



Fed minutes show officials dealing with policy split

BUSINESS, 10A

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FL family cringes at \$3,430 bill

'We got another bill ... This is not sustainable'

Anne Geggis
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Subsidies that ended with 2025 after helping millions of Floridians pay for their Obamacare could be restored retroactive to Jan. 1 with a stroke of President

Donald Trump's pen before the last gavel falls on this congressional term.

A Jan. 8 U.S. House vote approved a three-year extension of the enhanced Obamacare subsidies that were helping about 4.7 million Floridians afford their health insurance, either through direct payments to their insurance companies or tax credits at the end of the year.

But the Senate has yet to take up the subsidy extension and, without that chamber's approval and Trump's signature, the House vote for renewing the

health care subsidies will expire at the end of the current congressional term, Jan. 3, 2027.

The clock is ticking much faster for Steve Reyes, a Hollywood airplane parts distributor, who doesn't know how much longer he can keep paying his health insurance premiums which have ballooned from the \$982 a month he was paying last year to the \$3,430 monthly bill he's paying in 2026 to cover his family of four.

See BILL, Page 5A



Lubna Mustafa displays halal food available at Jerusalem Mediterranean Market in Lakeland.
ANDY KUPPERS/THE LEDGER

Halal grocery offers items for holy month of Ramadan

Paul Nutcher
Lakeland Ledger | USA TODAY NETWORK

The holy month of Ramadan during the ninth month of the Islamic calendar began on Feb. 17 across the world.

Ramadan is the holiest month in Islam. For Muslims around the world, it's a time to come together to pray, celebrate community, do charity work and fast during all daylight hours, among other traditions.

See RAMADAN, Page 3A

Polk fueling station that would pinch wildlife corridor denied for now

Paul Nutcher
Lakeland Ledger | USA TODAY NETWORK

R&L Carriers plans for a private truck refueling station in unincorporated Lakeland near Interstate 4 that could obstruct a wildlife underpass has been denied by Polk County, but the decision can be appealed.

The land at 8425 Epicenter Blvd. in Lakeland falls within the Green Swamp Area of Concern and as such, development must not be within its wetlands. The parcel is also potentially an obstruction to a portion of a wildlife corridor.

R&L Carriers' application proposed development of wetlands and floodplain areas within the wildlife corridor that connects the new I-4 wildlife crossing overpass and SR 33 underpass to the Green Swamp Protection Area.

As of noon on Thursday, Feb. 19, the applicant had not reapplied, according to the Polk County Land Division.

R&L also applied for an environmental resource permit with the Southwest Florida Water Management District, commonly known as Swiftmud, in July. The regulatory step is required when a development affects wetlands or surface water flows.

See CORRIDOR, Page 3A



Site map showing plans for a truck refueling station near an I-4 wildlife corridor overpass in Polk County. FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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