

LATE NIGHT FOR THE LOMBARDI

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Bianca DeSouza sits in court with Assistant Public Defender Elizabeth Ramsey during her sentencing hearing in Circuit Judge Sarah Willis’ courtroom at the Judge Daniel T.K. Hurley Courthouse in downtown West Palm Beach on Jan. 29. DeSouza will avoid a prison term but will serve 10 years of probation.
PHOTOS BY THOMAS CORDY/PALM BEACH POST

‘A loss for everyone’

Treatment, not prison for teen mom whose baby suffocated after birth

Hannah Phillips
Palm Beach Post | USA TODAY NETWORK

WEST PALM BEACH — Bianca DeSouza gave birth to a boy with chubby arms and a cry that only she would hear. He was still warm by the time first responders filed into her bedroom but had gone quiet long before. Their attempts to resuscitate him failed.

Palm Beach County sheriff’s deputies charged DeSouza with aggravated manslaughter in December 2022, a year and a half after the newborn’s death. Investigators say she ignored the child’s cries and let him suffocate against her thigh while she reeled from the delivery in bed at her suburban Boca Raton home.

“I just didn’t do anything,” she told deputies later. “It was like my body stopped working.”

DeSouza, now 23, pleaded guilty to aggravated manslaughter of a child without first negotiating a plea agreement with prosecutors. She returned to court Jan. 28 for the first of a two-day sentencing hearing, hopeful that Circuit Judge Sarah Willis might spare her from prison.

Under Florida’s sentencing guidelines, DeSouza



Circuit Judge Sarah Willis listens to Assistant Public Defender Elizabeth Ramsey during Bianca DeSouza’s sentencing hearing. DeSouza, now 23, pleaded guilty to aggravated manslaughter of a child without first negotiating a plea agreement with prosecutors.

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Numbers show life expectancy in Florida has reached new peak

Aging in the Golden Years
Anne Geggis
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLA.

USA TODAY NETWORK-FLORIDA has a health care series called *Aging in the Golden Years* focused on navigating the financial and physical challenges to emerge as more people reach advanced age and, along with their children, confront a reality for which they will need help preparing. We want to hear what questions you have as you and your loved ones enter new territory. Email reporter Anne Geggis your questions at ageggis@USATODAYCO.com.

The number of years Americans born in 2024 can expect to live has hit a new peak — 79 years — with Florida residents doing even better — a life expectancy just shy of 80, according to new federal data.

The statistic released Jan. 30 is considered a key measure of the nation’s wellness — with the new surge in life expectancy reflecting the nation’s recovery from the COVID-19 epidemic and the decline in drug overdoses.

COVID was no longer among the 10 leading causes of death in 2024, after climbing as high as the third-leading cause of death in 2021.

Another set of national statistics show that the rates of drug overdose death rate declined by 26.2% between 2023 and 2024.

Life expectancy climbed in both Florida and the nation by 7.2 months in 2024 compared to the measure taken in 2023.

Dr. Larry Bush, a Wellington infectious diseases expert, said it’s likely that Florida currently looks better on paper in life expectancy because of how retiree migration is such a big part of population growth here, as opposed to places like Idaho, which depend on babies

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No ‘civil war,’ but GOP leaders clash on major issues

Gray Rohrer
USA TODAY NETWORK - Florida

Near the midway point of the legislative session, House and Senate leaders are at odds on several key issues, including property insurance legislation, agriculture bills, even the timing of unveiling their budgets.

The chambers aren’t necessarily supposed to be in sync already but the recent public sniping from House Budget Chair Lawrence McClure, R-Dover, toward the Senate has heightened tensions in a session where disagreements on major issues like property tax cuts and redistricting have likely already been pushed to special sessions outside of the regular session.

After Senate Appropriations Committee Chair Ed Hooper, R-Clearwater, said his chamber would delay releasing their proposed budget by a week to line up with the House, which planned to roll out their spending plan next week, McClure chided him.

“With respect to Senator Hooper, during this term the Florida Senate has demonstrated little interest in respecting legislative traditions,” McClure posted on X on Feb. 4. “Any timing issues they are having in pulling together their Senate budget have absolutely nothing to do with the Florida House.”

His remarks came one day after Senate President Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, and House Speaker Daniel Perez, R-Miami, appeared at an event together where Albritton insisted there was ‘no civil war’ between the GOP leaders.

The delay compresses the time for the House and Senate to negotiate on the final budget, and increases the likelihood lawmakers would need to extend the 60-day session beyond its scheduled March 13 end date to pass the spending plan. Last year, a dispute over tax cuts led to an extra 45 days of the legislative session before a budget deal was reached.

Agriculture bill aggravation in Florida

The comment from McClure was the second time he sharply chided a Senate leader in recent weeks. He slammed a move by Senate Rules Committee Chair Kathleen Passidomo, R-Naples, on Jan. 27 to postpone a vote on a large agriculture bill, SB 290, after

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