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TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

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Cody Castillo is shown with his wife Makayla, of Crawfordville, and their dogs. Cody Castillo was shot and killed March 21 in the Bahamas during a confrontation with police. PHOTOS PROVIDED BY GOFUNDME

LEON SCHOOLS

\$7.8M slashed amid budget shortfall

Alaijah Cross

Tallahassee Democrat
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

The Leon County School Board approved \$7.8 million in budget cuts Tuesday, trimming arts and athletics funding, district administrative staffing and funding for community groups as leaders work to close a looming deficit.

The vote follows months of sometimes heated discussions after Superintendent Rocky Hanna outlined reductions aimed at addressing an anticipated \$8 million deficit next year.

The approved reductions include:

- **\$2,381,310:** District center reductions for employees not based in schools.
- **\$4,800,048:** Staffing plan reductions determined by school principals.
- **\$500,000:** Arts and athletics reductions in money for programs at

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'A moment that changed everything'

Family mourns after local man killed by police superintendent in Bahamas

Jeff Burlew

Tallahassee Democrat
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

In an incident that sparked international headlines and drew the attention of the U.S. Department of State, a Crawfordville, Florida, man was shot and killed in the Bahamas during an encounter with an off-duty senior Royal Bahamas Police Force officer.

Cody Castillo, 31, was killed on the night of Saturday, March 21, outside Da Plantation Bar and Grill, a popular beach spot in Nassau.

And while the Royal Bahamas Police Force said the officer acted out of self-defense, the U.S. Embassy in the Bahamas said Castillo was unarmed and the officer allegedly followed him to his vehicle before shooting him.

According to Bahamas news reports Wednesday, the officer has been charged with murder in the shooting. He was not required to enter a plea to the murder charge when he appeared before Acting Chief Magistrate Ancella Evans and denied bail, according to the Nassau Guardian.

The charge comes hours after Bahamas Prime Minister Philip "Brave" Davis called for a "full and transparent" investigation of the shooting and said that "where the evidence supports criminal charges, the law must move swiftly," The Tribune newspaper in Nassau reported.

"The badge can never place anyone above the law," Davis said.

Bahamas National Security Minister Wayne Munroe said investigators obtained video footage of the incident and

suggested the case could result in charges instead of a Coroner's Court inquest, The Tribune reported.

According to a GoFundMe, Castillo, an electric lineman, was in the Bahamas working for the Pike Corporation, a large firm based in Charlotte, North Carolina, working to upgrade the transmission and distribution network of Bahamas Power and Light.

"Cody was working to support his family with Pike Electric in the Bahamas," the GoFundMe says. "Then, in a moment that changed everything, Cody's life was taken by senseless violence while he was working abroad."

The GoFundMe said that Castillo and his wife, Makayla, were expecting their first child in August. He was

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Judge faces reprimand for remark to lawyers

Jeff Burlew

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USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A judicial review panel found probable cause that Wakulla Circuit Judge J. Layne Smith violated the state's Code of Judicial Conduct when he told lawyers in his courtroom last year that he wanted a deputy to "pull his gun and shoot them."

The Florida Judicial Qualifications Commission, in a 7-page document dated March 23, also recommended to the Florida Supreme Court that Smith face a public reprimand for his comments. Smith could have faced up to removal from



Smith

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Budget battle persists; redistricting, tax issue loom

James Call

USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

To borrow from an old song, Florida's legislative leadership is dancing in the dark, unseen by the public as they negotiate differences in a proposed state budget for 2026-27.

Senate Appropriations chair Ed Hooper, R-Clearwater, and House Budget chair Lawrence McClure, R-Dover, have been out of the news and made no public comments in the two weeks since the Florida Legislature adjourned their regular session without a spending plan for the fiscal year beginning

July 1.

It's the only bill lawmakers are constitutionally required to approve, and it pays the bills for Florida to educate its children, care for the elderly and needy, and protect clean water and air. The individual proposals from the House and Senate are about \$1.4 billion apart: The House wrote a \$113.6 billion spending plan, while the Senate's is \$115 billion.

Lawmakers have until June 30 to work out their differences. If they don't, state government shuts down, meaning non-essential services will be

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Gov. Ron DeSantis gives his State of the State address on opening day of the Florida legislative session on March 4, 2025.

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