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Agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement detain an immigrant after a court hearing at the Connecticut Superior Court on July 3 in Stamford, Connecticut.

JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

Some migrants opt to speed deportation

More pleading guilty out of fear of getting stuck in system

Ana Goni-Lessan
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

In a cold courtroom in downtown Tallahassee, Isabela Hurtado sat in a wooden pew. It had been over a month since she last saw her father.

On May 29, he was getting ready for work at a construction site near the capital city’s CollegeTown. On July 2, he was in an orange jumpsuit, shackled by the hands and by the ankles, waiting to see a federal judge.

“All I wanted to do in that moment was cry, but I had to contain myself,” Hurtado, 19, said.

She looked at her dad, Juan Hurtado Solano, who sat in a chair next to his public defender. He turned around and smiled. Minutes later, he pleaded guilty to illegally reentering the United States, a federal crime with a potential punishment of up to two years in prison and \$250,000 fine.

See **DEPORTATIONS**, Page 7A



A group of men from Nicaragua watch a coworker who is being detained at a construction zone in Tallahassee raided by immigration agents May 29.

ANA GONI-LESSAN/TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

New state emergency law affects all counties

Building bans, rooster limits run afoul of new builder-backed measure

John Kennedy
Capital Bureau
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

TALLAHASSEE – One county has postponed plans to ban roosters in some neighborhoods; others worry about pausing new construction or re-pairing damaged wetlands.

Local governments across Florida are confronting a powerful new state law this summer which critics say clearly favors developers by encouraging building and rebuilding – even in areas hit by hurricane damage and floods.

“It defies logic,” said Jamie Cole, a Fort Lauderdale attorney in discussion with several local governments about a possible lawsuit challenging the new measure.

“We can learn from a hurricane, say, that certain areas flood terribly,” he added. “So, if a city wants to pass an ordinance that says that if you redevelop, you’ve got to make houses a little higher. Well, now, we can’t do that.”

The measure (SB 180), signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis on June 26, is a broad emergency management law backed almost unanimously in the Legislature. It blocks local governments from making “more restrictive or burdensome” changes to their comprehensive plans or land development codes.

Every Florida county affected by new emergency law

The bill targeted Florida counties listed in last year’s federal disaster declarations for the three hurricanes that hit the state: Debby, Helene and Milton. But since every Florida county was included in at least one of those 2024 designations, the new restrictions apply statewide.

Also, the ban on land use and development changes is retroactive back to August last year. It ends in October 2027 but can be automatically extended whenever a hurricane hits within 100 miles of a community.

Also worrisome to cities and coun-

See **LAW**, Page 7A

New Hooters opens at Lake Deaton Plaza in The Villages

Julie Garisto
Leesburg Daily Commercial
USA TODAY NETWORK

Hooters in The Villages opened this week at the Lake Deaton Plaza, and social media has been abuzz about the new restaurant.

The wings-and-things chain restaurant at 700 Kristine Way hosted a grand opening with a ribbon-cutting on July 7.

Some on social media have complained that it is yet another chain res-

taurant, while others welcomed the new Hooters with an open mind and hope that it will go above and beyond to make itself a part of The Villages community.

The location is 4,500 square feet inside and offers an outdoor patio. More than 70 employees have been hired there, and the restaurant is open daily from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.

There are two Hooters corporations. The Villages’ spot is owned by HMC

See **HOOTERS**, Page 9A



The original Hooters’ wings, according its founders/owners, HMC Hospitality Group, “are fresh, never frozen, shaken in a choice of over 15 sauces and rubs.”

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