

ABATE OF FLORIDA, INC. PALM BEACH CHAPTER



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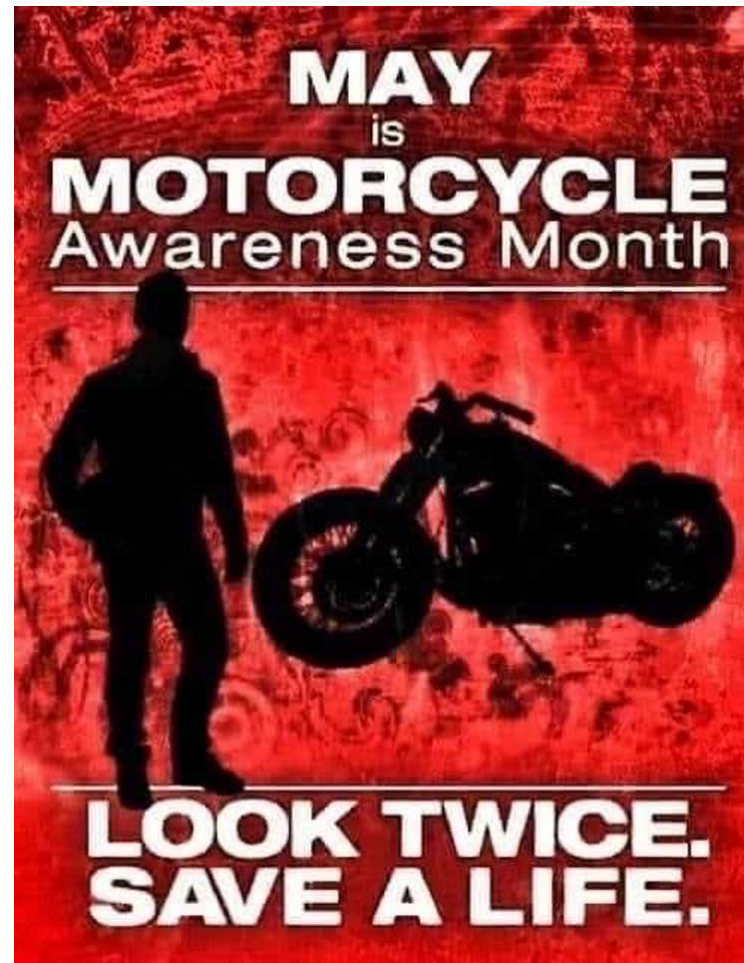


**A MERICAN
B IKERS
A WARENESS
M ONTH
E DUCATION**

**NEXT CHAPTER
MEETING
CANCELLED
May 17**

**CHECK TWICE
FOR MOTORCYCLES**

**LET THOSE
WHO RIDE
DECIDE!**



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Palm Beach Chapter
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Editor's Update

Dan "Slo Motion" Henderson

EDITORIAL GUIDELINES

You are encouraged to submit letters about ABATE related to events, articles, photographs, commentaries, etc. Please do not submit slanderous nor accusing letters, profanity nor nudity. Abate of Florida, Inc., will not accept any advertising that discriminates against any type of motorcyclist

Fifteen days? It has been three months of quarantine! It has cost us so far one State and three Chapter meetings. The Thunder Beach Spring Rally has been canceled in favor of the Autumn Rally. Leesburg Bikefest was rescheduled to November. Locally Nam Knights Rock n Roll was announced and cancelled on Facebook. Palm Beach Harley hasn't had any events and limited hours. While bike nights in country have been rare of late, there have been none during the quarantine. The UBCPB canceled their open houses, recently they did a couple of rides and AOA North had an open house. Some things are starting to be re-opened but with all the safeguards, like social distancing and the new fashion accessory Facemasks - have you noticed everyone is making them in all kinds of styles with designs? I'm still wondering why there is a toilet tissue shortage, was COVID-19 giving people the runs? So will June return to normal?

"Doc and the State Board have decided that starting June 1st, all Chapters can resume normal meetings and events. Since more and more areas in Florida are being opened by Gov. DeSantis, we have decided to let the Chapters return to regular meetings and having events again. **There is a possibility that some of the venues where Chapters meetings are held may not be fully opened. So check with your host location and be ready to make any alternate arrangements if needed.**

I look forward to seeing you in St. Augustine in June."
Scribe State VP (see more on page 5)



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ABATE of Florida, Inc. Mission Statement

WHO WE ARE

We are a non-profit organization of motorcycle enthusiasts from all walks of life. We lobby and educate the government and the general public to promote motorcycling in a safe and positive image. We endeavor to enlist the cooperation and participation of all organizations and individuals that share a similar interest in preserving our American tradition of FREEDOM. We promote motorcycle safety, training, & political awareness. We ARE NOT A CLUB NOR A GANG. We fund our work through events, toy runs, poker runs, campouts, and other motorcycle activities. We are your neighbors & friends who work, pay taxes, and get involved with our community. We serve and support our country and believe in freedom. We use all legal means to protect our rights without infringing on the rights of others. We are Pro-choice NOT anti-helmet, it is up to you to decide.

OUR GOALS

To become a powerful and viable political force in legislative matters concerning the motorcyclist.
To promote the safe riding habits without infringing on individual freedoms.
To motivate the bikers to write letters to legislators before, during, and after the legislative session.
To furnish a newsletter to keep all bikers informed in regards to upcoming legislation.

MEMBERSHIP

When you become a member of ABATE OF FLORIDA, INC. you are helping make a difference in the ongoing mission to protect your right to ride and enjoy the motorcycle of your choice, your choice of riding apparel, and when and where you can ride a motorcycle. These are issues that are real and present in today's "protect yourself from yourself" political environment. This holds true for all levels of government. There will always be those who see our love for motorcycling as a negative and will try any means to control and if possible prohibit motorcycle use.

On the local level our members get out the vote and support candidates who are sympathetic to our issues. We also will endeavor to lobby local governments whenever there are issues that need to be addressed, affecting local motorcycle use, ownership, and any discrimination that may result from said use of ownership.

At the state level we have a paid registered lobbyist who regularly visits our state capital in Tallahassee to lobby our legislators on the issues concerning the motorcycling public in Florida. He also finds reliable House and Senate sponsors for the bills we support. On the national level we are aligned with Motorcycle Riders Foundations (MRF), and the National Coalition of Motorcyclists (NCOM), along with several other international motorcycle rights organizations (MRO's).

As one can see we have our ear to the ground and our resolve tempered like steel. As Americans we have had it demonstrated to us time and again the vigilance is armor of free men and women. We shall not let the armor rust or weaken. With your support we can re-enforce and strengthen the armor for now and generations to come.

What else do you get with your membership? All members receive with their paid membership, the Membership Card, Event Discounts and Updates, Voting Privileges, Free Newsletter Classified Advertisements, a Chapter Newsletter, and a free \$4,000 Accidental Death or Dismemberment Insurance Policy from the American Income Life Insurance Company.

Memberships are open to anyone 18 years of age or older, no matter what type of motorcycle you ride, if any at all! We welcome all riders—in clubs, associations, independents, and sport riders to join us.

EDITOR UPDATE from page 3

So it seems ABATE of FL Inc. is looking for things back to normal for June. We have just received official word that the City of St. Augustine will open all facilities June 1st. So the State meeting will be there June 13. With that we hope to have our Chapter meeting June 21, waiting to be sure the VFW Post will be able to host it. The UBCPB has resumed its' Friday night Open Houses for June. Palm Beach Harley has an empty event calendar. I haven't seen much on Facebook on local bike nights or whether they are back on.

On the back cover you see that the June 13 Soaked and Sore Ass Run from Clearwater is on with a backup destination if the Keys aren't open. June 14 has the Ride 4 Life run from Pompano to Lucky Cole's in Ochopee FL. June 15 is the annual National Ride to Work Day. Usually mid June is Laconia Rally but it is rescheduled for August 22-30.

UPCOMING Event Schedule

Friday June 5 Black Piston's Open House

Sat. June 6 AOA South FL Memorial GBNF 1%ers

Sun. June 7 Wings of Gold MC Ft. Lauderdale Party

Friday June 12 AOA WPB Open House

Saturday June 13 ABATE of FL Inc State Meeting St. Augustine

Saturday June 13 Soaked and sore Ass Poker Run Clearwater to Keys or St Augustine

Saturday June 13 St. Michael's Legion Backyard BBQ 1401 Allendale Rd Suite A1 West Palm Beach

Sat. June 13 Midnight Club Reapers MC Annual

Sunday June 14 Ride 4 Life Pompano to Lucky Cole's Ochopee

Monday June 15 National Ride to Work Day

Friday June 19 States MC Lake Worth Open House

Sat. June 20 USMV MC South Broward Annual

3rd Sunday June 21 — Palm Beach Chapter Meeting ABATE of FL. Inc. 11:30 am V.F.W. Post 4143 located at 2404 Broadway, Riviera Beach 561-844-5718. From I 95 exit Blue Heron Blvd. go east to Broadway (Federal Hwy., US- 1) turn right, go south 1 block the V.F.W. is on the east side. Look for the flag. Breakfast will be served 9:00 AM 'til Noon

Thurs. June 25 Turboz Custom Cycles Bike Night 7-10 PM Ralph's Stand Up Bar Jupiter

Friday June 26- Lone Legion Brotherhood Open House

REMINDER: EVERY Sat. night Fly n Wheels Open House

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OUR NEWSLETTERS are best viewed at palmbeach.abateflorida.com as most timely (by the first of month), in full color, and with active Internet links to stories, etc., of interest. And for us with older eyes, can be zoomed in without magnifying glasses. We do need our advertisers, donations and more members to be able print and distribute more copies to the county for motorcyclists to be aware of the issues facing us. So please join in and let us know of good places to put them in. Issues can be mailed to members if no Internet access. Non-members can buy a subscription for \$20 a year but the other two methods are faster as it takes more time and cost to get mailings done.

Laconia Motorcycle Week®

Rescheduled for August 22-30

LACONIA, New Hampshire, April 29, 2020: Progressive Laconia Motorcycle Week has officially been postponed to August 22-30, 2020. The announcement was made shortly after the Laconia City Council unanimously decided to reschedule the rally in keeping with the governor's mid-May extension of the state's stay-at-home order. The consensus was that June was too early for a gathering of tens of thousands of people in Weirs Beach and beyond, particularly considering that most visitors travel from out of state.

Organizers are working tirelessly to maintain the look, feel and logistics of the rally by reaching out to vendors and event hosts in an effort to reschedule the signature events that make the world's oldest motorcycle rally so popular, as evidenced by the millions of dollars it pumps into the state's economy. Already, New Hampshire Motor Speedway has announced that the 97th Annual Loudon Classic will be moved to August 29th, continuing its tradition of closing out the week. The rally traffic plan will stay the same, with Lakeside Avenue closed to motorcycles only, centerline parking and serving as home to Rally Headquarters for the duration of the 9-day event.

Says Deputy Director, Jennifer Anderson, "We know these are unusual times and are doing everything possible to make this year's rally the best it can be within the parameters of ever-changing health and safety guidelines. We'd like to thank local businesses and the city of Laconia and town of Meredith for their commitment to ensuring this historic spring event endures. In our 97-year history, this is certainly a first. But, as riders, circumstance has given us the opportunity to experience August in New Hampshire, when the state is in full bloom and the warmth of summer is in the air."

Stay tuned for event updates over the next several weeks as the rescheduled 97th Progressive Laconia Motorcycle Week takes shape. Any/all updates will be posted to LaconiaMCWeek.com, through their e-newsletter and on all LaconiaMCWeek social media channels.

Laconia Motorcycle Week® gives great appreciation to all of our sponsors, especially our Presenting Sponsors: Progressive, AMSOIL, and Team Motorcycle as well as the State of New Hampshire for their large financial support of our rally each year.

"Laconia - where rallies were invented"

<https://laconiamcweek.com/>

.....
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 : Beach Elections Site - put in your address and get ALL your Election
 : Information and look under My Districts for your representatives.
 : In these sidebars Underlined District # , names link in the online version.
 :

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

DAN "SLOW-MOTION" HENDERSON



PALM BEACH Co. FL House of Representatives

D81 Tina Scott Polsky (D)
850-717-5081 Tallahassee
561-470-2086 Boca/Belle Glade

D82 Mary Lynn Magar (R)
850-717-5082 Tallahassee
772-545-3481 Hove Sound

D85 Rich Roth (R)
850-717-5085 Tallahassee
561-625-5176 Palm Bch Garden

D86 Matt Willhite (D)
850-717-5086 Tallahassee
561-791-4071(2) WPB

D87 David Silvers (D)
850-717-5085 Tallahassee
561-352-4824 West Palm Beach

D88 Al Jacquet (D)
850-717-5088 Tallahassee
561-650-6846 West Palm Bch

D89 Mike Caruso (R)
850-717-5089 Tallahassee
561-750-2396 Boca Raton

D90 Joseph A. Casello (D)
850-717-5090 Tallahassee
561-374-7850 Boynton Bch

D91 Emily Slosberg (D)
850-717-5087 Tallahassee
561-496-5940 Delray Beach

BACKROOM BRIEFING: 'REAL' OR 'IN PERSON' May 7, Jim Turner, Dara Kam

Weekly political notes from The News
Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE --- Court pro-
ceedings conducted by video can have
unexpected glitches, as evidenced by
the sound of a toilet flushing during a
U.S. Supreme Court hearing on
Wednesday.

Audio clips of the flushing
sound drew as much --- or more ---
attention than the court's history-
making long distance proceeding.

But nothing so dramatic trans-
pired during an eight-day trial in a
high-stakes Florida voting-rights law-
suit that wrapped up this week.

U.S. District Judge Robert Hin-
kle, lawyers and witnesses participat-
ed in the trial by video, while other
people were allowed to listen over the
phone.

Sure, there were a few hiccups
in the lawsuit over a Florida statute
that requires felons to pay "legal finan-
cial obligations" to be eligible to vote.

Dogs could occasionally be
heard barking. Echoing caused by law-
yers forgetting to turn off their micro-
phones caused temporary disruptions.
Video streams froze, prompting the
judge to remind participants to refresh
their computer screens.

But overall, things went

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smoothly, according to Hinkle, a senior judge who's been on the bench in Florida's Northern District for nearly 24 years.

"I don't think I've lost a thing in the process," despite not being in the same room as participants in the trial, Hinkle said Tuesday. "I've been able to see the witnesses and hear all of the testimony. I think the outcome will be exactly what it was, if we had been able to try the case in a traditional manner."

Until COVID-19 caused courts to nix most in-person proceedings, Hinkle was unaware that the federal court system has its own video-conferencing platform. But in the era of social distancing, the judge --- who confessed he isn't a technical guru --- and participants in the case from as far away as Utah adapted.

"There have been occasions when it went a little slower, but there also have been occasions where it probably went a little faster," the judge observed Tuesday.

Hinkle pointed out that people "trying to talk over one another" caused a few hitches.

"The video equipment doesn't deal with that very well, but neither does a real trial," he noted. "I shouldn't say a 'real' trial. Neither does an 'in-person' trial."

'I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW THE GUY' Gov. Ron DeSantis said he still would have appointed Gregory Tony as sheriff of Broward County last year, but he put distance between himself and the embattled lawman on Monday.

"It's not like he's my sheriff. I didn't even know the guy. It's not like he was a political ally of mine," DeSantis told reporters at the Capitol.

DeSantis added that he liked that Tony came from "real tough upbringing," played football at Florida State University and became a "great" law enforcement officer.

"So, he's gone through a lot of background investigations up to this point as well," DeSantis said. "And, and it seemed like he had the leadership, and people have been very pleased. I mean, the people I talked to in Broward have been pleased with what he's doing. That's ultimately a decision that the people in Broward can make. It's not going to be anything I'm going to be getting involved in."

Tony is drawing attention after the Florida Bulldog news site reported that the sheriff, as a 14-year-old in 1993, shot and killed an 18-year-old in their Philadelphia neighborhood. Tony has said the action was in self-defense. But it's become a local election issue because he didn't disclose the incident on an application to be a Coral Springs police officer before getting hired in 2005.

Days after his 2019 inauguration, DeSantis appointed Tony as sheriff, saying Broward County residents "deserve accountable, competent leaders who can safeguard our communities."

"Gregory Tony will be a champion for Broward County who will work tirelessly to safeguard our schools and our streets while ensuring accountability within the sheriff's office," DeSantis said in a Jan. 11, 2019, news release.

The release highlighted Tony as a former Coral Springs police sergeant and noted he would serve as Broward County's first African-American sheriff.

DeSantis tapped Tony to replace Scott Israel, who was suspended by the governor --- and ultimately removed from office by the Florida Senate. DeSantis accused Israel of "neglect of duty" and "incompetence" related to mass shootings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

Israel is running for his old job this year and is trying to unseat Tony.

On Monday, DeSantis noted that his office did a background check on Tony. But since Tony was not charged in the Philadelphia shooting, a record didn't show up.

"It's like if someone were to punch me and I punch him back, and the police said, 'You're self-defense.' Would that be something I disclose?" DeSantis said. "Obviously, a fatality is different. But I think it seems like he was in a very rough neighborhood and was trying to defend his family. So I don't think it would have because it was self-defense. I don't think it would have made a difference. But it did not come up in the background check, because he had never been charged or had ever had anything show up on the record."

RUNNING NEAR EMPTY Economic hits keep coming as the wait continues for an update from the state Revenue Estimating Conference about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on tax revenues.

A pair of transportation-related reports, highlighted this week by Tallahassee-based Florida TaxWatch, added to the expected bleak expectations.

Traffic volume on the Florida Turnpike system dropped 19.4 percent between Feb. 29 and March 27 from the same period a year earlier. Traffic volume on March 27 was 51 percent below the same day in 2019.

Financially, the turnpike was off \$28 million for the month, a 26 percent drop. The Sunshine Skyway was down 30 percent.

"April will be much worse for toll revenues based on these trends," TaxWatch said in a news release. "Furthermore, if March sales tax revenues show a similar decline, state revenues could be hundreds of millions of dollars below previous (pre-COVID-19) estimates."

TWEET OF THE WEEK: "Coach Don Shula leaves behind an incomparable legacy as the NFL's winningest coach and as the one who put Miami sports on the map. ... We will remember the great feats, like the only perfect season in NFL history, but also the qualities --- hard work, character, decency --- that made Don Shula not just a great coach, but also a great man." --- Gov. Ron DeSantis (@GovRonDeSantis) on the death of former Miami Dolphins Coach Don Shula.

JUDGE SIGNALS HE WILL PAVE WAY FOR FELON VOTING May 6, Dara Kam

TALLAHASSEE --- A federal judge said Wednesday he intends to lay out a process for the state to allow voting by felons who cannot afford to pay court-ordered "legal financial obligations," after Florida elections officials failed to develop a procedure.

U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle's comments came at the end of an eight-day trial in a voting-rights lawsuit challenging a state law that requires felons who have served their time in prison to pay legal financial obligations --- fees, fines, costs and restitution --- to be eligible to cast ballots.

The law, passed by the Republican-controlled Legislature last year, was aimed at carrying out a 2018 constitutional amendment restoring voting rights to felons "who have completed all terms of their sentences, including parole and probation."

Hinkle left no doubt about how he intends to rule, pointing to a decision by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals that upheld a preliminary injunction he issued in October in favor of 17 plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

In the Feb. 19 ruling, a three-judge panel of the Atlanta-based appeals court found that requiring all felons to pay financial obligations violates equal protection rights guaranteed under the 14th Amendment because it "punishes those who cannot pay more harshly than those

who can.

After the appeals-court ruling, Hinkle granted class certification in the lawsuit, meaning that hundreds of thousands of convicted felons could have their voting rights restored when the case is concluded.

“Assume that the (preliminary injunction) order that was entered is going to apply to everybody in the class. I don’t think I’m going to surprise you. I’m going to follow the 11th Circuit decision,” the judge said Wednesday.

In the preliminary injunction, Hinkle ruled it is unconstitutional to deny the right to vote to felons who are “genuinely unable to pay” financial obligations associated with their convictions. The judge’s October injunction also ordered the state to come up with an administrative process to allow voting by felons with outstanding financial obligations who can’t afford to pay the debts.

This week, Florida Division of Elections Director Maria Matthews told Hinkle her office has not finalized such a plan.

During closing arguments Wednesday, Mohammad Jazil, an attorney representing Gov. Ron DeSantis and Secretary of State Laurel Lee, asked the judge for more time to make a case.

“I would ask the court to indulge the state in an opportunity to lay out a more detailed plan of how a remedy could be put forward of the legal financial obligations part, statewide,” Jazil said, eliciting a mild rebuke from Hinkle.

“So, you filed hundreds of pages of briefs. You’ve had a preliminary injunction hearing, summary injunction hearing, seven days of trial, opportunity to make closing argument, and that’s not due process. You need more time,” Hinkle said.

“I’m simply asking the court for a short indulgence, at least a short paper from the state highlighting what we think would or wouldn’t be workable,” Jazil said.

The state “has thoughts on the issue,” the administration’s lawyer told the judge.

“The state has not crystallized those issues, so I would just like to preserve an opportunity to at least put something short ... on paper, because some of this would go to the workability of the remedy,” Jazil said, adding that he wanted to consult with Oren Rosenthal, a lawyer for Miami-Dade County Supervisor of Elections Christina White, who is one of the defendants in the lawsuit.

But “the time to confer with Mr. Rosenthal was some time ago,” Hinkle said.

“I’m not going to set up additional briefing. I’m going to make a ruling. I expect it to be a whole lot easier to administer than anything you’ve dealt with so far. That may be a bit of a bold statement, and when I write it down, I may find that it’s not as easy as I thought it might be. I certainly don’t think it’s easy, but I hope to make it better for you. I hope it’s more administrable,” the judge said.

National voting-rights groups maintain that the 2019 Florida law linking finances with voting rights amounts to an unconstitutional “poll tax.” The Republican governor, meanwhile, has fiercely defended the statute, saying that it properly carries out constitutional amendment.

But since the trial began on April 27, testimony from county elections officials, clerks of court, felons and scholars spotlighted the difficulty in ascertaining whether people who are convicted of felonies owe money. Court records, especially in older cases, can be contradictory or incomplete. Databases are difficult to navigate. People sometimes have to pay to obtain the records.

Under pressure from plaintiffs' lawyers in the days leading up to the trial, attorneys representing the DeSantis administration released a procedure for identifying felons who had outstanding financial obligations. Plaintiffs' lawyers maintain the process is inadequate and accused the state of intentionally waiting until the last minute to release the details.

The revised plan instructs state elections workers to credit all payments felons have made --- including fees to collections agencies or other third parties --- toward the total amount assessed at the time of sentencing. If the payments equal or surpass the amount assessed at sentencing, the voter is considered eligible, according to the new procedure.

But plaintiffs' lawyers said the revised process is problematic because clerks of court do not always keep records of restitution payments or payments made to collection agencies. Felons may not have to pay restitution to be eligible to vote, if the restitution was not ordered at the time of sentencing, they argued.

"This is a nice idea, but it's an absolutely impossible system," American Civil Liberties Union attorney Julie Ebenstein argued Wednesday. "It's the equivalent to a credit card company telling somebody to figure out what they owe by finding receipts from the last two decades as opposed to checking their statements online."

The plaintiffs also allege that the Florida law discriminates against "returning citizens" who are black because they make up a larger percentage of convicted felons than the general population.

The state, however, argues that lawmakers did not intend to discriminate against African Americans when they drafted the legislation (SB 7066).

Hinkle acknowledged Wednesday "there's no direct evidence of racial animus in anybody's heart in any of this."

But, he added, "there plainly is a racial impact" in the law, because black people comprise a disproportionate amount of the felon population and are more likely to register as Democrats and vote for Democrats.

As an October deadline for Floridians to register to vote in the November elections looms, Hinkle said he intends to rule "in a hurry" on the lawsuit.

"We need to get the case on up to the 11th circuit, assuming again that I don't satisfy everybody," he said. "And, look, if you look at the remedy and you think you've got a better idea and you want to put it in a motion to alter or amend, put it in a motion to alter or amend. Just do it as soon as you can."

ADVANCES: WEEK OF MAY 3, 2020 May 1, NSF Staff

TALLAHASSEE --- Two months. Think about how much life has changed in Florida in two months.

Hundreds of thousands of people have lost jobs. Businesses have shut down. Schools and college campuses have become quiet. Residents have hunkered down at home. And Floridians across the state have become sick and even died.

On Monday, the state will start trying to rebuild an economy that has been devastated by the coronavirus pandemic. Gov. Ron DeSantis is beginning to lift restrictions that were imposed to try to prevent the virus from spreading and conserve medical supplies

Restaurants and retailers outside of hotspots Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties will be able to serve customers Monday, at least on a limited basis. Hospitals and other health-care providers will be able to resume elective procedures. And state parks will reopen to help people get some fresh air.

But myriad questions remain. How fast should Florida lift restrictions? How does the state balance reviving the economy and stemming the spread of the virus? What is the danger of another surge of cases in the future? How long before businesses and workers get back to some sense of normalcy?

Everybody seems to have opinions about the questions. But that doesn't mean there are easy answers.

HAIR SALONS AND BARBER SHOPS REMAIN CLOSED, FOR NOW May 2, Jim Turner

TALLAHASSEE --- Barber shops and hair salons are still on the sidelines as Gov. Ron DeSantis' reopening of select businesses during the coronavirus pandemic begins Monday.

DeSantis laid the foundation for the reopening of personal grooming businesses during a roundtable with barbers and hair stylists in Orlando on Saturday.

But the governor said more consideration of employee and customer safety is needed before he can give the go-ahead for salons and barber shops to turn on the lights again.

"Throughout this whole time, I've said I'd rather get it right than get it fast," DeSantis, joined by Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings, told stylists, barbers and reporters at Ohsooojazzy Hair Salon in Orlando Saturday afternoon. "It doesn't mean we're going to sit on our hands. But we just want to be very thorough about how we're doing it."

The barbers and hair stylists assured the governor they are prepared to increase already stringent sanitation requirements.

"Our biggest thing is we don't want to just keep ourselves safe," Nadine Armstrong-Tarpley, an owner of Ohsooojazzy, told DeSantis. "We love our clients ... so we want to keep them safe."

DeSantis, who set up a task force to come with recommendations to reopen businesses, on Wednesday outlined what he called a step-by-step, three-phase plan that initially allows restaurants and select retailers outside of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties to have outdoor seating and indoor occupancy limited to 25 percent capacity.

The first phase of the reopening also allows hospitals and other health-care providers to conduct elective medical procedures.

However, movie theaters will remain closed, as will bars, gyms and hair salons, and visitors will continue to be prevented from going to hospitals and nursing homes. And while DeSantis said the state won't issue fines, gatherings of 10 or more people will continue to be prohibited.

Demings, who also established a reopening task force, on Friday urged DeSantis to include barber shops and hair salons in phase one.

"They are committed to ensuring that if they are allowed to reopen, consistent with the governor's executive order, that they will do so in a safe manner," Demings told the governor on Saturday. "For me, the guiding principle is to ensure safety first and the economic recovery next. And there is a happy balance between the two that we're attempting to measure up to within this community."

The group of barbers and stylists on Saturday gave DeSantis a variety of precautions they intend to employ to ensure workers and customers are protected from COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

The cosmetologists said they will limit the number of customers inside their shop and try to schedule exclusive times to see clients who are the most vulnerable to COVID-19, such as older adults and individuals with pre-existing medical conditions. The shop owners said

they've already removed items that can be touched, such as candy jars, will advise customers not to handle display products and will upgrade sanitation practices for tools and work stations.

"We have hand sanitizer by the dozens in here. We have a manufacturer here in Orlando that supplies it to us, so it's always readily available," Armstrong-Tarpley said. "We've even gone a step further to order disposable capes so it's never touching again. We have masks in the front, just in case someone doesn't bring one in. We've supplied masks to all of our stylists."

DeSantis, who joked that he hasn't had a haircut since February, said he will propose the safety measures to state cosmetology and barber licensing boards.

"If it vets and it's safe, then I think we have a responsibility to get the 'yes' on this stuff," the governor said.

George Ralls, Orlando Health Orlando Regional Medical Center chief quality officer, said that, while barbers and stylists must wear masks and take additional precautions, customers must also be willing to abide by changes at the businesses.

"We should not come to a salon if we're sick. If you're asked to wash your hands, wash your hands. If you're asked to wear a mask, understand why they're doing that. They're asking you to help protect them so that they can protect this economy and this community," Ralls said.

Friday morning, DeSantis added state parks to the list of sites slated to reopen on Monday.

The state Department of Environmental Protection later noted that the parks would be opened in phases, with about 80 parks being available to the public on a limited basis on Monday.

The parks that open will operate from 8 a.m. to sunset. Beaches that are part of a state park will be available for people to walk, jog, swim and fish, but sunbathing, chairs, canopies or coolers are not allowed.

Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation Secretary Halsey Beshears on Friday said his agency won't count servers and other restaurant employees toward the 25-percent indoor occupancy limit. He also advised restaurant owners to use as much outdoor space as possible under federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention physical-distancing recommendations.

On Saturday, DeSantis reiterated that the state needs to proceed cautiously.

"I mean, our mantra is safe, smart, step-by-step. Be very methodical, data driven. But having healthy small businesses is important to be able to fight any health problems because, if the society is not functioning, our ability to deal with this is not going to be as strong," he said.

JUDGE CLEARS WAY FOR CHALLENGE TO GUN LAW May 4, Jim Saunders

TALLAHASSEE --- A federal judge has refused to dismiss the National Rifle Association's challenge to a 2018 state law that blocked people under age 21 from buying guns.

Attorney General Ashley Moody's office argued that Chief U.S. District Judge Mark Walker should dismiss the case, which challenges a law that the Legislature and then-Gov. Rick Scott approved after a gunman killed 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland.

But Walker, in an eight-page decision Friday, denied the state's request to dismiss the

case, which is scheduled to go to trial in January. Walker made clear that he was not ruling on the NRA's underlying arguments that the law violates constitutional 2nd Amendment and equal-protection rights --- only that the case should be allowed to move forward.

"It is important to keep in mind the narrow issue before the court at this stage of the proceedings. This court is not asked to, and does not, decide whether (the law) is constitutional. Rather, the question is whether plaintiffs' complaint contains 'enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face,'" he wrote, quote a legal precedent.

The law, which the Legislature rushed to pass after the Marjory Stoneman Douglas massacre, says that people under age 21 cannot buy firearms, including rifles and shotguns. A federal law already banned licensed firearms dealers from selling handguns to people under 21, and the state law broadened that to also prevent private sales of handguns to people under 21, according to court documents.

"Consequently, 18-to-20-year-old adult citizens in Florida are now prohibited from purchasing any firearm from any source," Walker wrote.

In a Jan. 21 motion to dismiss the case, attorneys in Moody's office argued that the measure "follows a long tradition of laws conditioning the purchase of firearms on the purchaser's having obtained the traditional age of majority --- 21 years of age." Also, the motion said that while the law prevents people ages 18 to 20 from buying guns, it doesn't prevent them from having guns that, for example, they received as gifts.

"Florida's age qualification is reasonably calculated to advance the state's interest because it applies only to the purchase of firearms," the motion said. "Any law-abiding person over the age of 18 may gift, loan, or allow the use of a firearm to an otherwise qualified person over the age of 18, who may in turn keep and use that firearm for any lawful purpose, including home defense, hunting, sport and practice shooting. The sale-gift distinction is aimed at a uniquely dangerous problem --- the purchase of firearms by 18-to-20-year-olds absent the judgment of a parent, guardian, or other law-abiding adult that the individual is prepared for the responsibility of gun ownership."

But in a memorandum filed April 17 opposing the motion to dismiss, NRA attorneys described the law as "draconian" and said it infringes on the constitutional rights of people ages 18 to 20 to keep and bear arms. Also, NRA attorneys contended that the law is not the "least restrictive alternative to achieve a compelling government interest."

"The ban prevents the ability of all 18-to-20-year-olds to purchase firearms to exercise their Second Amendment rights --- even for self-defense in the home," the NRA memorandum said. "If the compelling interest is limiting gun violence on school campuses, the ban is not the least restrictive means because the ban encompasses all 18-to-20-year-old adult Floridians, including those who no longer have any connection to school campuses. Nor have defendants demonstrated the unavailability of less restrictive alternatives."

Former Marjory Stoneman Douglas student Nikolas Cruz was 19 at the time he was charged with using a legally purchased semi-automatic rifle to kill 17 students and faculty members at the school. Cruz continues to await trial.

The NRA filed the lawsuit immediately after the law was passed in 2018, but the case has moved slowly, at least in part because of a dispute about an NRA attempt to allow two opponents of the law to participate in the case anonymously --- an idea that ultimately was dropped, with a named plaintiff, Radford Fant, joining the case.

While Walker denied the state's request to dismiss the lawsuit Friday, he agreed to a

request to dismiss Moody as a defendant. Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Rick Swearingen remains a defendant.

WEEKLY ROUNDUP: GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS May 1, Ana Ceballos

TALLAHASSEE --- The curtain has been partially raised.

After weeks of Florida being shut down because of coronavirus concerns, Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday unveiled the first phase of his plan to restart the state's economy.

Places like restaurants and retail stores outside of Southeast Florida can start reopening on Monday at limited capacity. Many other businesses --- including hair salons, bars, nightclubs, bowling alleys and theme parks --- will remain shut for the time being.

Phase one of the plan was rolled out a day after DeSantis flew to Washington, D.C. to meet with President Donald Trump. The visit also landed the governor in a nationally televised Oval Office briefing with the president, a moment he used to tout Florida's response to the pandemic and reject criticism of his leadership during the crisis.

Upon his return to Tallahassee, DeSantis' plan had the backing of the president. The governor's office said in a news release that Trump was "very supportive of Florida's efforts" to reopen, making the point after the president criticized Georgia Republican Gov. Brian Kemp for rushing to reopen.

Looking forward, DeSantis said he hopes the next phases of his plan will happen within weeks of each other. But he maintained he would embrace a "deliberate, methodical" approach to each step that would include monitoring hospital capacity and health-care resources.

While the next steps have not been announced, recommendations issued by a task force offered a glimpse into what Florida could look like as it emerges from the coronavirus shutdown.

LIFE IN THE AGE OF CORONAVIRUS DeSantis' Re-Open Florida Task Force on Thursday released a blueprint for reopening the economy, though DeSantis is not bound to follow the recommendations.

For the second phase, the task force recommended that the state allow people to resume non-essential travel and permit restaurants, gyms, movie theaters, concert halls, bowling alleys, auditoriums and casinos to operate at 75 percent capacity, while keeping large sporting-event venues at 50 percent capacity.

Theme parks --- a critical part of Florida's tourism industry --- "may consider re-opening with capacity limits, strict social distancing and proper measures to clean and disinfect," under the phase-two recommendations from the task force, whose members included executives from Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort.

DeSantis has prevented people from renting vacation properties because of concerns visitors would bring the coronavirus into Florida. The task force would still impose restrictions on vacation rentals during the second phase. For example, hosts would only be allowed to rent to Florida residents and would be banned from accepting reservations from international travelers or from visitors who live in cities that are known hotspots for COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus.

Hotels, motels, resorts and time-share projects would not be subject to the same restrictions as vacation rentals.

By the time the third phase comes around, the task force recommended, local governments should return to in-person meetings after being allowed to meet in conference calls and video conferences to prevent spread of the virus.

Also in the third phase, the task force recommended allowing bars, gyms, restaurants and nightclubs to operate at full capacity, theme parks to return to normal operations with “limited social distancing protocols” and vulnerable people to be allowed to “resume public interactions while practicing social distancing.”

Restaurants should also throw away paper menus after customers touch them and nail salons should not allow magazines or newspapers in service areas in phase three, the task force recommended.

VOTING RIGHTS CLASH A federal trial that could determine whether hundreds of thousands of Floridians can cast ballots in this year’s presidential election kicked off Monday and continued through the week, as lawyers battled over a state law requiring felons who’ve served their time behind bars to pay “legal financial obligations” before voting.

The clash over voting rights is rooted in Republican lawmakers’ interpretation of a 2018 constitutional amendment aimed at restoring voting rights to felons “who have completed all terms of their sentence, including parole or probation.” The amendment excluded people “convicted of murder or a felony sexual offense.”

In a partisan vote last year, the GOP-controlled Legislature interpreted the amendment to require felons to pay court-ordered “legal financial obligations” --- fees, fines, costs and restitution --- to be eligible to vote.

National voting-rights groups challenged the law, arguing that it amounted to an unconstitutional “poll tax” that would prevent “returning citizens” from casting ballots.

Sean Morales-Doyle, one of the attorneys for the plaintiffs, branded the Florida statute as an extension of the state’s 150-year practice of suppressing voting rights of felons, blacks and poor people.

But Mohammad Jazil, a lawyer who represents DeSantis and Secretary of State Laurel Lee, said the law carries out the words --- and the intent --- of the constitutional amendment, which appeared on the 2018 ballot as Amendment 4.

STORY OF THE WEEK: Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday unveiled the first step in reviving Florida’s economy amid the coronavirus pandemic, announcing that restaurants and many retail stores outside of Southeast Florida can start reopening Monday with limited capacity.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: “It’s time for me to be heard. It’s time for people to see the change in me. People can change, and live a different life, do better, become an example, a mentor, all of that. I believe I have accomplished that.” --- Curtis Bryant, a plaintiff in a federal trial that challenges a Florida law designed to carry out Amendment 4, which was aimed at restoring voting rights of felons who have completed their sentences.

BACKROOM BRIEFING: LETTING HIS HAIR DOWN April 30, Jim Turner, Ana Ceballos

TALLAHASSEE --- Frustrated that he needs a haircut and his baby can’t see her grandparents, Gov. Ron DeSantis this week gave a glimpse of how the coronavirus pandemic is affecting life in the governor’s mansion.

DeSantis, a father of three who has been traveling for his job, said the rest of his family has not left the mansion in Tallahassee since February --- with the exception of First Lady Casey DeSantis going to the hospital to give birth to Mamie in late March.

"Since she was born, and just in the last couple of weeks, it has occurred to me that none of my family has seen her. She has not been held by a single person in any of our families," the governor said.

"The little things have really had an impression on me," he added.

As the governor began to lay out his plan to reopen Florida's economy, in an approach he says is data-driven and "measured," he highlighted personal anecdotes in a show of empathy for hunkered-down Floridians.

"If there was some magic thing where I could flip the switch and say everything is fine, I would do it, trust me. It just doesn't work that way," he said. "We need to get there, and I would like to be in a situation where her (Mamie's) grandparents can come see her."

His family was not the only thing on the governor's mind. His hair is also a point of frustration.

"I need it (haircut) worse than anything," he joked. "I haven't had a haircut since February."

Although he wants a haircut, the governor on Wednesday maintained a prohibition on close-contact services like haircuts, styling or shaving.

As the governor tried to show solidarity with Floridians with scruffy hair, he took a jab at some reporters' hairdos.

"It's really interesting how some of these talking heads on TV, particularly the ones that don't want anyone to go back to work, how come they always look so clean-shaved? They always look so nice and kept. How does that possibly happen if they're not allowed to get a haircut? Gee, I wonder what they're doing," he said.

A 'GRIM' PICTURE Calls from the political left side are growing for lawmakers to hold a special session to revisit the state's \$93.2 billion budget for the fiscal year that starts July 1.

On Tuesday, the left-of-center Florida Policy Institute said in a conference call that \$4.6 billion allocated to Florida from a federal stimulus package, even combined with state reserves, won't be "nearly enough" to cover spending incurred combating the coronavirus.

"As unemployment skyrockets and Florida's critical tourism industry sustains unprecedented economic damage --- from our empty theme parks in Orlando, to the decimated cruise industry in Miami, to closed hotels, restaurants, bars and establishments statewide --- the real fiscal picture for this year is grim," Florida Policy Institute CEO Sadaf Knight said. "It is likely most of our sales tax revenue --- which makes up almost 80 percent of Florida's general revenue --- will have dried up for this year. These facts, combined with a 'rainy day' fund regarded as one of the weakest in the nation to weather this coming recession, all leave the Sunshine State in special economic peril."

Holly Bullard, the institute's chief strategy and development officer, added that more federal stimulus will be needed.

"We are likely entering an economic downturn greater than the previous recession, and our state is ill-prepared," Bullard said. "If we fail to receive a heavy influx of additional federal dollars, we believe our economy could enter a tailspin for years to come."

An analysis by the institute pointed in part to a Goldman Sachs estimate that the sports and entertainment, casino, and package-tour sectors of the economy will see consumer

spending drop by 90 percent, while public transit, hotels, restaurants and rental car agencies will see a decline of 75 percent.

The state's financial picture is expected to be clearer when April sales tax revenues are reported in late May, but Republican legislative leaders have said they expect the combination of reserves and federal stimulus dollars to help weather the drop in tax revenues.

During an appearance at the White House just before the institute conference call, DeSantis acknowledged the state is "facing a hit" and will require consumers and travelers to regain confidence as businesses reopen. But, he noted, "fortunately we had billions of dollars in reserve."

WARMING UP FOR GAMES DeSantis hasn't fully tempered his enthusiasm for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers or sports, even while talking about the coronavirus.

At recent press conferences, he's slipped in comments about the Bucs acquiring quarterback Tom Brady and trading for the rights to tight end Rob Gronkowski, reuniting the New England Patriots champions.

DeSantis deemed the WWE an essential service so it could tape events in Orlando before empty arenas. One of his schedules last week noted a call with Major League Baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred.

Also, the governor has tweeted about golfers Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson joining Brady and retired quarterback Peyton Manning in a charity match in May in Florida as providing "sports fans something to look forward to during this difficult time."

But as he moves forward with a plan to revive the economy, DeSantis doesn't know exactly when he and other fans will be able to go to arenas and watch live games.

"So there's going to be a lot of good stuff going on but I don't think we're probably ready to have fans, but I do think, if the trends are good, I think as you get into June, July, I think there is a window to have some fans," DeSantis said Wednesday. "You're not going to have everyone packed in, but man in 90-degree weather in the state of Florida, if you're out there and someone's 10 feet away from you and you want to watch a ballgame or something, you may be able to do that. So, this is something that we're just going to have to do. We'll be driven by the facts, driven by the data. But I think that Major League Baseball coming back, I'm hearing this, I think that that's going to be exciting for a lot of people and I just think that there's going to be a lot of possibilities, so let's just be resourceful and creative."

TWEET OF THE WEEK: "Trump, in Oval Office meeting with FL Gov. Ron DeSantis, suggested DeSantis would be 'cutting off Brazil,' per pool. DeSantis: 'Well, not necessarily.'" --- Wall Street Journal White House reporter Rebecca Ballhaus (@rebeccaballhaus) on Tuesday.

COUNTY OFFICIALS STRUGGLE WITH FELONS' VOTING LAW April 29, Dara Kam

TALLAHASSEE --- County elections workers are "butting our heads against the wall" trying to figure out if convicted felons are eligible to vote under a Florida law that is the subject of a nationally watched trial this week, a Central Florida supervisor of elections told a federal judge on Wednesday.

The law, passed by Republican legislators last year, requires felons who've served their time behind bars to pay court-ordered "legal financial obligations" --- fees, fines, costs and restitution --- to be eligible to vote.

The statute was aimed at carrying out a 2018 constitutional amendment designed to restore voting rights to felons who have completed the terms of their sentences.

But voting-rights groups filed a lawsuit contending that linking finances with voting

rights amounts to an unconstitutional “poll tax.” Gov. Ron DeSantis’ administration, meanwhile, insists that the state law properly carries out the language of the constitutional amendment.

Since the trial began Monday, plaintiffs’ witnesses have laid out a host of problems with the law.

The state lacks a single database where felons, lawyers or elections officials can determine whether people have outstanding court-ordered financial obligations.

County and state databases that do exist often have contradictory or incomplete records. Sentences imposed decades ago can be impossible to track down.

And, without direction from the state Division of Elections, county supervisors of elections are often powerless when felons who want to register to vote seek help.

Potential voters “need a credible, reliable source that they can get information from,” Osceola County Supervisor of Elections Mary Jane Arrington told U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle during Wednesday’s testimony.

“It would be nice if we had a clearinghouse or something like that that could give us this information. But voters or potential voters are lost a lot of times as to where to even begin this process,” she added.

Under a process that has been in place for years, the state Division of Elections verifies that Floridians who register to vote are eligible to cast ballots by checking a variety of court databases. Voters who are not deemed eligible are flagged, and the information is sent to county supervisors of elections, who make final determinations about eligibility and have the authority to remove people from the voting rolls.

Days before the trial began, attorneys representing the DeSantis administration released a procedure for identifying felons who had outstanding financial obligations. Plaintiffs’ lawyers, who pressed the state for the updated procedure, maintain the process is inadequate.

Under the revised plan, state elections workers are supposed to credit all payments felons have made --- including fees to collections agencies or other third parties --- toward the total amount assessed at the time of sentencing. If the payments equal or surpass the amount assessed at sentencing, the voter is considered eligible, according to the new procedure.

But determining who was paid, how much they were paid, and when they were paid can be difficult or impossible to discern, according to Arrington.

Arrington said her office has reached out to collections agencies and court clerks to help people in her county determine whether they had outstanding financial obligations, such as restitution.

“The clerk of the court could not give us the definitive answer. Sometimes they gave us the name of the collection agency that had acquired the debt. When we contacted the collection agency, we got no information, either,” she said.

Arrington said she and her staff advised potential voters to contact the Department of Corrections, seek legal help or reach out to the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, one of the groups that advocated for what appeared as Amendment 4 on the November 2018 ballot.

For now, Arrington’s office has given up trying to help people determine whether they have outstanding court-ordered fees, fines, costs or restitution.

“We’re just butting our heads against the wall,” she said.

One man who sought Arrington’s assistance said he had been convicted of a felony 50 years ago. He could not remember whether any financial obligations were imposed at the time, or if he had paid them, she said. Arrington’s office reached out to the Osceola County clerk of

court on the man's behalf.

"They told us those records were in storage somewhere and they'd have to go hunt them and they weren't real excited about doing that," she said. "So in the end, we told him that he had to determine if he had paid his fines and fees."

Arrington said she did not know if the man ever registered to vote.

"He left that day and we haven't seen him again," Arrington said.

As is the case in most general-election years, elections supervisors have a "tremendous workload increase" exacerbated this spring by social-distancing precautions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the supervisor of elections said.

Arrington also said she would be unable to decide whether someone who wanted to register to vote had the ability to pay outstanding fees and fines.

"I would think you would have to have certain documents. I don't know if I have a right to see those documents. There would be lots of questions," she said.

Electing supervisors throughout Florida need "a lot of" guidance from Secretary of State Laurel Lee's office about how to handle the impact of the state law and the constitutional amendment on voter registration.

"There are 67 of us. There's a good chance we all would be doing it 67 ways," Arrington, who was elected in 2008, said.

In a preliminary injunction issued in October, Hinkle ruled that state cannot deny the right to vote to felons who are "genuinely unable" to pay financial obligations associated with their convictions. The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the injunction, which applied only to the 17 named plaintiffs in the case. Hinkle this month granted class certification to plaintiffs, adding potentially hundreds of thousands of felons to the lawsuit.

Hinkle's October ruling also ordered DeSantis' administration to come up with a process in which felons could try to prove they are unable to pay financial obligations and should be able to vote.

The administration is fiercely defending the law, despite a series of decisions pointing toward a final decision by Hinkle in favor of the plaintiffs.

During Wednesday's testimony, Douglas Bakke, the chief operating officer of the Hillsborough County Clerk of Court's office, said it can take hours for his staff to research decades-old cases to determine whether financial obligations were imposed and if they were paid.

In the 1970s and 1980s, his office used a shoebox to store records of felons' financial payments, Bakke said Wednesday.

More than 100,000 people have been convicted in Hillsborough County over the past decade, according to Bakke, who said his office would be swamped if tens of thousands of people asked for information about their court-ordered financial obligations.

"It would be quite an overwhelming task," he said.

DESANTIS PLAN ALLOWS RESTAURANTS, RETAILERS TO REOPEN April 29, Jim Turner TALLAHASSEE --- Restaurants and many retail stores outside of Southeast Florida can start reopening Monday with limited occupancy as part of the first phase of Gov. Ron DeSantis' economic-recovery effort after the coronavirus caused massive shutdowns.

DeSantis on Wednesday outlined what he described as a step-by-step plan that will allow restaurants outside of Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties to have outdoor seating and occupancy up to 25 percent, with operations complying with physical-distancing guidelines.

The first phase --- following guidance from the White House to governors --- also will allow hospitals and other medical providers to conduct elective procedures.

However, movie theaters will remain closed, as will bars, gyms and hair salons, and visitors will continue to be prevented from going to hospitals and nursing homes. And while DeSantis said the state won't issue fines, gatherings of 10 or more people will continue to be prohibited.

DeSantis did not give a firm timeline for moving into the next phases of reopening the economy, saying the second phase will depend on trends involving hospital occupancy and if there are surges or declines in cases. The state will also look at what other states are doing for businesses, such as barber shops, that require close contact between workers and customers.

"My hope would be each phase we're thinking about weeks, we're not thinking about months," DeSantis told reporters at the Capitol. "If we're making progress, you know, we need to continue to put people back to work in a safe, smart and step-by-step way. But it's going to be data driven."

DeSantis spoke of a need to reduce fear of the virus while highlighting that Florida's outbreak hasn't been as large as some people had initially predicted.

The first phase of reopening excludes heavily populated areas of Southeast Florida, which has by far seen the most cases of COVID-19, the deadly respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus. As of Wednesday morning, the state had 33,193 coronavirus cases and 1,218 deaths --- with nearly 60 percent of the cases in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach.

"We also want public confidence," DeSantis said. "One of the reasons we're going to take a very slow and methodical approach is because we want to make sure we build as much confidence as possible with the general public, and we're also going to be partnering with local communities, which is what we did from the very beginning. We knew the epidemic was going to be different in Southeast Florida, and we work with those counties differently and treated them differently than we would in say Jacksonville or Northeast or Northwest Florida where the epidemic was significantly less."

Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry in a prepared statement said the phased approach "will allow our city and every community in Florida to get back to life as we knew it just months ago."

Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried, the only statewide elected Democrat, said she was "encouraged by this cautious approach."

"I remain concerned about key numbers in the weeks ahead, that testing must be increased and that all data must be accurately reported, both cases and death," Fried said in a prepared statement. "We are all eager to get back to normal, and to do so safely without jeopardizing public health."

Meanwhile, Senate President Bill Galvano, a Bradenton Republican who has resisted calls to rush into a special legislative session to deal with the economic impacts of the virus, said he's confident in Florida's ability to recovery.

"Floridians have shown great patience and sacrifice in tolerating severe economic hardships and many other inconveniences for the good of others during this unprecedented time," Galvano said in a statement after DeSantis' announcement. "While it appears that the worst of this pandemic is behind us, here in Florida we must remain vigilant in order to avoid any setbacks as we work to reopen our state."

DeSantis signaled in recent days that he would allow elective medical procedures to resume. They were halted, at least in part, to try to conserve medical supplies.

Florida Medical Association President Ronald Giffler said Wednesday he was “pleased” with DeSantis allowing the procedures to return.

“This is welcomed news as many patients have had to delay much needed treatment and care due to (a DeSantis executive order) prohibiting patients with chronic kidney disease, certain cancer, cardiac bypass and congestive heart failure and those needing joint surgeries to alleviate chronic pain, to receive care,” Giffler said in a statement. “While the state has understandably focused on the immediate needs of fighting COVID-19, it is imperative that we not ignore a potential second crisis: a wave of emergencies and fatalities among the people delaying care or going untreated.”

But Rich Templin, a lobbyist for the Florida AFL-CIO, questioned DeSantis’ use of the “past tense” in describing the pandemic.

“As @GovRonDeSantis argues for reopening Florida he keeps talking in past tense,” Templin tweeted. “The escalation of the pandemic is still happening here!! It is not past tense!!”

In addition to the White House outline, DeSantis used recommendations from a task force he formed to look at various business-related issues. DeSantis met with President Donald Trump on Tuesday at the White House.

DeSantis said his moves won’t tread on civil liberties.

“There have been wide-ranging and punitive orders issued in various regions of this country,” DeSantis said. “People have rights. The government needs to protect health, but we should not go beyond what is necessary to do that.”

DESANTIS SAYS HE WILL ‘GO SLOW’ ON REOPENING April 27, Jim Turner

TALLAHASSEE --- Gov. Ron DeSantis said Monday that reopening the state after coronavirus-caused shutdowns will be “very methodical” and “data-driven,” and some people might think it is too slow.

Appearing at Tampa General Hospital, DeSantis talked of regional reopenings as he tried to temper anticipation about “non-essential” businesses opening their doors again to customers.

“It’s not going to be something that a switch is going to be flipped,” DeSantis said of his month-long stay-at-home order that ends Thursday.

“This is uncharted territory. We use the data. We use the facts as best we can,” he continued. “But the fact is, nobody knows what this will do. So, you go slow, you measure, you go steady, and then you make the best decisions, uh, that you can.”

An outline on reopening is expected to be presented to his Re-Open Florida Task Force this week.

DeSantis reiterated on Monday that Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties may be even slower than the rest of the state in reopening, as Southeast Florida has been hit with the largest outbreaks.

“This phase one is a baby step,” DeSantis said. “I mean, we are deliberately going to be very methodical, slow and data-driven on this because I think that if people want to have confidence that things are going in a good direction, it gives us the ability to do things if we see something somewhere.”

DeSantis’ office this weekend collected suggestions from the public and members of

his task force, which is dominated by elected officials, leaders of lobbying groups, and leaders of large organizations including Disney World, Universal Orlando, Publix, Florida Power & Light, AT&T, Tampa General, Raymond James Financial Services and Lockheed Martin.

Last week, members of the task force discussed the need for enhanced cleaning, a continued use of personal protection equipment such as masks and gloves and maintaining physical distancing, all of which could initially limit crowds in restaurants and other businesses.

DeSantis' appearance at Tampa General Hospital came after he held similar news conferences over the weekend at Cleveland Clinic in Broward County and Orlando Health. At each of the stops, he has discussed recovery and signaled that the state will end a ban on elective surgeries when an executive order expires May 8.

The state Department of Health on Monday reported 32,138 cases of COVID-19 in Florida, with 1,088 deaths tied to the disease, which is caused by the coronavirus.

The Monday totals represented increases of 610 new cases and 14 deaths from a Sunday count, with the additional deaths involving people who tested positive in Broward, Miami-Dade, Duval, Hernando, Leon, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas and Volusia counties.

Tampa General Hospital President and CEO John Couris, a member of the executive committee of DeSantis' task force, said the medical community has the capacity to handle future COVID-19 cases.

"As the economy starts to slowly, methodically and thoughtfully open up, if we do see a surge or a cluster here or there, this institution, and I know my sister institutions, BayCare and Advent and HCA and others, will be ready and prepared to handle anything that comes our way," Couris said, referring to other big hospital systems.

Democrats, however, criticized DeSantis for following President Donald Trump's "reactionary" approach to the pandemic in a conference call with reporters Monday.

"What we've seen as a trend throughout this crisis nationally is a focus on the needs of big business, and unfortunately, that also seems to have trickled down to our state, where there simply has not been a big enough focus on the people," said state Rep. Fentrice Driskell, D-Tampa.

WEEKLY ROUNDUP: THE WAITING IS THE HARDEST PART April 24, Dara Kam

TALLAHASSEE --- Will they or won't they? And, if they do, when?

If, and when, lawmakers will hold a special session to tackle COVID-19's impacts on the state budget and other major parts of life in Florida are questions dominating political pundits' chatter.

The financial picture will start to become clearer when April sales tax revenues are reported in May. A panel of economists is expected to meet in June to consider what likely will be the disease's devastating impact on sales tax collections, which comprise about 74 percent of Florida's general revenue.

Democrats are pushing for a special session to address myriad issues surrounding COVID-19, such as fixing the beleaguered system Floridians use to apply for unemployment compensation benefits.

But House and Senate Republican leaders insist it's too soon to set a date.

House Speaker José Oliva acknowledged that legislators of both parties "have valid concerns and the desire to return to activity, which I share."

House leaders' focus now, however, is to aid Gov. Ron DeSantis, who put together a task force to make recommendations on reopening the state.

“The tremendous impact on our budget may require us to return to Tallahassee soon, and perhaps subjects outside of spending will be addressed,” Oliva, R-Miami Lakes, said in a prepared statement provided Friday to The News Service of Florida.

The topics the libertarian-leaning House leader has in mind, however, might give local officials chills.

“The subjects include but are not limited to the powers granted to governments and their limitations with regards to our individual liberties in moments of crisis. A special session’s only current value is of a political nature and politics is what is least needed at this critical moment,” he said.

Senate Appropriations Chairman Rob Bradley also said a special session isn’t on the immediate horizon.

“You don’t assess the damage and response in the middle of a hurricane. We will know much more in two or three months,” Bradley, R-Fleming Island, said in an interview this week.

The Senate budget chief predicted the state will fare better than was anticipated when the regular legislative session concluded in March.

“Worst-case scenario was the Great Depression 2.0, and best-case scenario was a v-shaped recovery where we snap back to where we were before,” Bradley said. “My sense is that it is going to be more towards the rosier scenario than the doomsday scenario. But it’s going to take a while.”

DUSTING OFF THE WELCOME MAT DeSantis’ Re-Open Florida Task Force met throughout the week to rush recommendations to the governor.

The task force is dominated by elected officials, leaders of lobbying groups, and leaders of large businesses including Disney World, Universal Orlando, Publix, Florida Power & Light, AT&T, Tampa General Hospital, Raymond James Financial Services and Lockheed Martin.

Working groups of the task force explored issues involving specific industries.

While some of the elected officials and people representing lobbying groups run small businesses, a working group focused on tourism, retail and transportation had only a single person identified as representing a small business, Amy Schwartz, the owner of Bella Bella Restaurant, which is blocks from the governor’s mansion in Tallahassee.

Working-group meetings featured discussions from Walmart, which remains open as an essential business, Universal Orlando, owners of international fast food chains and professional sports organizations.

On Wednesday, members of the task force expressed a need to hear less about what the state’s giant corporations are doing to get through the crisis.

Oliva said small-business owners need to know quickly what they must do to maintain social distancing and safety for workers and customers when allowed to reopen.

“We’ve heard a great deal from a large number of very large corporations, who have within them great resources to do things that small companies cannot do,” said Oliva, who is a member of the task force’s executive committee. “I think what small businesses are looking for in the very short term is the understanding of, ‘Can I open my barber shop if people are x amount of feet apart, if the people that are working within the barber shop are wearing certain protective gear, and if only so many people can be in the unit.’”

WEEKLY EVENTS

Mon Dinner 6:30 States MC Pompano Clubhouse

Once a Month Tues 2nd Tues Jupiter Moose Bike Nigh

Wed Island Jack's Bike Night with Gorilla Motors

Wed Chit Chat's bike night 7pm Free BBQ, music

Wed Pirates Well Bike Night 9477 Alt. A1A Lake Park

Last Wed Gatti's Garage Bike Night 130 South H St Lake Worth

1st Thurs PBH Abacoa Bike Night 1st Thurs. Howley's Bike Night 4700 S Dixie WPB

2nd Thurs TBS Bike Night Tequesta

3rd Thursday Palm Beach and Treasure Coast Harley Bike Nights

Last Thurs Turboz/Ralph's Bike Night Jupiter

1st Fri Enforcers MC Party

1st Fri Black Pistons MC WPB Open House

2nd Fri AOA WPB Open Houses

3rd Fri States MC Lake Worth Open House 8pm @LLB

4th Fri Lone Legion MC Brotherhood Open House

SAT HOG Morning ??? Palm Beach Harley and often other events and bikini bike washes Grill Days

SAT night Fly n Wheels Open



SUN Lone Legion Breakfast

Black Pistons MC
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\$3 DRAFTS 10PM - CLOSE
\$2.75 JACK & JAVELIN BOTTLES 6PM TO 10PM
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STATES MC LAKE WORTH



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MEETINGS**

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From I 95 exit Blue
Heron Blvd. go east
to Broadway (Federal
Hwy., US- 1) turn
right, go south 1
block the V.F.W. is
on the east side. Look
for the flag. Come for
breakfast and the
meeting

2020
3rd Sunday June 21
IF ALLOWED
3rd Sunday July 19
3rd Sunday Aug. 16



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BROWARD EVENTS**

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ABATE - Memorial Day EVENT
30th-Sat New Attitudes MC Annual

JUNE
6th-Sat AOA South FL MEMORIAL
GBNF 1%ers
7th-Sun Wings of Gold MC Ft. Laud.
- PARTY
13th-Sat Midnight Club Reapers MC -
Annual
27-Sat USMV MC S. Broward Annual

JULY
4th-Sat Independence Day
12th-Sun Alternative MC - Annual
19th-Sun Soldiers for Jesus MC
BROWARD - Annual
25th-Sat Wheels of Man MC -
CHILI COOK-OFF

AUGUST
7th-16th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally
14th-16th South FL Tattoo Convention
16th-Sun AOA FT. LAUD. -51st
ANNIVERSARY PARTY-
23rd-Sun Scurvy Few MC Annual
30th- Sun Southern MC Teddy
Bear Run

SEPTEMBER
7th-Mon Labor Day
13th-Sun States MC Pompano Key
West Tune UP Party
18th-20th Petersons Key West ?
26th-Sat Kingdom of Brothers MC
- ANNUAL**

OCTOBER
4th-SunMystic Seven Annual
10th-Sat Outcast - PARTY
11th-Sun S.E. ABATE - Annual
15th-18th Daytona Biketoberfest
24th-Sat Wheels of Man MC -
HALLOWEEN PARTY
25th-Sun CMA - Memorial

NOVEMBER
7th-Sat Heathens MC - ANNUAL
11th-Wed Veterans Day
14th-Sat USMVMC CH 1 Annual

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May 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 Thunder Bch Spring Rally Black Pistons Open House	2 Thunder Bch Spring Rally Fly n Wheels Open House
3 Thunder Bch Spring Rally	4	5	6 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park Bike Nights	7	8 AOA WPB Open House	9 Fly n Wheels Open House
10	11	12	13 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park Bike Nights	14	15 States LW Open House @ LLB	16 Fly n Wheels Open House
17 ABATE PB Chapter Meeting	18	19	20 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park Bike Nights	21	22 Lone Legion Open House	23 Fly n Wheels Open House
24	25	26	27 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park Bike Nights	28 Turboz/ Ralph's Bike Night	29	30 Fly n Wheels Open House
31						

June 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park	4	5 Black Pistons Open House	6 Fly n Wheels Open House
7 Wings of Gold MC Ft. Lauderdale - PARTY	8	9	10 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park Bike Nights	11	12 AOA WPB Open House	13 Fly n Wheels Open House ABATE FL State Meeting Sore Ass Run
14 Ride 4 Life	15 National Ride to Work Day	16	17 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park Bike Nights	18	19 States LW Open House	20 Fly n Wheels Open House
21 ABATE PB Chapter Meeting	22	23	24 Gorilla Bob/ Island Jack's Pirate's Well Lake Park Bike Nights	25 Turboz/ Ralph's Bike Night	26 Lone Legion Open House	27 Fly n Wheels Open House USMV MC S. Broward Annual
28	29	30				

DELEGATE REPORT

The hosting hotel for the June State meeting has extended the deadline to reserve a hotel room at the discounted ABATE rate until May 31st. If you would like to reserve a room please contact: The Ponce Hotel 1111 N. Ponce DeLeon Blvd St. Augustine, FL 32084 1-904-824-5554 Mention ABATE for the discounted price of \$139. After May 31st the price will return to \$239 per night. The price does include a FREE shuttle to downtown AND a FREE breakfast.



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STATE MEETING

June 13th 2020

Hosted By: **VINTAGE CHAPTER**

BOARD MEETING AT 12:00 NOON

DELEGATE'S MEETING AT 2:00 PM



State Meeting will be held at:

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**Susan Hedrick, President
904-547-0723
SaraBeth Kohl, VP
904-591-4100**

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Dec. 12 Forest

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- Robert "Torch" Lyle
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DeSantis has issued an executive order largely directing people to stay home until April 30. But businesses that have been forced to close have not received an outline about how they can reopen.

The governor is expected to release his reopening plan early next week.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

More than one in 10 new jobless claims across the United States last week were made to Florida's overwhelmed unemployment system, according to numbers released Thursday by the U.S. Department of Labor.

Meanwhile, the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, trying to reduce a massive backlog of claims, by Thursday had processed 30.6 percent of its claims, with unemployment payments of up of \$275 a week going out to 17 percent of the applicants.

On Thursday, the federal labor department reported Florida had an estimated 505,137 first-time applications of the 4.4 million new unemployment claims filed during the week ending April 19.

Applicants continue to express frustrations about being cut off from Florida's online CONNECT unemployment system and not being able to get through to call centers for assistance. The state expanded the ways people can apply, making a second online system available and allowing people to fill out paper applications.

People who have lost their jobs and are applying for checks of \$600 under a federal stimulus program also must navigate the state's unemployment site.

DeSantis on Tuesday described the CONNECT system, which cost \$77 million to get online in 2013, as a "jalopy" but said the state was making "a lot of great progress" in getting checks out.

STORY OF THE WEEK: Gov. Ron DeSantis' Re-Open Florida Task Force met throughout the week to come up with strategies to get the state back to work, after widespread shutdowns due to COVID-19.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Universal and Disney World and everyone else, God bless them, they're a major part of the economy, they're going to work it out ... But what the very small business owner is looking for is, 'Just tell me what I've got to do to open my doors.'" --- House Speaker José Oliva, R-Miami Lakes, a member of Re-Open Florida Task Force executive committee.

ADVANCES: WEEK OF APRIL 26, 2020 April 24, 2020 NSF Staff

TALLAHASSEE --- Hundreds of thousands of Floridians' voting rights could be on the line during the coming week as attorneys for Gov. Ron DeSantis' administration and voting-rights groups square off over a 2019 state law requiring felons to pay court-ordered "legal financial obligations" before they are allowed to cast ballots.

The animosity between the DeSantis administration and voting-rights groups, which represent felons trying to vote, ramped up in advance of a trial set to begin Monday in federal court. The lawsuit, in part, likens the requirement of paying legal financial obligations to a poll tax.

For months, plaintiffs' lawyers have tried to get Secretary of State Laurel Lee to reveal her process for determining voter eligibility under a 2018 state constitutional amendment aimed at restoring voting rights to felons who have completed terms of their sentences.

The financial obligations --- court-ordered restitution, fees, fines and costs associated with felony convictions --- are at the heart of the legal battle over the 2019 law, which Republi-

can lawmakers passed to carry out the constitutional amendment.

In a preliminary injunction issued in October, U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle ruled that it is unconstitutional to deny the right to vote to felons who are “genuinely unable to pay” court-ordered fees, fines and restitution. The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the injunction, which applied only to the 17 named plaintiffs in the case. Hinkle this month granted class certification to plaintiffs, adding potentially hundreds of thousands of felons to the lawsuit.

On April 14, lawyers for the DeSantis administration filed a trial brief assuring Hinkle that the state “now has a process for re-enfranchising felons who will fall within the ambit of Amendment 4.” But the brief did not disclose the actual procedures.

The state’s assertions sparked a flurry of correspondence and court filings by plaintiffs’ attorneys, as they tried to nail down details before the trial begins.

After much finger-pointing, the state agreed to allow plaintiffs to depose state Division of Elections Director Maria Matthews this weekend. Hinkle signed off on a one-hour deposition --- Matthews’ third --- by video at 8 a.m. Sunday.

The state’s process is a critical element of the trial, and Hinkle has hammered DeSantis’ lawyers for not implementing a process to carry out the amendment and for delays in responding to the October preliminary injunction.

The injunction ordered the state to come up with an administrative process in which felons could try to prove that they are unable to pay financial obligations and should be able to vote.

As recently as March 26, Mohammad Jazil, who represents Lee, told Hinkle that the state “is working diligently every day” to develop a system but had not finalized one yet.

Hinkle warned Jazil to have a process in place by the time the trial begins.

“If the state’s not going to fix it, I will,” the federal judge scold

BACKROOM BRIEFING: MORONS? SEZ WHO? April 23, Jim Turner

TALLAHASSEE --- Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry and Gov. Ron DeSantis spent part of Wednesday defending beachgoers dubbed “#FloridaMorons” on social media.

The hashtag was aimed over the weekend at people who --- after being stuck inside because of the novel coronavirus --- flocked to Northeast Florida beaches when they reopened Friday.

Curry said photos of beachgoers that went viral were misleading.

“There were a number of still photos that made it look like we were overcrowded and there was no distancing, which was not accurate,” Curry said.

Most of the photos featured large clusters of people walking on beaches. A few showed police advising people sitting on towels that such activities remain verboten.

Curry’s order opening the beaches allows people to walk, bike, hike, fish, run, swim, surf and take care of pets, as long as they maintain physical distancing rules, with the beaches open from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 8 p.m.

People aren’t allowed to sunbathe or bring towels, blankets, chairs, coolers and grills. No organized group activities, from picnics to sporting events, are allowed.

Curry told members of DeSantis’ task force on reopening the economy to work with local media as more beaches are made accessible and acknowledged that given a day’s notice of the reopening, “a lot of people showed up at once.”

DeSantis pointed to Northeast Florida for having fewer cases of coronavirus per 100,000

residents and fewer deaths, than areas between Washington, D.C. and Massachusetts, the source of at least part of the vitriol against Florida.

“I think the folks that are criticizing them don’t have a lot of leg to stand on when you’re throwing potshots at a county that has better numbers than you,” DeSantis told reporters.

“My hat’s off to Mayor Curry,” DeSantis added. “My hat’s off to the people of Jacksonville and Northeast Florida for doing a great job. And for those who try to say you’re morons, I would take you over the folks who were criticizing you any day of the week and twice on Sunday.”

But it wasn’t just people in other parts of the country who piled on after the photos went viral.

Lake Worth Beach City Commissioner Omari Hardy tweeted, “When a person in power doesn’t believe in science, they do dumb things that hurt the public. This move is so dumb that I had to make sure it wasn’t fake news. You guys, it isn’t fake news.”

REPORT CARDS Post-mortems on the 2020 legislative session have started to come out while talk continues to swirl in Tallahassee about the possible need for a special session to deal with budget damage from the coronavirus.

A pair of environmental groups --- Sierra Club Florida and Florida Conservation Voters-- released recaps that predictably are critical of bills championed by the Republican-dominated Legislature.

Florida Conservation Voters credited lawmakers for providing \$100 million for the Florida Forever program, but it wasn’t impressed with the legislative chest thumping about overall increases in environmental spending.

“The total environmental budget increased by more than \$485 million over last year, mostly due to increased federal funding,” Florida Conservation Voters said in a news release. “The \$67.5 million in U.S. EPA Volkswagen settlement funds, along with \$212 million in federal funding for drinking water facilities and wastewater treatment infrastructure, contributed more than half of this year’s environmental budget increase.”

The organization also wasn’t as enamored with the “Clean Waterways Act” (SB 712), which lawmakers passed to meet many of DeSantis’ environmental requests.

While the bill established new rules for septic tanks, increasing environmental fines and setting records requirements on agricultural fertilizers, Florida Conservation Voters called the final product “watered down.”

“Rather than stopping pollution at the source, the bill is full of bureaucratic housekeeping and weak, inadequate measures,” the organization said. “Rather than mandating strict nitrogen reduction standards for septic systems, it merely moves the regulation of septic tanks from the Department of Health to the Department of Environmental Protection. Rather than enacting stricter pollution standards for agricultural operations, it doubles down on voluntary best management practices.”

Sierra Club Florida offered a more traditional scorecard of individual lawmakers based on votes on seven separate measures opposed by the organization.

The measures included the Clear Waterways Act and a bill to prevent Key West and other local governments from banning sunscreens with chemicals that could be harmful to coral reefs (SB 172).

Rep. Anna Eskamani, D-Orlando, scored a 100, in part for changing her vote on the Clean Waterways Act from “yea” to “nay” after the roll call.

“The political pressure and upcoming election was too much for others to stand strong,” the Sierra Club report said.

Fourteen other House members, all Democrats, scored 85 in the report.

The Sierra Club inquiry gave special negative recognition to Rep. James Grant, R-Tampa, “for his continued assault on citizen initiatives and growth management,” and to Rep. Spencer Roach, R-North Fort Myers, and Sen. Rob Bradley, R-Fleming Island, for sponsoring the bill that prevents sunscreen bans.

Expect the findings and rankings to flip when recaps come from business lobbying groups, such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce and Associated Industries of Florida.

TWEET OF THE WEEK: “FL can’t get back to work, and businesses won’t reopen with the threat of #Covid19 lawsuits hanging over their head like a sword. I am drafting legislation that would shield businesses from job-killing, frivolous Covid lawsuits by those seeking to turn FL into a legal battlefield.” --- Sen. Jeff Brandes, R-St. Petersburg (@JeffreyBrandes).

UPDATED: CONSUMER CONFIDENCE KEY TO REBOUND April 21, Jim Turner

TALLAHASSEE --- Getting people to dine out, board airplanes and visit resorts will require increased confidence that businesses are aggressively implementing enhanced hygiene measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, members of Gov. Ron DeSantis’ task force on reopening the state said Tuesday.

No reopening timelines were set as the task force’s Industry Working Group met. Also, no votes were taken as members appeared to support the need for heightened safety guidelines for workers and customers in the hospitality industry.

While the numbers of cases and deaths in Florida continue to grow from the deadly respiratory disease, DeSantis on Tuesday said he anticipates many businesses that are currently considered “non-essential” will be able to reopen as risks of the novel coronavirus get lower and if consumers gain confidence about safety.

“If people can fight over toilet paper at Costco, I got to think there’s a way that you can run a restaurant safely,” DeSantis said. “If people are going to line up to go to the grocery store, then I gotta think there’s ways that you would be able to do some of the other things that we would do.”

DeSantis said how different industries implement changes will be important to restoring consumer confidence because of the “huge hysteria that has swept the country.”

“A lot of people were really, really scared and many of them still are scared,” DeSantis said. “Are they going to have the confidence to want to do some of the things that we used to do?”

DeSantis’ Re-Open Florida Task Force held its first meeting Monday, with the governor taking digs at “the media and the expert class” for predicting Florida’s hospitals would be full and at governors of other states for implementing “ham-fisted” stay-at-home directives.

Visit Florida President and CEO Dana Young, whose agency oversees tourism marketing, said Tuesday the state has eased into its stay-at-home orders, and “now our job is to look at how to appropriately ease out of it.”

Changes offered by working group members could mean maintaining recommendations about physical distancing, limiting how many customers could be inside businesses at a time and providing sick days for workers.

Jose Cil, CEO of Restaurant Brands International, said such guidelines are being implemented through the company, which owns Burger King, Tim Hortons and Popeyes restau-

rants.

Cil said the restaurants are requiring daily health screening of employees that will include infrared temperature gauges, continued use of gloves and masks, increased frequency of employee handwashing, minimizing the exchange of cash and having hand sanitizer available for guests who will dine in.

“The folks in the front lines need to feel comfortable that they’re working in a restaurant that is conscious and conscientious about these issues and our guests need to know that as well,” Cil said.

PGA Tour Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer Len Brown said customers could also be encouraged to carry their own pens to sign credit card receipts.

“So even in the credit card process they don’t have to pass a pen back and forth,” Brown said.

Cil also stressed the need to provide paid sick leave of up to 14 days.

“Typically, in our business there’s no hourly employees, there’s no paid sick leave,” Cil said. “But given the importance of folks taking this seriously and not scrambling to go to work, even if they’re feeling ill, we made a policy very early on that that anyone who exhibits kind of like the symptoms of COVID-19, the manager and or medical professional suggesting that they go home to get better.”

Young said Visit Florida is already working on a four-phase marketing “rebound” plan in response to the virus, which has devastated the state’s tourism industry.

“Travel has proven to be resilient industry, and people will travel again when they feel safe to do so,” she said.

However, Young said the state hasn’t “fully experienced the impact of the economic downturn on travel” even with hotel revenue in Florida down more than \$1.6 billion from March 1 to April 11, compared to the same period a year earlier. People flying into Florida are down more than 65 percent, with international flights off nearly 80 percent.

Still, Young said people are visiting the “inspirational vacation planning content” on the company’s website at levels prior to the COVID-19 shutdown.

“This tells us that people want to know if it is safe to travel to Florida, because the desire to visit our states still exists,” Young said.

The first travelers in the marketing plan are expected to be Floridians who want to explore once the stay-at-home order is lifted. Later phases of the plan will be to start attracting U.S. and international travelers as they become more comfortable traveling further away from home.

“A critical part of this plan is focusing on expanding Visit Florida’s ongoing marketing efforts for the next two to three years because our economic rebound will take time,” said Young, whose agency’s authorization was extended this year by lawmakers to Oct. 1, 2023.

House leaders had sought to eliminate the agency on July 1. But Visit Florida backers pointed to its role in marketing the state amid negative media coverage of issues such as hurricanes, red tide, algae and diseases outbreaks.

Members of DeSantis’ task force are expected to hold a series of meetings this week. The governor wants recommendations from the task force’s executive committee --- comprised of county mayors from Southeast Florida, state elected Republican leaders and officials from businesses such as Disney World, Universal Orlando, Publix, Florida Power & Light, AT&T, Tampa General Hospital, Raymond James Financial Services and Lockheed Martin --- by the

end of the week.

CHALLENGERS LINE UP FOR CONGRESSIONAL SEATS April 22, NSF Staff

Florida members of the U.S. House won't get a free pass back to Washington, D.C. Midway through a qualifying period for this year's congressional elections, challengers had qualified to run against 22 of 25 House members who are seeking reelection in November, according to the state Division of Elections website. As of early Wednesday afternoon, only Republicans Neal Dunn, Gus Bilirakis and Mario Diaz-Balart had not drawn opponents who had qualified. The qualifying period began at noon Monday and will end at noon Friday. Two incumbents --- North Florida Republican Ted Yoho and Southwest Florida Republican Francis Rooney --- have announced they will not seek reelection this year, which has led to large fields of candidates seeking to replace them. Among the latest qualifiers for those seats was state Rep. Byron Donalds, a Naples Republican who is running to succeed Rooney in Congressional District 19.

CANDIDATES EMERGE FOR STATE HOUSE RACES April 22, NSF Staff

Parkland Mayor Christine Hunschofsky has opened a campaign account to run for a seat that was held by the late Rep. Kristin Jacobs, D-Coconut Creek, while three Florida House incumbents have drawn new challengers, according to the state Division of Elections website. Hunschofsky, a Democrat, opened an account this week to run in Broward County's House District 96. Jacobs died recently after a long battle with cancer. Also with an open account for the race is Coconut Creek Democrat Saima Farooqui. Meanwhile, three House members have drawn opponents as they seek reelection in November. Republican Linda Chaney opened an account last week to run against Rep. Jennifer Webb, D-Gulfport, in Pinellas County's House District 69, according to the Division of Elections. Also, Democrat Edgar "EJ" Bernier opened an account to run against Rep. Toby Overdorf, R-Palm City, in House District 83, which is made up of Martin County and part of St. Lucie County. Also, Democrat Imtiaz Mohammad opened an account to run against Rep. Juan Alfonso Fernandez-Barquin, R-Miami, in Miami-Dade County's House District 119.

FINAL INCUMBENTS QUALIFY FOR CONGRESSIONAL RACES April 21, NSF Staff

While two Republicans will not seek another term this year, Florida's other 25 U.S. House members are ready to run for re-election. With the addition Tuesday of Republicans Neal Dunn and Ross Spano and Democrat Ted Deutch, the 25 incumbents have qualified to run in November. Qualifying for congressional and judicial races started at noon Monday and will last until noon Friday. North Florida Republican Ted Yoho and Southwest Florida Republican Francis Rooney are not seeking another term, creating large fields of candidates for the only two open seats in the 27-member delegation. As of early Tuesday evening, nine Republicans and one Democrat had qualified to try to succeed Yoho in Congressional District 3, according to the state Division of Elections website. Meanwhile, five Republicans, two Democrats and a write-in candidate had qualified to try to succeed Rooney in Congressional District 19.

REOPENING HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY COULD BE GRADUAL April 21, Jim Turner

TALLAHASSEE --- Gov. Ron DeSantis' push to get the state's economy up and running from the crush of the coronavirus might require gradual steps.

Incoming Senate President Wilton Simpson, a Trilby Republican and member of the executive committee of DeSantis' Re-Open Florida Task Force, said Tuesday that reopening might need a phased approach, particularly in the hospitality industry. That could involve issues such as spacing and wearing personal protective equipment to prevent people from

spreading the virus.

“I think the key to these things are not to hit the gas pedal, to try and go 100 miles an hour out of the gate, but to gradually ramp up,” said Simpson, who is slated to become Senate president in November. “Even if you say, ‘OK, the first two weeks you can be at 25 percent capacity and two weeks later if testing proves that we are OK, we’ll maybe go up to 40 percent or 50 percent.’ But I think you’re going to be many months before you could be back up to --- you know we have to have better therapeutic medicines and things --- before you could probably be back at 100 percent.”

Simpson said a “hybrid” approach for restaurants of continuing take-out orders and food delivery with limited in-store seating would also help farmers meet the demands of businesses restarting orders.

“I think with the take-out model, in addition to that 35 to 40 percent, whatever that number turns out to be that will allow them to get back up and going, that will also allow that supply chain to mature at a slow pace so that we can be diligent as we allow it to ramp up,” said Simpson, who owns an egg farm.

While the numbers of cases and deaths in Florida continue to grow from COVID-19, the deadly respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus, DeSantis told reporters Tuesday afternoon at the Old Capitol the state has been able to “flatten the curve” and that dire media predictions haven’t occurred.

“I think it’s important to just tell people we’re going to be OK,” DeSantis said. “We’re not out of the woods. This is something we’re going to have to deal with. But if you look at where we are today versus where we were six weeks ago, a lot of the predictions that were made time and time again, I would say that nobody predicted that we would be in the spot that we are right now. So that’s a good thing. It doesn’t mean the work’s done, But I think that we’re on the right track. And I think it’s because Floridians have really pulled together.”

Earlier in the day, DeSantis said he anticipates many businesses that are currently considered “non-essential” will be able to reopen as risks of the virus are reduced and if consumers gain confidence about safety.

“If people can fight over toilet paper at Costco, I got to think there’s a way that you can run a restaurant safely,” DeSantis said. “If people are going to line up to go to the grocery store, then I gotta think there’s ways that you would be able to do some of the other things that we would do.”

Members of DeSantis’ task force are expected to hold a series of meetings this week. The governor wants recommendations from the task force’s executive committee --- comprised of county mayors from Southeast Florida, state elected Republican leaders and officials from businesses such as Disney World, Universal Orlando, Publix, Florida Power & Light, AT&T, Tampa General Hospital, Raymond James Financial Services and Lockheed Martin --- by the end of the week.

Miami-Dade County Mayor Carlos Gimenez on Tuesday suggested the possibility of allowing more outdoor seating for restaurants, which could count toward their overall space in meeting reduced occupancy standards. He also stressed the need for medical guidance.

A separate task force will be set up in South Florida that will include a mixture of industry leaders and health care officials to set standards for restaurants to open, Gimenez said.

During a Tuesday morning meeting, members of the task force’s Industry Working Group pointed to a need in opening businesses to maintain recommendations about physical

distancing, limits on how many customers could be inside businesses at a time and providing sick days for workers.

“Typically, in our business there's no hourly employees, there's no paid sick leave,” said Jose Cil, CEO of Restaurant Brands International, which owns Burger King, Tim Hortons and Popeyes restaurants. “But given the importance of folks taking this seriously and not scrambling to go to work, even if they're feeling ill, we made a policy very early on that that anyone who exhibits kind of like the symptoms of COVID-19, the manager and or medical professional suggesting that they go home to get better.”

Visit Florida President and CEO Dana Young said Tuesday the state's tourism-marketing agency is working on a multi-year, four-phase marketing “rebound” plan in response to the virus.

However, Young said the state hasn't “fully experienced the impact of the economic downturn on travel,” even with hotel revenue in Florida down more than \$1.6 billion from March 1 to April 11, compared to the same period a year earlier. People flying into Florida are down more than 65 percent, with international flights off nearly 80 percent

Still, Young said people are visiting the “inspirational vacation planning content” on the company's website at levels prior to the COVID-19 shutdown.

“This tells us that people want to know if it is safe to travel to Florida, because the desire to visit our states still exists,” Young said.

DESANTIS, HOSPITALS LOOK TO RESTART PROCEDURES April 21, Christine Sexton
TALLAHASSEE --- Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis signaled on Tuesday that he might be ready to follow federal guidelines that call for letting doctors and hospitals again provide procedures that have been halted during the COVID-19 crisis.

DeSantis told reporters in Tallahassee that he wanted to move quickly to help bolster hospitals, which have been losing money during a clampdown on optional surgeries.

“We need to do it pretty quickly, because if we keep it up the way we are going, I think more people are going to get laid off,” DeSantis said, noting that some hospitals have been forced to shed jobs due to the loss of revenue. “I think there is going to be less financial viability for some of these health-care outfits, which is very important.”

The Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida and representatives from HCA Healthcare on Monday sent a recommended reopening proposal for the governor to consider. The major hospital-industry players also met with members of the DeSantis administration to discuss the plan, which provides two potential dates for resuming surgical procedures: April 25 or May 1.

The hospitals' proposal would require all visitors to wear masks or cloth mouth and nose coverings and stay in main waiting areas, although there would be exceptions involving death and dying patients, women in labor, and patients with cognitive impairments. One visitor would be allowed for each patient.

The proposal also recommends that no facilities would be allowed to offer optional procedures unless they meet certain requirements, including maintaining COVID-19 and “person under investigation” units.

Hospitals also would be precluded from offering optional surgeries unless the number of available beds is 20 percent greater than the number of beds occupied by COVID-19 patients.

The Safety Net Hospital Alliance of Florida includes public, teaching and children's hospitals, while HCA is a for-profit company that operates dozens of hospitals in the state.

Meanwhile, doctors also are seeking to resume providing procedures.

In a letter Tuesday, Florida Medical Association President Ronald F. Giffler asked DeSantis to lift a March 20 executive order that prevented the delivery of non-essential health care.

“While the state has understandably focused on the immediate needs of fighting COVID-19, it is imperative that we not ignore a potential second crisis: a wave of emergencies and fatalities among the people delaying care or going untreated,” Giffler wrote.

DeSantis issued his March executive order to help conserve necessary personal protective and hospital space as the state prepared for a surge in COVID-19 patients. National health care models showed that Florida would have a surge and that the demand for health care services and hospital beds would exceed the state’s supply.

DeSantis on Tuesday said the dire predictions have not come to fruition.

“You go back a month, month and a half, report after report saying it was just a matter of time that Florida’s hospital system would be completely overwhelmed,” DeSantis said.

“Those predictions have been false. Our work is succeeding. We have flattened the curve,”

The hospitals and doctors are asking DeSantis to consider reopening the health-care system under non-binding guidelines that President Donald Trump’s administration issued.

To qualify under the federal guidelines, the state must have had a two-week downward trajectory in documented COVID-19 cases and a downward trajectory in the numbers of positive tests as a percentage of total tests.

Additionally, the federal guidelines call for hospitals to have enough supplies to treat all patients without having to worry about “crisis” care decisions. Moreover, the facilities would be required to have testing programs in place for at-risk health care workers.

But the move to soften restrictions --- under what is known as Phase 1 --- has been met with skepticism from public health officials. After the Trump administration released the guidelines last week, Bill Hanage, an associate professor at Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health, told National Public Radio in an interview that “with the state of testing,” no city in the United States is ready under Phase 1 to reopen health care.

ARGUMENTS PUSHED BACK IN MAJOR GUN CASE April 17, NSF Staff

After the state’s lead attorney requested a delay, the 1st District Court of Appeal has pushed back arguments in a battle about a 2011 state law that threatened tough penalties if city and county officials approve gun regulations. The Tallahassee-based court issued an order Friday scheduling the arguments on July 14. The court was scheduled to hear the case June 16, but state Deputy Solicitor General James Percival submitted a filing this week asking for a continuance. The filing said Percival’s wife is expected to give birth to twins and it will be difficult to “obtain help from extended family members and friends during this time given the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.” The state is asking the appeals court to overturn a circuit judge’s ruling that said parts of the 2011 law were unconstitutional. Florida since 1987 has barred cities and counties from passing regulations that are stricter than state firearms laws, and the penalties in the 2011 law were designed to strengthen that “preemption.” The law, for example, could lead to local officials facing \$5,000 fines and potential removal from office for passing gun regulations. Local governments and officials filed three lawsuits challenging the 2011 law after the February 2018 mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland that killed 17 people. The lawsuits were ultimately consolidated in Leon County circuit court, where Judge Charles Dodson last year rejected parts of the law. Dodson cited issues related to

“legislative immunity,” which protects local government officials in their decision-making processes. He also pointed to the constitutional separation of powers, as judges could be asked to rule on penalizing local officials. Supporters of the law, including the National Rifle Association, contend it is needed to prevent cities and counties from overstepping their legal authority in passing gun regulations

ADVANCES: WEEK OF APRIL 19, 2020 April 17, NSF Staff

TALLAHASSEE --- Spring is usually a time of excitement on college and university campuses.

Soon-to-be-graduates look forward to commencement festivities. Undergrads make plans for the coming year. And administrators gear up for the next batch of incoming freshmen.

But this spring, campuses have been cleared because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Students and professors are doing their work online. And excitement has been replaced by questions.

Brent Sembler, a Florida State University trustee, said during a Board of Trustees’ meeting Friday that the biggest question he gets is, “What about fall?”

But at least at this point, it’s hard to answer that and myriad other questions, including how the pandemic and campus closures will affect schools’ finances.

FSU President John Thrasher said university officials will need to know sometime in the “July timeframe” about whether campuses will reopen this fall or whether classes will continue online. A lot will depend, he said, on health and safety issues.

Boards of several universities and state colleges will meet during the coming week. And like the FSU leaders, they are almost certainly mulling contingency plans, looking at budget numbers and hoping --- maybe praying --- that things will get back to normal.

WEEKLY ROUNDUP: THE ‘NEW NORMAL’ April 17, 2020 Dara Kam

TALLAHASSEE --- Florida Surgeon General Scott Rivkees generated national headlines when he called protective measures such as face masks and social distancing the “new normal” during a press conference this week.

Floridians’ novel existence will continue until researchers create a vaccine for the highly contagious coronavirus, which causes the respiratory disease known as COVID-19, according to Rivkees, who doubles as secretary of the state Department of Health.

How long will the new normal last? “Probably a year, if not longer,” Rivkees said.

“As long as we are going to have COVID in the environment, and this is a tough virus, we are going to have to practice these measures so we are all protected,” he added.

The surgeon general’s straight talk didn’t appear to sit well with DeSantis’ communications director, Helen Ferré. Shortly after his remarks, Ferré whispered in Rivkees’ ear, and the two exited the press conference.

Rivkees’ blunt comments were a stark contrast to the DeSantis administration’s secrecy about outbreaks in prisons and long-term care facilities.

For nearly a week, Department of Corrections officials did not disclose that two inmates at a Northwest Florida prison had died as a result of COVID-19.

State health care officials also refuse to identify assisted-living facilities and nursing homes where deaths have made up about a fifth of Florida’s total coronavirus-related fatalities. The Miami Herald has filed a notice of intent to sue DeSantis to obtain the information.

Florida’s First Amendment Foundation President Pamela C. Marsh offered some unsolicited advice to the Republican governor in an op-ed this week.

“The media does not have to be your enemy. Together, we can help you provide accu-

rate, life-saving information,” Marsh, a former federal prosecutor, wrote. “How can we help our communities if we don’t know the truth about its needs? If you begin to lead our entire state by example, with total transparency, only then will you have our trust as leader.”

NURSING HOME WOES About one in five of the state’s COVID-19 deaths stem from long-term care facilities, new data released by DeSantis’ administration revealed.

As of Friday morning, 141 of the state’s 686 reported COVID-19 deaths were related to infections at nursing homes, assisted-living facilities and other types of long-term care centers in 23 counties.

The state releases reports twice a day showing a variety of statistics about the COVID-19 pandemic, but it did not provide a death toll for long-term care facilities until Wednesday evening. In all, 1,515 COVID-19 cases as of Friday morning involved long-term care residents or staff members, though the state numbers do not break down how many only involve residents.

“The fact that one in five fatalities started as an infection in a long-term care facility --- and in some counties, 100 percent of all fatalities --- demonstrates that the residents of long-term care facilities are among the most vulnerable groups of all in this pandemic,” AARP Florida spokesman Dave Bruns told The News Service of Florida.

The additional data was disclosed amid mounting criticism of the DeSantis administration’s refusal to release the names of long-term care facilities that house infected residents or the number of facilities battling the alarmingly fast spread of the virus.

PRISON WOES Four Florida prisoners have died as a result of COVID-19, but state corrections officials did not release information about deaths until a medical examiner this week confirmed the fatalities of two inmates at a Santa Rosa County facility.

Department of Corrections officials kept the deaths of inmates at Blackwater River Correctional Facility secret for nearly a week, despite numerous questions from The News Service of Florida about fatalities.

Jeffrey Sand, a 69-year-old inmate, died April 9 from complications related to COVID-19, according to Jeff Martin, the director of the medical examiner’s office that oversees Santa Rosa County.

Blackwater inmate William Wilson, 84, died three days later as a result of COVID-19, Martin told the News Service.

Wilson and Sand appear to be the first two COVID-19-related deaths among the state’s roughly 94,000 inmates. Two more inmate deaths followed this week.

After long refusing to reveal how many prisoners and staff members had been tested for the virus, the Department of Corrections on Wednesday night began releasing information about inmate testing.

As of Thursday, 310 Florida prisoners had been tested for the virus, with 54 percent of tests results pending, according to the corrections agency. The number of tests that had been performed encompassed about 0.3 percent of the state’s inmates.

Officials have not disclosed the number of staff members who have undergone testing for the virus.

“It terrifies me that the state is not being transparent,” Natausha Hunt, whose 28-year-old son Gary Ford is a Blackwater inmate who has been exposed to the virus, told the News Service on Wednesday. “This heightens my fear for my son, inmates and families. I’m so scared for my son.”

The number of COVID-19 cases at Blackwater, a prison operated by The Geo Group Inc., a private contractor, skyrocketed in the last week. More than three-fourths of the 44 Florida inmates infected by the disease as of Thursday were housed at the Milton facility, according to the state corrections agency.

As of Thursday, 63 workers, along with the 44 inmates --- including 34 at Blackwater --- had tested positive for COVID-19, the corrections department said. COVID-19 had been detected in 25 prisons and three probation offices throughout the corrections system, which has roughly 23,000 workers and 145 facilities.

UNEMPLOYMENT WOES Payments had been made Thursday to roughly 4 percent of the more than 800,000 people who had filed jobless claims since the coronavirus started shuttering businesses across the state.

On Wednesday, DeSantis removed Department of Economic Opportunity Executive Director Ken Lawson from oversight of the CONNECT unemployment system. He put the system, which cost \$77 million to get online in 2013, into the hands of Department of Management Services Secretary Jonathan Satter.

Part of the reason for the shake-up was the inability of Lawson's department to provide daily updates on claims and payments.

DeSantis told reporters Thursday that checks had been sent to 33,623 people who had applied for benefits since the beginning of March through the troubled unemployment-compensation system.

With early qualifiers drawing multiple checks, about \$50 million had gone out in state assistance --- in checks of up to \$275 a person a week.

Separately, 23,801 checks had gone out to people who qualified for federal money under a new federal stimulus law. The federal payments go up to \$600 a week.

"While we've made some progress in the recent days, it's not nearly enough. We've had an unprecedented number of claims and we have to work through them," DeSantis said.

STORY OF THE WEEK: Gov. Ron DeSantis continued to grapple with the impact of COVID-19 by shaking up the office that handles unemployment claims and beginning to release information about coronavirus-related deaths at prisons and long-term care facilities.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Until we get a vaccine, which is a while off, this is going to be our new normal and we need to adapt and protect ourselves." --- State Surgeon General and Florida Department of Health Secretary Scott Rivkees, speaking to reporters about COVID-19.

ANALYSIS WARNS OF STATE BUDGET WOES April 14, Christine Sexton

TALLAHASSEE --- A new analysis predicts that Florida might have to make deep budget cuts because of the economic collapse brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

Numbers released Tuesday by Moody's Analytics run contrary to cautious optimism expressed by legislative leaders who have contended that Florida has reserves large enough to help weather the financial blow brought on by the pandemic.

Moody's concluded that a combination of tax revenue losses and increased Medicaid spending will wipe out the reserves of many states, including Florida. If that were to happen, it would require legislators to return to Tallahassee and adjust the \$93.2 billion spending plan they adopted for the upcoming 2020-2021 fiscal year.

"The COVID-19 pandemic is set to inflict an unprecedented amount of stress on state governments throughout the country," the report said.

Moody's did an analysis that looked at two different scenarios. In one case, economists

looked at the pandemic causing a deep recession in the first two quarters of 2020 followed by a modest rebound at the end of the year. That scenario concluded that as hundreds of thousands of people lose their jobs, many will try to enroll in Medicaid.

The analysis predicted that a “moderate stress” scenario would create a “combined fiscal shock” of \$8.1 billion for Florida --- a figure more than double the amount the state has in reserves.

A more severe scenario, which envisions travel and business restrictions remaining in place into the third quarter, would result in a \$10 billion “combined fiscal shock” to the state, analysts predicted in the report.

In each scenario, Florida is projected to be one of 10 states whose budgets would be hit hardest.

Florida Chief Financial Officer Jimmy Patronis has been calling for the state to look closer at the potential impact to the budget, but state economists have said they won't have a clear idea of how bad the situation is until May, when more information about tax collections will be available.

“Today's Moody's report makes it clear that as more folks lose their jobs, there will be greater demand for public services like Medicaid,” Patronis said in a statement. “The report also points out that the government is going to have to move faster than normal to get families back on their feet.”

Legislative leaders, though, have said that the combination of reserves and increased funding from the federal government would be enough to shield the state from severe budget problems.

Senate President Bill Galvano, R-Bradenton, wrote in an April 2 memo to senators that the state has enough cash to get through the current fiscal year without having to make cuts and pointed to billions of dollars coming to Florida through a federal-stimulus law known as the CARES Act.

“In addition to the healthy reserve set aside this (legislative) session, the influx of federal funding under the CARES Act should help alleviate concerns regarding significant budget cuts to the 2020-21 fiscal year budget,” Galvano wrote in the memo. “Any line item vetoes Governor (Ron) DeSantis deems necessary (in the newly passed budget) will further buffer the already healthy reserve.”

Katie Betta, a spokeswoman for Galvano, said Tuesday the Senate was reviewing the findings in the Moody's analysis, calling it a revision from a previous report.

The Moody's report noted that analysts did not “explicitly” account for an increased federal contribution rate for Medicaid, the safety-net health care program jointly funded by the state and federal governments. Congress recently agreed to a 6.2 percentage-point increase in federal funding for Medicaid.

Patronis' office did not know Tuesday how much Florida has received because of the increased federal Medicaid funding, staff told The News Service of Florida.

BACKROOM BRIEFING: WARMING UP FOR THE MAIN EVENT April 16, Ana Ceballos Dara Kam

TALLAHASSEE --- With campaign rallies on hold indefinitely and President Donald Trump controlling the television airwaves, Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden enlisted the aid of state Rep. Shevrin Jones this week for a virtual town hall to hear from workers and criticize Trump's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jones, a West Park Democrat who is running for the state Senate, helped field questions from a meat-processing worker, a mass-transit bus driver and a grocery-store clerk during the hour-long webcast Wednesday.

The selection of Jones as moderator for the event with union members highlights the significance of Florida, a swing state Republicans and Democrats consider crucial for a White House win in November.

“This crisis has underscored our country's need for a president who will prioritize the lives of the people,” Jones, a gay Broward County legislator who is black, said. “I look forward to your victory. ... I'm going to ride with you until the final day and so we can say, Vice President Joe Biden is the president of the United States.”

The workers who participated in the webcast said some of their colleagues had succumbed to COVID-19, the deadly respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

Biden accused Trump of “foot dragging and delays” and of failing to take responsibility “for any mistake he's made” in the federal government's response to the virus, which was first reported in China late last year.

“He's not doing enough to help governors and mayors who are leading this response, is not bringing this country together. He likes to say he's a wartime president. Well, he needs to be able to step up and act like one,” Biden said.

The vice president also blasted Trump for criticizing the media, saying the president needs to “not harangue the press for hours on end” during his daily appearances.

“While people are dying, your friends and co-workers are dying, our family members and friends and neighbors are dying, Trump is having a temper tantrum about his authority or whatever he wants as president,” he said. “Well, have we heard him offer anything that approaches a sincere expression of empathy for the people that are hurting? Have we seen any sign that he grasps just how hard it will be for people to recover from this, not just economically, but physically and emotionally as well? I don't think this is appropriate conduct for president.”

Biden's performance drew sarcasm from Trump's campaign team, which has repeatedly characterized the former vice president as doddering and unfit to serve as president.

“Biden referred to the coronavirus as ‘COVID-9,’ proving yet again he's not up for the job,” Trump's campaign said in a news release.

The president has provided “unprecedented and overwhelming assistance” to states in need of aid, the release said.

“Between his low-energy teleprompter reliance and his spreading of more disinformation, Joe Biden continues to demonstrate to voters that he isn't up for the job of leading America out of this crisis,” Trump's campaign said.

WRASSLING OVER ESSENTIALS Gov. Ron DeSantis has taken an unexpected step to try to keep Floridians entertained and the economy afloat during the global pandemic: supporting professional wrestling.

World Wrestling Entertainment was deemed an “essential business” last week, allowing it to tape events at an empty performance center in Orlando. That came after DeSantis issued an executive order directing people to stay home unless they are doing something essential.

At a time when public health experts are urging people to keep their distances from each other, deeming pro wrestling “essential” --- a sport where people clad in costumes scuffle on stage --- raised some eyebrows.

The move also drew a national buzz for another reason: politics.

On the same day that WWE was deemed essential in Florida, the pro-Trump America First Action political committee, which is led by Linda McMahon, the wife of WWE Chairman Vince McMahon, announced in a news release that it would spend \$1.8 million in the Tampa and Orlando media markets.

Trump's support was critical to DeSantis getting elected governor in 2018. But DeSantis, who is helping Trump try to win again in Florida this year, said Wednesday that the WWE decision had nothing to do with politics.

"What does that have to do with me? Have they (McMahons) supported me?" the governor said when a reporter asked about the political connection at a news conference in Tallahassee.

The website for the governor's political committee, Friends of Ron DeSantis, shows zero contributions from the couple.

"If there is no support, it would be really hard to draw that connection at that point. Not that it would be legitimate anyway. But in this case, the factual predicate isn't even there," DeSantis said.

Instead, the governor said his decision was based on a need to alleviate boredom and anxiety for people stuck at home amid the pandemic.

"There's not a lot for people to look at right now and I think you are starting to see that it is starting to wear on some people. So my view would be, let's do what we need to do to stop the spread (of COVID-19) and to make sure we are flattening the curve, but at the same time you can give people some outlets," DeSantis said. "Maybe that's with programming on TV."

TWEET OF THE WEEK: "Florida's surgeon general just said Floridians will have to maintain social distancing measures until there's a vaccine. 'This is the new normal,' he said. He acknowledged that a vaccine could be a year away. Then he was removed from the Cabinet room by @helenaguirrefer." --- Tampa Bay Times reporter Lawrence Mower (@lmower3), referring to Surgeon General Scott Rivkees and DeSantis communications director Helen Aguirre Ferre.

ADVANCES: WEEK OF APRIL 12, 2020 April 10, NSF Staff

TALLAHASSEE --- 2.8 percent.

During the first two months of this year, that was Florida's unemployment rate.

Since the beginning of March, the state's economy has crumbled as the novel coronavirus has spread through Florida, forcing businesses to shut down or dramatically scale back. Hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs, and the financial carnage continues.

Where will it bottom out? Hard to tell.

But the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity during the coming week will release a March unemployment report that will provide a statistical glimpse of how the coronavirus has hammered workers. With the crisis continuing, the report won't fully reflect the state's job losses.

It's safe to say, however, that the bottom line will not be 2.8 percent.

WEEKLY ROUNDUP: IN THE VIRUS BULLSEYE April 10, 2020 Dara Kam

TALLAHASSEE --- After snapping up gallons of hand sanitizer, barrels of disinfectant wipes and buckets of bleach spray, Floridians this week flooded the Etsy e-commerce site in search of face masks.

Health officials' recommendation that people cover their noses and mouths when they leave

home is the latest effort to gird against COVID-19 in an increasingly dystopian world. Hundreds of thousands of Sunshine State workers have lost their jobs, as Gov. Ron DeSantis and his team race to bolster the broken system where fearful folks can apply for unemployment benefits.

The number of inmates and workers in the state's massive prison system who have tested positive for COVID-19 is soaring.

The number of reported COVID-19 infections at long-term care facilities increased by nearly 500 during the past week, with 629 cases in 47 counties as of Friday morning.

And the death toll caused by the virus continues to rise, here and around the globe.

Music lovers are mourning this week's passing of John Prine, the 73-year-old singer/songwriter Rolling Stone called "one of America's greatest songwriters."

Prine died Tuesday in Nashville from complications related to COVID-19, the highly contagious respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

Prine, who was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame last year, was revered for chronicling the plight of working-class Americans in songs that mixed humor and pathos.

In one of his last songs, "When I Get to Heaven," Prine contemplates his own mortality and lays out a post-death plan to shake God's hand, start a band, order a drink, reconnoiter with loved ones and kiss a pretty girl.

"Yeah, this old man is goin' to town," Prine pledged.

COVID-19, NURSING HOME EDITION While the number of confirmed COVID-19 infections at nursing homes and assisted living facilities skyrocketed during the past week, state health officials won't say whether there is "community spread" of the disease in long-term care facilities. But Live Oak City Council member Don Allen has seen the number of coronavirus cases in his rural county increase to 58, including 36 involving long-term care residents or staff members.

Allen told The News Service of Florida on Tuesday that the long-term care cases in Suwannee County stem from the Suwannee Health and Rehabilitation Center in Live Oak, about two blocks from where he lives.

"This nursing home is in my district and so I consider these people my constituents, and somebody has got to care for them," Allen said, explaining his decision to speak with the press about the nursing home. "I've spoken with employees there who want to remain anonymous for fear of losing their jobs, but they are scared. They want the National Guard to come in there and clean the place up."

Suwannee Health and Rehabilitation Center did not reply to requests for comment this week. Neither did the Suwannee County Emergency Operations Center.

Allen said he has kept abreast of infections in the facility through extended family members and friends who have loved ones there. He also reviews state data.

And on Monday, Allen sat in his parked car outside the facility to watch the comings and goings.

"I worry about the people. I know them. I know those who work there," Allen said. "I don't want to be like the place in Seattle on TV every night where they start hauling them out of there, dead."

As of Friday morning, Thursday evening, Florida had 17,531 cases of COVID-19 and 390 deaths, according to the state Department of Health.

COVID-19, PRISON EDITION Corrections workers, inmates and their families are growing increasingly frightened as the virus begins to spread within the country's third-largest prison sys-

tem.

The number of inmates at a Santa Rosa County prison who have tested positive for COVID-19 skyrocketed to 30 on Thursday, according to the Florida Department of Corrections.

Thursday's tally at Blackwater River Correctional Facility in Santa Rosa County was a jump from a Wednesday report of just four positive cases among prisoners.

All but one of the state's 31 inmates who have tested positive for COVID-19 are located at the Milton facility, operated by The Geo Group, a private prison contractor. The other prisoner is housed at Sumter Correctional Institution in Bushnell, according to corrections officials.

In addition to the 30 inmates at Blackwater, six employees at the prison have been diagnosed with COVID-19.

Officials with the Department of Management Services, the state agency that oversees private prison contracts, have not revealed how many inmates with COVID-19 symptoms have been placed in isolation at Blackwater or how many of the facility's inmates and staff have been tested.

Corrections officials maintain they are taking many measures to prevent the spread of the virus within the system, which has roughly 94,000 inmates, 143 facilities and about 23,000 workers. For example, new inmates are placed in quarantine, and inmates in the general population can request temperature checks, the Department of Corrections said in an email Wednesday.

The corrections agency, however, won't reveal how many inmates have been tested for COVID-19 in prisons operated by the state.

The lack of information "is very troubling," Southern Poverty Law Center staff attorney Sumayya Saleh told the News Service on Tuesday.

"We know that once the virus is inside, it is very difficult to contain it, and Floridians have a right to know what is happening to 95,000 people in the state," she said.

COVID-19, ELECTION EDITION Florida election supervisors are asking DeSantis for emergency measures they say will help cope with an anticipated "significant statewide shortage" of poll workers later this year because of the novel coronavirus.

The local officials want the governor to issue an executive order allowing supervisors to designate additional or alternative early voting sites, give counties the option of adding an extra week to the two-week early voting period and allow people to cast ballots at early voting sites through Election Day.

"While we anticipate that some level of in-person voting will continue, we believe that based on our March 17, 2020 election, alternatives or additional voting methods must be made available to counties," Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones wrote to DeSantis on Tuesday.

The supervisors also want DeSantis to suspend a state law requiring at least one polling place in each precinct.

"This will allow the supervisor the option to relocate or consolidate polling places with early voting sites," Jones, president of the Florida Supervisors of Elections organization, wrote.

But Florida Democratic Party Chairwoman Terry Rizzo warned that "limiting polling locations could disenfranchise voters in large cities."

Democrats hailed the effort to expand vote-by-mail and early voting but said it didn't go far enough and are pushing to do away with in-person voting during the 2020 elections in August and November.

The possibility of all-mail ballots --- which Florida's supervisors said they are not prepared to carry out this year --- has sparked a partisan divide.

In a Twitter post Wednesday morning, President Donald Trump told Republicans to "fight very hard" against statewide mail-in voting.

"Democrats are clamoring for it," the president, who acknowledged that he voted by mail in March, wrote. "Tremendous potential for voter fraud, and for whatever reason, doesn't work out well for Republicans."

STORY OF THE WEEK: The novel coronavirus continued to spread in Florida's long-term care facilities and prisons, as the number of COVID-19 cases in the state climbed each day.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "He called me panicking and scared, and said, 'Momma, they are leaving us here to die.'" --- Natausha Hunt, whose son, Gary Ford, is housed at Blackwater River Correctional Facility, where 30 inmates and six employees have tested positive for COVID-19.

BACKROOM BRIEFING: OUT OF THE LOOP? April 9, Jim Turner

TALLAHASSEE --- Democratic members of Congress represent some areas of Florida hit hardest by COVID-19, but they contend they've been left out of the loop on state efforts to slow the spread of the deadly disease.

In a Zoom conference call on Tuesday, several Democrats repeatedly said Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and his office have refused to talk or make agency heads available to them.

Congresswoman Debbie Mucarsel-Powell, who represents part of Miami-Dade County and Monroe County, called it "frustrating" trying to work with the office and that she hasn't been able to get "clear and straight" information.

Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Broward County added, "I wouldn't expect him to be getting on a call with us all the time. But they won't put anyone on a call with us. I don't need to talk to the governor. I just need him to do his job. But we do have a need to interact with his agency heads because we're trying to troubleshoot things for our constituents and be able to make sure we can get the information out to them."

Miami-Dade and Broward by far top the state in cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus.

DeSantis' office didn't reply to a request for comment. But if it's any comfort to the Democrats, DeSantis' published daily calendars indicate he also hasn't been talking a lot with Republican members of the congressional delegation.

From March 1, when DeSantis directed state Surgeon General Scott Rivkees to declare a public health emergency, through Wednesday, DeSantis' published calendars listed just four calls with three members of the delegation.

DeSantis talked with U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio on March 17 and Tuesday, Congressman Matt Gaetz on March 27, and Congressman Michael Waltz on March 28. All are Republicans.

In the same time, DeSantis had 30 calls involving mayors and local-government managers and administrators and 22 with individual sheriffs, the Florida Sheriffs Association or the Florida Police Chiefs Association.

DeSantis has been on the line with President Donald Trump six times and Vice President Mike Pence eight times. DeSantis has also had four calls with Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp.

DeSantis also held 31 news conferences or "livestream" briefings, mostly from Tallahassee, but also from Miami, Miami-Gardens, Pembroke Pines, The Villages, Orlando, Tampa

and West Palm Beach. He had five interviews on Fox News.

IF IT'S NOT ONE THING ... Rubio and fellow U.S. Sen. Rick Scott, R-Fla., want coronavirus-protection guidelines for the six-month hurricane season, which begins June 1.

In a letter to Federal Emergency Management Agency Administrator Peter Gaynor, Florida's senators want to know how Centers for Disease Control and Prevention social-distancing protocols can be carried out if hurricane shelters fill up and people rush out to buy storm supplies.

"It is our hope that the pandemic will quickly pass, but all points indicate we will be dealing with this virus for the foreseeable future," the senators wrote. "In this new normal, our goal is to make sure that Floridians have their hurricane plans in place as soon as possible."

HOW AM I DOING? At least judging from a couple of polls, DeSantis apparently is doing better than the president in handling the pandemic.

But matched against his counterparts in other states, and in the eyes of pundits, DeSantis' COVID-19 efforts have room to improve.

In a national Microsoft News poll, governors averaged 27 percentage points higher than Trump in how their responses to COVID-19 are viewed.

However, the spread between Trump and Florida's governor is closer.

DeSantis received a 53 percent favorable rating in the Microsoft poll, tied with Missouri Gov. Mike Parson and 1 percentage point better than Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey. Trump had a 45 percent approval rating from Floridians.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine and Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, both Republicans, were at the top of the list with approval ratings of 85 and 84 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, a University of North Florida poll released Monday had DeSantis at 51 percent approval for his handling of the virus and 46 percent disapproval. Trump was at 45 percent approval, strongly or somewhat, and 53 percent disapproval.

The conservative website Breitbart touted the results for DeSantis, with a headline declaring; "Majority of Floridians Approve of Gov. Ron DeSantis's Handling of Coronavirus."

"The majority approval for DeSantis follows contentious weeks of critiques against the governor, whose critics say he waited too long to issue a statewide stay-at-home order," Breitbart said. "From the onset, DeSantis advocated a more measured, 'surgical' approach to the pandemic threatening the state, leaving more aggressive measures to local officials. All the while, DeSantis took aggressive action against travelers from coronavirus hotspots, requiring a 14-day quarantine for those fleeing New York and Louisiana."

But DeSantis also faces criticism, with The Economist labeling him as "Trump's and the coronavirus's favourite governor."

An opinion piece in Politico Magazine by contributing editor Bill Scher said six governors were poised to break out and another six "risk serious damage to their political futures." DeSantis topped the risk category.

"DeSantis is one of Trump's favorite governors and a potential 2024 presidential prospect. But he has made a bad first impression on the rest of the country by failing to fully shut down Florida's beaches before or after they were overrun with partiers on spring break, many of whom then traveled home to locations throughout the United States," Scher wrote.

TWEET OF THE WEEK: "Why go to an island? Florida is your huckleberry. @FloridaDBPR will get your fighters licensed and we will make it work. Then remember us when all the cool kids want to date you again, that Florida tried to help out when nobody else would." --- Florida

Department of Business and Professional Regulation Secretary HalseyBeshears (@HalseyBeshears), urging Ultimate Fighting Championship events to be held in Florida instead of on a private island during the pandemic.

TAX 'HOLIDAYS' TEED UP FOR DESANTIS April 8, 2020 NSF Staff

A tax package featuring sales-tax “holidays” in advance of hurricane season and the upcoming school year has gone to Gov. Ron DeSantis. Legislative leaders on Wednesday formally sent the package (HB 7097) to DeSantis, who will have until April 23 to sign, veto or let the bill become law without his signature. The proposed tax cuts were scaled back in the final days of the 2020 legislative session to bolster reserves because of the novel coronavirus pandemic. The final version is expected to reduce state and local revenues next fiscal year by \$47.7 million, according to a staff analysis. The package features a three-day back-to-school “holiday” from sales taxes in early August on clothes, school supplies and personal computers and a seven-day disaster-preparedness holiday in May and June as the six-month hurricane season gets underway. Other parts of the bill involve policy changes, such as a change that could lead to more local capital-outlay tax dollars going to charter schools. Another change deals with requirements for hospitals to qualify for a charitable tax exemption. Also, the bill would increase a population threshold from 750,000 to 950,000 for counties that can use tourist-development tax dollars for zoos, fishing piers and nature centers. The House initially approved a bill that sought \$120.5 million in state and local tax cuts, but legislative leaders scaled back the bill amid economic fallout from the coronavirus. The initial House proposal, in part, would have expanded a tax discount on aviation fuel, provided a one-time \$2 million tax credit for rental-car companies and reduced the communications-services tax, which is collected on such things as cell phones and cable and satellite television.

ADVANCES: WEEK OF APRIL 5, 2020 April 3, 2020 NSF Staff

TALLAHASSEE --- As the realities of the novel coronavirus began to sink in across the country last month, the images from Florida beaches told a different story.

Crowds of people, many of them spring breakers, gathering on the sand and having a good time.

Gov. Ron DeSantis resisted calls to close beaches across the state to prevent the spread of the virus, focusing instead on preventing large crowds and calling for “social distancing.” DeSantis largely left beach-closure decisions to local officials, who went ahead in most coastal areas with closures.

“If you have a mother just walking down the beach with her daughter, I think that can be done safely,” DeSantis said at one point last month. “If they (local governments) are willing to put the resources in, I want to give them a chance to do it. That is much different than (a beach partier) doing a Jell-O shot off somebody’s stomach. We are not tolerating that. We’ve told them that the party is over, and I am glad they’ve finally listened.”

But Santa Rosa Beach attorney Daniel Uhlfelder saw the issue differently. He filed a lawsuit seeking to force DeSantis to order statewide beach closures. The lawsuit described DeSantis’ refusal to issue such an order as an “abject failure of his obligation to faithfully execute the Florida statutes, observe the Florida Constitution and thereby uphold his oath of office.”

The case will play out Tuesday, when Leon County Circuit Judge Kevin Carroll holds a hearing that is expected to include debate about DeSantis’ motion to dismiss the lawsuit and Uhlfelder’s request for an injunction requiring statewide beach closures.

DeSantis' attorneys point to his discretion in determining how to use his emergency powers.

"To be sure, plaintiff (Uhlfelder) may believe a variety of alternative actions are superior to those of the governor," the motion to dismiss the case said. "But just because plaintiff believes he knows best does not confer a justiciable controversy."

WEEKLY ROUNDUP: SAFER AT HOME April 3, 2020 Ana Ceballos

Recap and analysis of the week in state government and politics

Coronavirus

TALLAHASSEE --- Gov. Ron DeSantis this week asked all Floridians to do what might have been unimaginable more than a month ago: Don't leave the house, unless you absolutely have to.

The Republican governor resisted making the request for almost two weeks. But on Wednesday, DeSantis caved after a White House task force projected the novel coronavirus could cause at least 100,000 deaths with mitigation efforts in place and expanded social-distancing guidelines.

"Even though there are a lot of places in Florida that have very low infection rates, it makes sense to make this move now," DeSantis told reporters.

As of Thursday night, the number of coronavirus cases in Florida had surged past 9,000. Cases had been confirmed in 60 of the state's 67 counties, with the largest concentrations in heavily populated South Florida. The death toll had reached 144 people from COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the coronavirus.

DeSantis' unprecedented move to ask all Floridians to stay home to prevent the spread of the virus came with exceptions, including for people to "obtain or provide essential services or conduct essential activities."

Under his executive order, people also are allowed to leave their homes to attend religious services in churches, synagogues and other types of houses of worship. Running, fishing and hunting within social-distancing guidelines are permitted.

"It's less important what you do than how you do it," DeSantis said. "Just think about it as, if you are engaging in an essential activity, are you doing it in a way that is limiting contacts, and if you are, you are probably going to be OK."

'NOT HANDLING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE' Paper applications for jobless benefits will soon be accepted as Florida's rapidly growing ranks of out-of-work people have overwhelmed the online unemployment-compensation system.

DeSantis on Thursday expanded the way people can file applications for benefits while directing agency heads from throughout state government to find employees --- many now working from home because of the coronavirus --- to "beef up" unemployment-assistance call centers.

He also directed Department of Economic Opportunity Executive Director Ken Lawson to purchase software to add capacity to the online system.

"We're in a situation where this system is not handling the needs of the people of Florida in an adequate way," DeSantis told reporters at the Capitol. "So, we need to do more to be able to get relief to the people of Florida."

DeSantis also issued an executive order to provide temporary relief from certain mortgage foreclosures and evictions for 45 days.

As of Thursday, the Department of Economic Opportunity had received more than

348,000 unemployment applications in the past two weeks, with an additional 2.1 million telephone calls for assistance in navigating the online system and the requirements to qualify for benefits.

In all of 2019, the Department of Economic Opportunity received just over 307,000 applications for benefits. And from August 2018 to February of this year, the call center fielded 2.39 million calls.

Democrats and labor leaders have repeatedly criticized the unemployment system --- both for the technical problems and for relatively sparse state benefits. In calling for changes last week, the Florida AFL-CIO described the system as “badly broken.”

FEARS OF CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK BEHIND BARS

Prison workers, inmates and their loved ones have grown more fearful of a coronavirus outbreak in Florida’s prison system as they saw the number of workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 climb to 16 this week.

On the front lines, prison employees who are reporting to work are worried that they don’t have gloves, facemasks and hand sanitizer to protect them from the highly contagious disease.

Mothers of inmates are frantically reaching out to state lawmakers for help.

“I’ve heard from a number of constituents who are worried that their loved ones are sitting ducks and that during a pandemic, they are going to get infected and that the state is not going to help them,” Rep. Carlos Guillermo Smith, D-Orlando, told The News Service of Florida.

Senate Criminal and Civil Justice Appropriations Chairman Jeff Brandes, R-St. Petersburg, said he is “getting inundated with requests from families to look into certain activities.”

Corrections officials, however, maintain that they are prepared to handle a potential outbreak.

Prisons are on lockdown, and all face-to-face visitations have been canceled. Prison officials are also telling inmates to wash their hands frequently, for at least 20 seconds, as health guidelines recommend. Inmates largely have been restricted to interacting with other prisoners housed within their dorms.

But Jim Baiardi, who leads the state corrections chapter of the Florida Police Benevolent Association, said the Department of Corrections needs to come up with a plan in case a large number of correctional officers are infected. Prisons already have staffing issues, he said. And a pandemic could cause even more strain on staffing levels.

A South Florida prison educator, who asked to remain anonymous because he is afraid of being fired, said in an interview he is concerned about what would happen if hundreds of prisoners become infected at once.

“Where are they going to take the inmates to get better?” he said.

STORY OF THE WEEK: As the number of coronavirus cases continued to balloon, Gov. Ron DeSantis on Wednesday directed Floridians to stay at home after resisting the move for close to two weeks.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: “The problem with the prisons is that we are a little gated community --- and once it hits there, it’s going to hit. And the window is closing on the department (Department of Corrections) to be able to get this under control.” --- Jim Baiardi, who leads the state corrections chapter of the Florida Police Benevolent Association, about the possibility of a coronavirus outbreak behind bars.

WHY JOIN ABATE OF FLORIDA, INC.?

ABATE is a non-profit Motorcycle Rights Organization whose cause is to EDUCATE the government, motorcyclists and the general public on freedom, rights, road safety, and awareness of motorcycles on the road.

REQUIREMENTS—must be at least 18 years of age. In does not matter what you or even if you ride. You can be an independent or member of a club or association. All are welcome at meetings.

JOIN FOR THE CAUSE. Everything is voluntary, we understand work and family comes first. We hope you can help in any small way, vote and spread the word.

BENEFITS Your money is used to provide a lobbyist to the state and federal government to watch for our rights and freedom. The State *MasterLink* newsletter every 2 months we bring back from State meeting or read it online. The chapter newsletter is available online at palmbeach.abateflorida.com so is in color, with active Internet links and zoomable. Members get free classified ads in our newsletters.

INSURANCE As an active member you have a \$4,000 **Accidental Death and Dismemberment** policy from American Income Life. You will get a card in the mail from state office to register your beneficiary for ADD insurance. Do NOT mail it, just be sure your family knows about the policy. If you send it in and they try to meet to sell you more so only if you are interested in more insurance. If they bother you contact our State Office to have it stopped. You can mail to the office as Registered letter to have it done when you family notifies. Be sure to renew in time so are always covered! It does not have to be a motorcycle accident.

MOTORCYCLE INSURANCE Palm Beach Chapter members can get an insurance discount with Leslie Kay Progressive insurance company. Contact them for a quote 1-866-367-1788 www.LeslieKays.com The \$3000 accessory package is normal. The State has arranged with Coastal Insurance Company to offer members up to 10% discount and \$3000 parts and accessories coverage. They are at 190 Hwy A1A Suite, Satellite Beach FL. Agent Doug Guido's phone is 888-596-2453. So these are two more options to compare with your company

PRIVACY Your email, address and phone are never given out to anyone except State/Chapter executive board.

EMAILINGS you can be added to a mass mailing which you can opt to be removed at end of email. Usually only do twice a month to let you know our Newsletter is online and remind you of chapter meetings. Local events are included and sometimes urgent matters may be included. No one will see your email **PHONE TEXT** another way to communicate with members. Your phone number may be added to our text alert system To change or add the chapter email is palmbeach.abateflorida@gmail.com Our website is palmbeach.abateflorida.com

We have a Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/AbatePalmBeachChapter>

Mail: **ABATE - Palm Beach Chapter, P.O. Box 530944, Lake Park, FL 33403**

Another benefit of chapter membership in ABATE of FL Palm Beach is having a free business card in newsletter and free newsletter classified for items to sell or acquire. Support your brothers and sisters when possible, Besides a \$4,000 ADD insurance policy, discount Leslie Kay insurance, we are looking into other benefits for members. We are always in need of more paid advertisers so find any business to benefit from our low rates and support our newsletter and chapter.

A.D.D. INSURANCE POLICY UPDATE

We all realize the \$4,000 Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance policy if one of the best benefits of being an ABATE member. That is one reason to keep your membership up to date. You MUST name someone to get the money in case of death to prevent taxes and being in probate court. So when you receive the yellow card mailed from our state office, you can complete it and mail to insurance company. Most likely an agent will contact you even if you said not to. If they do be, SURE to get their name and number upfront. They do NOT need to visit you even to deliver the certificate. If they insist or get push, contact ABATE of FL. main office and report it but you MUST have the agents' name and number for action to be taken. Otherwise you may just return the completed yellow card to ABATE to have on file. Then be sure your survivors know to contact ABATE for the benefits.

STATE OFFICE: ABATE OF Florida, Inc. PO Box 2520, Deland, FL 32721-2520

Phone: (386) 943-9610 Fax: same Email: flabate@bellsouth.net

Get your card at chapter meeting or our table at events. Keep membership up to date for the insurance



ABATE OF FLORIDA INC. PALM BEACH CHAPTER MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



Membership Dues: \$20 for 1 year or \$600 for Life Membership per person

Fill out form, print, sign, and attach your check or money order and mail to:

ABATE — Palm Beach Chapter

PO Box 530944 Lake Park FL 33403

ALL APPLICATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY Will Palm Beach Chapter be your HOME voting Chapter
NEW Member: Year or Life Renew: Transfer: Address Change:

First : Last : Road :

Address:

City: State: Zip (full): -

Phone: Cell: Text notification Yes No

Email for News Alerts

Registered Voter? Yes No State House: State Senate: US Dist:

How can you best help ABATE? Time, Labor, Money, Other

State newsletter the *MasterLink* every other month online and our Chapter newsletter
The Chrome Chronicles is online at start of month in color with active Links.

MEMBERSHIPS FEE \$

ALL APPLICATIONS ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

SIGNATURE Date:

MEMBERSHIP CARD / PATCHES CAN BE GOTTEN AT CHAPTER MEETING (on the third Sunday of Month usually) OR MAILED WITHIN 30 DAYS. LIFE CARD MAY TAKE LONGER AS PICKED UP AT STATE MEETINGS EVERY OTHER MONTH

SOAKED & SORE ASS RIDE 2020
June 13th 2020

Registration Starts at 8am
 • First Out By 9am • Last Out 10am
 Last Hand In By 8pm • Awards At 9pm
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Hands are \$40/person or \$70/Couple (Couples get 2 of each item)
 Single Riders (\$40 - 3 Poker Hands, T-Shirt & Patch at End Stop)
 Double Riders/Couples - (\$70 - 3 Poker Hands EACH, (2) T-Shirts & (2) Patches at End Stop)

CALL FULL THROTTLE FOR MORE INFO 727-935-4875

23rd Annual Full Throttle Soaked and Sore Ass Poker Run!

Starting in Clearwater at Quaker Steak and Lube and ending in Islamorada in the Florida Keys. Tentatively we will be at Hog Heaven for our end stop. Book your hotel rooms online at Hotels.com or any other hotel booking sights on or around Islamorada. This is a 300+ mile ride, Each registration will receive 3 poker hands, there will be 7 stops, and at the end stop you will receive a t-shirt, patch and completion certificate. Couples will receive doubles of everything and registration is \$70.

Pre-registration is happening now online at:
<https://full-throttle-multi-media-inc.square.site/>

Registration, day of, starts at 8am on June 13th, with the first bike out at 9am and last bike out by 10am. Awards will be at 9pm

We will be paying the 1st, 2nd 3rd and worst poker hands!

For more info call 727-935-4875

PLAN B - IF THE KEYS DO NOT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.....

WILL BE GOING TO ST. AUGUSTINE!!!

Making final decision on this Tuesday May 26th

Next Palm Beach Chapter Meeting VFW POST 4143

CANCELLED 3rd Sunday May 17 , 2020 11:30

Directions: 2404 Broadway (US1), Riviera Beach - Exit I-95 at Blue Heron Blvd, go east to Broadway (US1) turn south and is 1 block on east side. **Bike Parking is on south side of building.**

Support the VFW by having breakfast 9 am to Noon

GOALS & PURPOSES OF ABATE

To print a newsletter to keep all bikers informed with regard to legislative actions and events around the state and throughout the country.

To become a powerful and viable political force in legislative matters concerning all motorcyclists rights.

To provide a lobbyist to represent ABATE of Florida, Inc. on the state and national level.

To promote voter registration and motivate members to write their legislators.

To promote safe riding habits without infringing on individual rights.

To educate the public about motorcycle awareness.