

# US vaccine advisers declare not all babies need hepatitis B shot at birth

Some medical groups and state health departments say they will continue to recommend them.

**BY MIKE STOBBE**  
*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — A federal vaccine advisory committee voted on Friday to end the longstanding recommendation that all U.S. babies get the hepatitis B vaccine on the day they're born.

A loud chorus of medical and

public health leaders decried the actions of the panel, whose current members were all appointed by U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. — a leading anti-vaccine activist before this year becoming the nation's top health official.

“This is the group that can't

shoot straight,” said Dr. William Schaffner, a Vanderbilt University vaccine expert who for decades has been involved with ACIP and its work groups.

Several medical societies and state health departments said they would continue to recommend them. While people may have

to check their policies, the trade group AHIP, formerly known as America's Health Insurance Plans, said its members still will cover the birth dose of the hepatitis B vaccine.

For decades, the government has advised that all babies be vaccinated against the liver infec-

tion right after birth. The shots are widely considered to be a public health success for preventing thousands of illnesses.

But Kennedy's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices decided to recommend the birth dose only for babies whose

**See VACCINE, 5A**

## Council moves forward with transportation impact fee hike in Tampa

The city has not raised fees levied on developers since 1989.

**BY NINA MOSKE**  
*Times Staff Writer*

Tampa City Council members gave initial approval on Thursday to increase fees levied on new development to pay for transportation projects.

The so-called multimodal transportation impact fees haven't gone up since 1989, meaning developers pay rates based on decades-old traffic and land use patterns. A recent study commissioned by the city from the consulting firm Fehr & Peers found the hike “necessary, proportional, and directly related to the transportation needs created by new development,” according to a city document.

But some developers questioned the study's findings and said higher fees could raise already steep construction costs. They worried the money would go toward bicycle and pedestrian paths rather than roads.

“It's difficult to accept the justification that a lack of action for 30-plus years is a reason to increase fees to an extreme level,” Stephen Michelini, a local business consultant, wrote in an email to council members last month.

To build a new single-family home in Tampa, developers today pay an average fee of roughly \$1,770. If council members give final approval on the ordinance, that number will climb to an average of more than \$6,600, depending on the location of the home. Rates for new commercial developments also will increase depending on size and location.

The increase would be phased in over the next four years, beginning in June 2026.

**See IMPACT FEE, 2A**



Oil is seen on the water at the site of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill containment efforts in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Louisiana on May 7, 2010. All 28 of Florida's U.S. House members and both U.S. senators united Thursday in a bipartisan letter urging President Donald Trump to keep offshore oil drilling away from the state's coastline. (AP, 2010)

# Every Fla. Congress member to President Trump: Keep drilling away from our coast

The full delegation says expanding offshore oil drilling will threaten military testing operations and harm the state's coastal economy.

**BY MAX CHESNES**  
*Times Staff Writer*

In a rare display of unity, all 28 of Florida's U.S. House members and both U.S. senators joined in a bipartisan letter Thursday urging President Donald Trump to keep offshore oil drilling away from the state's coastline.

The response comes two weeks after the U.S. Department of the Interior unveiled a five-year proposal that would open the eastern Gulf of Mexico to new drilling leases. The plan drew swift condemnation across the political divide, from beachfront city halls to the chambers of Florida's Capitol in Tallahassee.

Further strengthening a coalition against new Gulf drilling, Florida's entire

congressional delegation told Trump on Thursday that if the plan were to move forward, it would violate his 2020 executive order that protected the region from offshore oil.

The letter is significant in that it merges long-standing Republican and Democratic philosophies against Florida offshore drilling — that it could thwart Florida's offshore military testing operations while also harming the state's coastal economy dependent on healthy, biodiverse beaches — into a lockstep call for a course reversal.

“We urge you to uphold your existing moratorium and keep Florida's coasts off the table for oil and gas leasing,” the lawmakers wrote. “Florida's economy, envi-

ronment, and military readiness depend on this commitment.”

The delegation reminded Trump of the devastation caused by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill: It wiped billions of dollars from a now-annual \$127 billion tourism industry that employs more than 2 million people. It also caused “irreparable damage” to beach ecosystems and coastal communities, they said.

“The risks posed by new offshore drilling far outweigh any short-term gains,” the lawmakers wrote.

The federal leaders are aligned with Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has also urged the Trump administration to uphold the 2020 moratorium barring the eastern

**See DRILLING, 2A**



Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier has intervened in a debate between the city of Clearwater and the Church of Scientology. (REBECCA BLACKWELL | AP)

## Some Clearwater residents skeptical of AG's response to Scientology dispute

The City Council on Thursday discussed a letter from Attorney General James Uthmeier.

**BY COLBI EDMONDS**  
*Times Staff Writer*

Some Clearwater residents are criticizing a City Council member for a lack of transparency after he sought legal guidance from the state attorney general on a land dispute with the Church of Scientology.

Without consulting the rest of the dais, City Council member

David Allbritton sent a letter last month to Attorney General James Uthmeier asking if he could clarify who owns a public street downtown that the church wants to develop.

The city attorney had already advised the council that it owns the land and is entitled to attach conditions to its possible transfer to the church.

“I understand, Mr. Allbritton, that you had the legal right to do so, but that's not really the issue that we have with it,” said Angela Drewnoski. “The issue is transparency and trust.”

During the meeting Thursday, Mayor Bruce Rector said the church has for months lobbied for someone to send a letter to Uthmeier about the road. He added that the church went to City Hall to request a copy of Allbritton's letter a few days before it was sent.

**See CLEARWATER, 2A**