



ANALYSIS: Trump short on foreign policy wins

NEWS, 6A

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Price of groceries in Florida ranks high

Clayton Park

Daytona Beach News-Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

As grocery prices keep climbing, a new national report has ranked Florida tied with two other states as having the country’s sixth-highest average weekly grocery costs.

The latest ranking by WorldPopulationReview.com coincides with the issuing of the Department of Labor’s latest Consumer Price Index on Aug. 12. The CPI report found that the annual rate of overall inflation slowed in July to 3.4%, down from 3.5% in June, while the annual increase in the average price of groceries — i.e., “food at home” — held steady at 2.7%, compared with the previous month.

Despite the dip in inflation in July, prices are still rising, just at a slower pace.

“It’s still going in the wrong direction,” said Ormond Beach resident Carrie Torres. “When I go to the grocery store, I’m flabbergasted. Cereal has gone up exponentially. I’ve also noticed that anything in aluminum cans has gone up as well.”

What items have gone up most and what has gotten cheaper?

Grocery items that saw the biggest increases in price in July, compared with a year ago, include instant coffee (up 15.8%), beef roasts (up 13.5%), fresh tomatoes (up 12.8%), and fresh apples (up 11.1%), according to the latest CPI numbers.

The overall price of breakfast cereal is up 4.1% year over year, while canned fruits and vegetables have risen 3.7%, compared with July 2025.

Lettuce was the biggest decliner in terms of price in July, compared with the previous month, down 16.4%. The chief reason: a multi-state outbreak (including Florida) in cyclospora infections linked to iceberg lettuce grown in Mexico and distributed by Taylor Farms from June 29 through July 16.

Even so, the national average price of lettuce in July was still up 7.5% from a year ago.

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Customers shop at Publix at Westport Square in Port Orange on Feb. 6. The employee-owned Lakeland-based chain on Aug. 3 reported \$31.9 billion in sales and \$2.5 billion in net earnings in the first half of 2026, up 1.5% and 2.7% respectively from a year ago.

CLAYTON PARK/USA TODAY NETWORK-FLORIDA

Polk County conducts prescribed burn at Circle B



Candice Knothe, Polk County’s senior environmental specialist sets a fire line in tall brush at Circle B Bar Reserve in Lakeland on Aug. 21. Polk County was conducting a prescribed burn along the reserve’s Eagle Roost trail to burn away overgrowth. PHOTOS BY ANDY KUPPERS/THE LEDGER



A palm tree ignites during a prescribed burn at Circle B Bar Reserve in Lakeland on Aug. 21. Polk County environmental crews were burning away old overgrowth along the Eagle Roost trail as part of the county’s land management program.



Chad Allison, Polk County’s land and water natural areas manager, and Sydney Houck, the natural resources educator, set old, overgrown grass ablaze along Eagle Roost trail at Circle B Bar Reserve in Lakeland on Aug. 21.

Israeli company to manufacture ‘air taxis’ in Polk County

Paul Nutter

Lakeland Ledger | USA TODAY NETWORK

Electric-powered “flying cars” could soon be seen over Auburndale now that SunTrax has attracted an Israeli company, AIR, which will operate a 20,000-square-foot facility to manufacture the aircraft.

The SunTrax transportation testing facility is the nation’s first dedicated test site for electric vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, sometimes loosely referred to as “flying cars,” positioning Polk County and Florida as a national leader in advanced air mobility, according to various media reports.

AIR represents a major economic development for Polk County

When Israeli aircraft developer AIR announced it will establish its U.S. headquarters at SunTrax, it was major economic news for Polk County, the Tampa Bay Business Journal reported.

AIR will manufacture its AIR ONE personal eVTOL aircraft and an autonomous cargo aircraft in Auburndale, the Business Journal reported. It will relocate flight-testing operations from South Florida to Polk County.

“We are excited to welcome them to the Central Florida Innovation District,” said Sean Malott, CEO and president of the Central Florida Economic Development Council.

Unlike several other companies locating facilities in Polk County in recent years, AIR has not received any incentives from the county, he said.

“From our discussions, one of the most significant factors in their decision to locate here was the presence of SunTrax and the unique testing and innovation environment it provides for advanced mobility technologies,” Malott said.

Gov. DeSantis announced eVTOL aircraft was coming to SunTrax

In two separate visits to Polk County this year, Gov. Ron DeSantis has said Florida will become a hub for testing eVTOL aircraft, specifically the SunTrax facility in Auburndale.

He suggested future travelers could potentially fly over Interstate 4 congestion between Tampa and Orlando.

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