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# THE NEWS-PRESS

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# Lee Health and insurer still at odds

## 50,000 patients in limbo as contract talks continue

**Liz Freeman**
Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Contract talks may still be taking place between UnitedHealthcare and Lee Health before an end of year cutoff.

The insurance giant says it made an offer Oct. 30 to the nonprofit Lee Health in Lee County to resolve a dispute that will impact thousands of patients covered by UnitedHealthcare. Lee Health is terminating the contract effective Dec. 31.

Lee Health says roughly 50,000 patients will become out-of-network Jan. 1 who are covered by UHC employer-based, individual, and Medicare Advantage plans for seniors 65 and older.

Senior citizens on original Medicare who have UHC Medicare supplemental plans will not be impacted.

Patients who will be affected face changing coverage for the new year or staying with UHC and paying more out of pocket for being out of network if a new contract does not happen.

Lee Health announced in late August that it was terminating its contract with UHC over strained relations and $100 million in outstanding claims.

Lee Health is among the largest nonprofit systems in the state; it has total net operating revenue of $1.9 billion

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# MEETING THE NEW MAYOR



Amber Ware, the current Division Manager of the STARS Complex in Fort Myers, greets students as they depart the bus on Wednesday, Nov. 4. Ware was elected as the next mayor of Fort Myers on Tuesday. She becomes the first Black woman to hold the city's top spot. ANDREW WEST/FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS & NAPLES DAILY NEWS

# FL property tax laws to be revised in special session

**James Call**
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Gov. Ron DeSantis said Nov. 4 he will call Florida lawmakers into special session before year's end to rewrite state property tax laws and implement a voter-approved constitutional amendment that could reshape local government finances for decades.

The special session will require an outgoing governor and lame-duck Legislature to write the rules for one of the most significant tax policy changes in modern Florida history. Lawmakers are expected to decide how Amendment 3 will be implemented, whether local governments will receive state assistance to offset revenue losses and how to prevent cities and counties from replacing property taxes with new fees.

"We've got to do it," DeSantis said Wednesday morning, referring to

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# Costco news brings excitement, and some angst



**In the Know**
Phil Fernandez
Fort Myers News-Press
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If there was any doubt about how passionately Southwest Floridians feel about Costco, the reaction to Cape Coral's mega-plans erased it.

About 1,000 readers responded to our team's coverage last week after city leaders confirmed plans to bring the wholesale retailer's first Cape Coral location to Chiquita Boulevard South, near Pine Island Road. Beyond the roughly 165,000-square-foot warehouse and fueling station, a busy City Council, which also fired its city manager, approved a Costco incentive package this week worth up to $10 million.

The response to Costco plans was overwhelming, emotional and, at times, deeply divided, a lot of it on our News-Press and Naples Daily News Facebook pages.

For many readers, Costco represents something simple: one less trip across the bridge. For others, it represents traffic, growth and public incentives they believe come with too high a price.

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## DeSantis talks about repelling the blue wave

**INSIDE, 7A**






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