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SPORTS, 1B

The Ledger

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2025 | THELEDGER.COM

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Winners of bear permits not known

With hunt underway, FWC not sharing info

Chad Gillis

Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Some Florida hunters say humans should put fear into animals like the Florida black bear, saying the animal is a dangerous apex predator that kills pets, destroys homes and raids refrigerators.

Captain Phil Walter at Gator Guides said the hunt is part of the way the world works, and that people should be able to manage their lands and the wildlife on it the way they see fit.

"In the natural order of things, a predator really needs to fear humans to coexist with us," Walter said. "With no hunts, this apex predator has no fear of humans."

Florida's controversial bear hunt started Dec. 6 and will end Dec. 28.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conser-

vation Commission is overseeing the hunt, and the state granted 172 lottery style permits for Florida black bears.

The state is refusing to release information about the ongoing Florida black bear hunt to the USA Today Network.

USA TODAY made requests in November and again this week for the names of all hunters who won a lottery permit, but the agency has so far failed to meet that request.

The controversial hunt was the idea of FWC chair Rodney Barreto, who

proposed the hunt to the staff in December of 2024.

That's not how hunts are typically approved by government agencies.

Most recommendations for hunts and wildlife management come from a staff level, where the state's experts have evaluated a situation and are looking for a remedy.

Barreto told the FWC to move forward with hunt options last year, and he then

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Nurse at 80: 'I've never thought about retiring'



Carolyn Paget, a full-time registered nurse at NCH Baker Hospital, celebrates her 80th birthday during a surprise party for her. She turns 80 Dec. 15. LIZ FREEMAN/FORT MYERS NEWS-PRESS & NAPLES DAILY NEWS

NCH Baker Hospital throws surprise birthday party

Liz Freeman Fort Myers News-Press & Naples Daily News | USA TODAY NETWORK

Carolyn Paget never imagined NCH Baker Hospital would throw her a birthday party for turning 80. • Or that she would still be logging at least 8,000 steps during a 12-hour shift as a registered nurse in the oncology unit where she has worked for more than two decades. • But her colleagues did throw a birthday party ahead of the big day Dec. 15 for the beloved full-time registered nurse, who goes by the nickname C.P. **See NURSE, Page 2A**

UF neutrality policy raises discussions about First Amendment

Stephany Matat
USA TODAY NETWORK

The University of Florida's policy for institutional neutrality on political and social issues has raised questions about the free speech of its employees and professors – and First Amendment experts are mixed on whether this will promote free expression and academic freedom.

UF's Board of Trustees approved the policy Dec. 5. In a nutshell, it limits the university's institutional and unit leadership teams, such as the administrative leaders and individual college deans, from making statements on political and social issues.

In an email sent to employees Dec. 9, UF interim president Donald Landry said it "clarifies expectations regarding university leadership commentary and proclamations on social issues."

"To be clear, you as university employees still retain the right to express your own opinions, provided you don't use UF communication resources to do so, or state or imply the university's endorsements of those opinions," Landry wrote.

But First Amendment experts have mixed views on this policy.

One provision says the employees retain the right to personal expression in private capacities, but they can't use UF emails, websites, social media, messaging and teleconference systems to do so. But professors can use these resources for "bona fide academic discussion, research, or teaching on political or social topics."

But the policy doesn't fully define "bona fide academic discussion," which can be an issue, said Clay Calvert, a First Amendment expert and nonresident senior fellow at the

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Volume 120 | No. 44
Home delivery pricing inside
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