Local Government Financial Information Handbook](#) produced by the State Legislature, "Two principles guide the application and use of regulatory fees. The fee should not exceed the regulated activity's cost and is generally required to be applied solely to the regulated activity's cost for which the fee is imposed." While building permit fees are a more straightforward, application-driven fee, impact fees are charges against new developments to provide for capital facilities' costs resulting from such growth. Impact fees are currently governed through section [163.31801](#), Florida Statutes.

For county by county data on the revenue from building permit and impact fee, [click here](#).

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