

## Watch World Cup

Dozens of venues are hosting viewing parties, events in Orlando



## Election help

Maxwell: Florida's 2026 ballot is packed, confusing. **Local & State, Page 3**

## Major League Baseball

Bianchi: With tourist dollars in play, Orange needs a team. **Sports, Page 1**

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## Ratings agencies: Tax cuts could hurt

Property tax overhaul risks destabilizing local governments

By Jeffrey Schweers  
ORLANDO SENTINEL

A massive overhaul of the state's property tax structure being pushed by Gov. Ron DeSantis would have a sweeping impact on the financial stability of local governments across Florida and place devastat-

ing constraints on their ability to borrow money, according to three of the nation's biggest credit rating agencies.

If approved by 60% of voters in November, the property tax amendment would take effect Jan. 1. It would incrementally raise the tax exemption on homesteaded properties, adding \$100,000 to the current \$50,000 exemption next year, raising it to \$250,000 in two years, and increasing it in line with inflation until homestead taxes are nearly

eliminated.

Ultimately, the measure would slash a quarter of what local governments currently collect to pay for necessary services and pay off bond debt, an amount Florida's Revenue Estimating Conference estimates could eventually total nearly \$12 billion annually.

"If enacted, the expanded exemptions would constrain city and county revenue, increase taxpayer concentration, and reduce financial flexibility," Moody's

Ratings, one of the largest government credit ratings agencies in the country, wrote in a report released Friday.

The three ratings agencies, which also include Standard & Poor's and Fitch, reviewed the proposed tax plan as approved by the Republican-controlled legislature earlier this month.

That version is far less sweeping than DeSantis' original plan, as it takes school taxes out of the mix and eliminates a proposed state

trust fund to help cities and counties more dependent on property tax revenues which would be hit hardest by the cuts.

The rating agencies' warnings echo a number of other criticisms of the plan, including a recent Wall Street Journal report saying it was "a shame that Gov. Ron DeSantis is using his final months in office to push a poorly designed measure on the November ballot that would put

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## Man who killed teenage classmate in '95 released

Supreme Court ruling sparked legal battle over sentence in Lake County murder



**Above:** Photos and newspaper clippings chronicle Orlando Sentinel coverage over the years of the fatal shooting of 13-year-old Joey Summerall at Tavares Middle School in 1995. Keith Johnson, who, at 15 years old, was sentenced to life in prison for the first-degree murder of Summerall, was recently released on parole. Photos at the bottom left show Johnson during a court appearance in 1996 and as an adult before his release this year. Pictured at top center is Dianne Summerall holding a photo of her son, Joey, as she and her daughters, Loukeria Gary, left, and Tiffany Dawson, mark the 20th anniversary of the shooting death in 2015.

By Steven Walker  
ORLANDO SENTINEL

A Lake County man convicted of murdering his classmate at Tavares Middle School 30 years ago has been released from prison and is now in a halfway house, ending a decades-long legal battle triggered by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling.

Keith Johnson, 45, was convicted and sentenced to life

in prison in 1996 for the murder of 13-year old Joey Summerall at Tavares Middle School. Johnson, who was 15, shot Joey 13 times with a 9mm pistol in the hallway of the Lake County school, a case that sent shockwaves through that community.

The judge who presided over the case said Johnson could have also been convicted of robbery because he "robbed this commu-

nity of its innocence."

Prosecutors at the time said there was "no chance" Johnson would ever get parole, but a 2012 Supreme Court ruling gave him a path out of prison. He was released in April and is now living in a halfway house in Gainesville.

Elaine Summerall Howard, Joey's aunt, said in an interview Friday that while she's come to forgive Johnson, he "should not

have been released, if Joey can't be released from death."

"He still has a life, and Joey doesn't," she said, adding that she believes Joey, who was Black, would still be behind bars had he killed Johnson, who is white.

Howard, who was a Tavares police officer at the time, was the first officer to arrive at the school

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## Israel condition could sink peace deal

Iran's call for nation to withdraw troops in Lebanon adds hurdle

By Jon Gambrell,  
Sam Metz and Samy Magdy  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Iran's top diplomat said Tuesday that the tentative deal to end the war with the United States would require Israel to withdraw from Lebanon — a condition Israel has already rejected and that could sink the agreement, leading to the resumption of all-out war.

The deal, which is between the U.S. and Iran, has not been made public, and officials have sometimes offered contradictory interpretations of what is in it. While Israel is not party to the agreement, it is part of the war: It joined the U.S. in launching strikes on Iran on Feb. 28, and has since fought the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group in Lebanon and seized large swaths of that country.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Israel's continued occupation of southern Lebanon would violate the deal.

"Without the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territories they occupied during this war, the war has not fully come to an end," Araghchi said.

A U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, has said the deal does not call for an Israeli withdrawal.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that Israel would remain in Lebanon "as long as necessary."

The negotiations to end the war have been plagued by such disagreements before, leading to a prolonged but uneasy ceasefire that has failed to develop into a permanent end to hostilities and has left the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial waterway for the world's energy supplies, effectively shut.

In other developments, Switzerland's Foreign Ministry said the

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## Ex-Florida nursing school operator pleads guilty to selling diplomas

By Annie Martin  
ORLANDO SENTINEL

The owner of a former South Florida nursing school, accused of selling fake diplomas to students who then used the credentials to become licensed nurses, pleaded guilty this week to some of the federal charges lodged against her.

Carleen Noreus, the former owner of Carleen Health Institute, reached the deal with prosecutors two weeks into her trial in federal court in Fort Lauderdale. In the plea agreement, she admitted to falsifying transcripts and diplomas, giving nurses a way to get licensed and employed though they hadn't received proper train-

ing.

The school was among roughly two dozen former nursing programs that sold fake degrees to more than 7,000 people over the past several years, uncovered in an FBI probe dubbed Operation Nightingale.

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Carleen Noreus, left, leaves the U.S. Federal Building and Courthouse in Fort Lauderdale with her attorney, Kyra Harkins, after a hearing in March. Noreus pleaded guilty to issuing diplomas to students falsely. **AMY BETH BENNETT / SOUTH FLORIDA SUN SENTINEL**