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Orlando Sentinel

FINAL EDITION

Saturday, April 26, 2025

\$4.50

Legislature deadlocks over tax relief

Budget talks stalled as Florida lawmakers head home for long weekend

By **Skyler Swisher**
Orlando Sentinel

TALLAHASSEE — State lawmakers are in a budget standstill as they enter the final stretch of their spring session, with legislative leaders and Gov. Ron DeSantis

at odds on how to best provide tax relief to Floridians.

Senate President Ben Albritton told senators Thursday that no spending deal has been reached with the House and that they were free to head home for a three-day weekend. That means legislators won't finish budget negotiations in time to end their session as scheduled on May 2.

“The biggest hurdle at this time is related to tax relief, both the

number and the policy,” Albritton said.

Though it appears Floridians will likely see a tax break of some sort, DeSantis and legislative leaders all have offered different proposals and have yet to reach a consensus. Lawmakers must pass a budget before July 1, and the governor has line-item veto authority over spending.

Albritton and House Speaker Daniel Perez both want to provide

a sales tax break, but the House's plan goes further. DeSantis has called for \$1,000 property tax rebates for primary residences, saying that would be a bigger help for Floridians.

At an event in Naples on Tuesday, DeSantis slammed state representatives, part of a growing rift between him and the Florida House.

“On so many issues, they have just gone AWOL,” he said. “They

are not doing anything to address my call for property tax relief.”

The House's tax plan would lower the sales tax from 6% to 5.25%, providing taxpayers savings of about \$5 billion. The Senate's plan includes about \$3 billion in recurring and one-time tax breaks. It would eliminate sales tax for clothes and shoes priced at \$75 or less, reduce the business rent tax

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Lynx bus riders get on and off buses at the Super Stop on Fernwood Boulevard in Fern Park on Wednesday. Seminole County plans to eliminate nearly all bus routes offered by Lynx and put in place a micro-transit service where a van picks up and delivers riders. **WILLIE J. ALLEN JR./ORLANDO SENTINEL**

Seminole plans to cut most Lynx bus routes

Amid high costs, empty buses, county to try micro-transit service using small vans

By **Martin E. Comas**
Orlando Sentinel

Frustrated by what they see as high costs and low ridership, Seminole County officials plan to cut most Lynx bus routes and launch a micro-transit service that dispatches small vans to homes and offices to shuttle riders around the county.

The plan would leave running the most heavily used routes clos-

est to the Orange County border but would cancel the others that county officials say often have mostly empty buses.

According to details unveiled at a county meeting this week, Seminole would hire a private company by Oct. 1 to provide on-demand, door-to-door van service for most of the county — except in the eastern rural area where Lynx doesn't provide service.

Seminole Commissioners have

long blasted Orlando-based Lynx — which runs buses in Seminole, Orange and Osceola counties — as inefficient and not worth the \$17 million cost this year.

But some longtime Seminole Lynx riders wonder if replacing many routes with a door-to-door, on-demand service would be efficient and dependable.

On a recent morning, Paul Pilkington waited to transfer to a second bus at a Lynx stop in Fern

Park. He frequently uses Lynx for medical appointments, taking buses to get from his home near Longwood to Orlando because he can't afford a car.

“Sure, I think it would be great. It could be awesome,” Pilkington said about the plans. “But I'd like to know how efficient it's going to be.”

“Will they have these vans avail-

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Orlando baseball effort gets \$1.5B push

Funds pledged to help Central Florida lure Rays, build stadium

By **Mike Bianchi**
Orlando Sentinel

Orlando's ongoing effort to lure the Tampa Bay Rays, or perhaps a Major League Baseball expansion team to Central Florida, gained major traction Thursday with the announcement that \$1.5 billion in funding has been pledged to attract an MLB team and build a new stadium.

The announcement was made by the Orlando Dreamers — an organization started by late Orlando Magic co-founder Pat Williams to bring a baseball team to town. The funding, according to the Dreamers, comes in the form of “preliminary letters of intent and verbal commitments from qualified investors.”

“We are extremely pleased with the recent rapid progress in financing interest towards prospective MLB team acquisition,” MLB Hall of Famer and longtime Orlandoan

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FBI arrests Milwaukee judge over ICE case

Jurist is accused of helping man evade immigration agents

By **Alanna Durkin Richer, Devi Shastri and Scott Bauer**
Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — The FBI on Friday arrested a Milwaukee judge accused of helping a man evade immigration authorities, escalating a clash between the Trump administration and local authorities over the Republican president's sweeping immigration crackdown.

Milwaukee County Circuit Court Judge Hannah Dugan is accused of escorting the man and his lawyer out of her courtroom through the jury door last week after learning that immigration authorities were seeking his arrest. The man was taken into custody outside the courthouse after agents chased him on foot.

The judge's arrest dramati-

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Kissimmee cop pleads guilty in use-of-force case

Up to 2 years in prison possible after incident that sparked scandal

By **Cristóbal Reyes**
Orlando Sentinel

The Kissimmee police officer whose brutal beating of a man two years ago sparked a scandal in his department pleaded guilty Friday to felony battery, witness tampering and official misconduct.

Officer Andrew Baseggio now faces up to two years behind

bars and must surrender his law enforcement certification, according to the plea agreement read in Osceola County court.

The beating, the false report he wrote about the incident and the “culture of cover-up” grand jurors said led his superiors to hide his actions and give him only an eight-hour suspension eventually led to the resignation of the then-chief of the Kissimmee Police Department.

Baseggio, hired as a patrol

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Andrew Baseggio waits for his hearing to start at the Osceola County Courthouse on Friday. **RICARDO RAMIREZ BUXEDA/ORLANDO SENTINEL**