FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
All About Florida

67 Counties. 67 Communities.

ONE FLORIDA

2026 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

December 2-4

Sawgrass Marriott

Ponte Vedra Florida

St. Johns County




AGRICULTURE & RURAL
AFFAIRS

Agriculture & Rural Affairs Committee



CHAIR

Andy Dance

Flagler County



VICE-CHAIR

Russell Melendy

Hardee County



VICE-CHAIR

Sean Parks

Lake County

ROLL CALL



67 Counties. 67 Communities.



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FAC BUSINESS SOLUTIONS PARTNER

Reminder

Only members of the committee can make motions and vote.

However, all commissioners and staff can make comments, ask questions, and debate during the discussion of each action item.

The Charge to Review and Restructure FAC's Guiding Principles

PRESIDENT FLOWERS' DIRECTIVE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE

A full review, front to back

The first comprehensive review and restructuring of the Guiding Principles in many years, announced by President Flowers at the June Annual Conference.

Commissioners leading the work

A Select Committee of county commissioners and staff from across the state, formally appointed by the President.

WHAT GUIDING PRINCIPLES ARE

Enduring policy, not session positions

The long-term foundation that holds while individual positions evolve year to year.

The lens for advocacy

FAC uses to evaluate legislation and communicate county priorities.

ARA 02 – Fiscally Constrained County Definition

Submitted by Columbia County

Proposal

Amend s. 218.67(1), F.S., to raise the fiscally constrained county threshold from $5 million to $10 million in revenue per mill.

Key Points

- A county raising $10 million or less per mill would qualify, regardless of rural area of opportunity (RAO) status.
- The change reaches the fiscally constrained distribution, offset appropriations, and program funding tied to the designation.
- Gives RAO-dependent counties an independent, value-based path to qualify; no new county action required.

Staff Notes:

- Currently, 29 counties qualify, and the $5 million threshold has not changed since 2006. Highlands and Putnam exceed it and qualify only through RAO designation.
- The Senate advanced the $10 million threshold in 2025 and 2026, each time paired with removing the RAO pathway; both stalled in the House.

ARA 03 – Clearer Statutory Definition of the Term Rural

Submitted by Marion County

Proposal

Amend s. 288.0656(2)(e), F.S., to recognize rural unincorporated communities in counties that are not rural as a whole.

Key Points

- The board of county commissioners maps the community by ordinance using whole census blocks.
- The community must lie outside any urban service area, fall below a housing density threshold (draft: 200 units per square mile), and carry rural land use designations.
- Qualifying communities become eligible for REDI programs, match waivers, and possible inclusion in a rural area of opportunity.

Staff Notes:

- Currently, Florida has no single definition of rural. The REDI definition turns mainly on county population (75,000 or fewer, or 125,000 if contiguous to a rural county).
- In nonrural counties, only small cities and federal enterprise communities with an agricultural employment base and economic distress can qualify.
- Optional for counties; no prior FAC statement.

ARA 04 – Voluntary Special Assessments on Ag-Zoned Land

Submitted by Marion County

Proposal

Amend s. 125.01(1)(r), F.S., to allow special assessments on agriculturally classified land when property owners voluntarily request them for infrastructure that benefits them.

Key Points

- Adds a third exception to the 2023 prohibition on county special assessments on agricultural land.
- Agricultural parcels in the benefit area could share the cost of road paving, drainage, and street lighting.
- Applies only when a neighborhood or group of property owners requests the assessment.

Staff Notes:

- Currently, agricultural parcels cannot be assessed, and their share cannot be shifted to neighbors, so projects stall.
- Marion County reports 11 road projects that cannot proceed and two canceled after successful petitions.
- Since 2016, the Legislature has steadily expanded protections for agricultural land from assessments.

FTA 06 – Fiscally Constrained Distribution Formula CROSS CLAIM

Submitted by Lafayette County

Proposal

Update the s. 218.67, F.S., distribution to fiscally constrained counties with an enhanced allocation and modernized distribution factors.

Key Points

- Currently, distribution of the allocation is based on two factors(unchanged since 2006): the ***relative revenue raising capacity factor*** and the ***local effort factor***.
- Requests a change in the distribution's sole source from communications services tax to sales tax.
- The current factors would be replaced with two new factors: The ***contribution to revenue factor*** and the ***personal income factor.***

Staff Notes:

- Fiscally constrained counties are counties entirely within a RAO or where a 1-mill levy would raise no more than $5 million in annual tax revenue.
- Same language as CS/SB 110 (2025 legislation which passed in the Florida Senate) is proposed.
- CS/SB 110 language from 2025 limits use: 50% public safety, 30% infrastructure, 20% any public purpose.

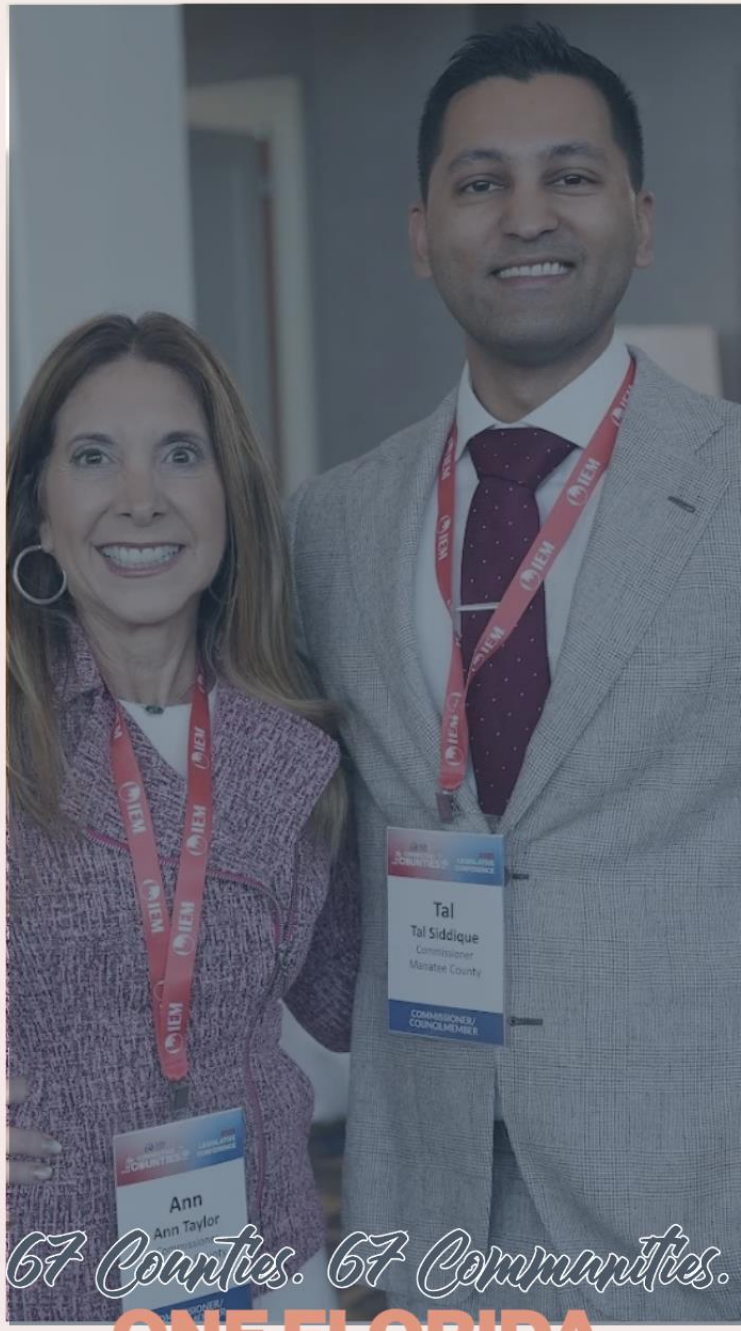
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2ND

FAC WELCOME RECEPTION

5:30 - 6:30 PM

Lagoon Pool / Gator Club

Sponsored by: CONSENSUS COMMUNICATIONS



Closing Breakfast

Friday, December 4 from 8:30 - 10:30 AM

Champions D-E

Be sure to stay for Closing Breakfast for the 2027 calendar reveal and adoption of the 2027 Legislative Action Plan.



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3RD

Committee Meeting:

FINANCE, TAX, & ADMINISTRATION

8:30 - 11:30 AM

Champions D-E

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