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# The Ledger

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2025 | THELEDGER.COM

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## State aims to kill vaccine rules

### Ladapo: Shot mandates drip of ‘disdain,’ slavery’

Ana Goñi-Lessan  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Florida is moving to end all vaccine mandates in the state. “Every last one of them is wrong and drips with disdain and slavery,” said Dr. Joseph Ladapo, Florida’s surgeon general, at a Sept. 3 press conference in Valrico, Hillsborough County. “Who am I to tell you what your child should put in their body? I don’t have that right. Your body is a gift from God,” Ladapo said.

Vaccine requirements are in state law. Ladapo, the state’s top public health official, said lawmakers will “have to choose a side.” To those who don’t want to get vaccinated, he said, “God bless you.” The press conference was a chance for Ladapo, Gov. Ron DeSantis, Lt. Gov. Jay Collins and other state leaders, including Education Commissioner Anastasios Kamoutsas and state lawmakers to appeal to the growing anti-vaccination movement. Ladapo said the Florida Department of Health, which he heads, will repeal the rules within his purview that require vaccines, and that the governor and the Legislature will work to repeal the rest. According to Florida law, immunizations are

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Florida Surgeon General Joseph Ladapo said the Florida Department of Health will repeal its rules requiring vaccines, leaving the governor and Legislature to repeal the rest. ERNST PETERS/THE LEDGER



Lakeland Electric will be the first to test a new liquid-nitrogen-based power-generation system on a utility scale. LEDGER FILE PHOTO

## Lakeland electric to test nitrogen power system

Sara-Megan Walsh  
Lakeland Ledger | USA TODAY NETWORK

Lakeland Electric will become the first to test a new liquid nitrogen power generation system on a utility scale. City commissioners unanimously approved a power purchase agreement with Tennessee-based American Independent Power LLC to pilot a new 5-megawatt liquid nitrogen generator in North Lakeland. Mike Dammer, LE’s manager of emerging technology, said the municipal utility made a connection with

American Independent Power after Tampa-based Block Energy canceled its contract to build 77 homes on a solar-powered microgrid in November 2023. “The mayor charged us, he said, ‘Go find something else,’” Dammer said. “We think we have something there that will function not only as a distributed energy resource but could become useful for us going forward.” Under the agreement, American Independent Power will build a 5-megawatt liquid nitrogen generation

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## Polk State president: State approved use of scholarship funds

Gary White  
Lakeland Ledger | USA TODAY NETWORK

The conflict between a Polk State College trustee and the school’s president has reached a new level. Angela Garcia Falconetti, the college’s president since 2017, took umbrage during the Aug. 25 District Board of Trustees meeting at trustee Ashley Bell Barnett’s suggestion that she had violated protocol by seeking foundation funds to cover the fees of some students. “Madam Chair, I would request that you and the board attorney call our chancellor and look for direction moving forward, because apparently my integrity is being questioned,” Falconetti said to newly elected Board Chair Ann Barnhart. “I’m being looked at as unethical, and that’s not what has occurred here. Everything has been done in a clean, very salient manner, following state statute. And I will end my comments by saying that I’m extremely disappointed by the continued accusations.” During the meeting, Falconetti provided an explanation of the administration’s request to the Polk State College Foundation for up to \$125,000 to assist students in danger of being dropped because of unpaid fees. With approval from the foundation’s board of directors, Polk State used \$38,447 to assist 51 students from the fall 2024 semester, Falconetti said. The college also applied \$50,956 to assist 84 students for the spring 2025 semester, she said. That amounts to about \$89,400.

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Polk State College President Angela Garcia Falconetti, shown in November 2024, defended the college’s use of scholarship money to pay student fees during a Board of Trustees meeting on Aug. 25. ERNST PETERS/THE LEDGER

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Volume 119 | No. 268  
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