



## Lake Wales weightlifting team wins 3rd straight county title

SPORTS, 4B

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## DeSantis signs new law, then sued by voter groups

### Legislation requires proof of citizenship

**John Kennedy**

Capital Bureau  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

A measure requiring new Florida voters to provide documented proof of U.S. citizenship was signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis, despite opponents saying it will keep many women, minorities and older voters from casting ballots.

DeSantis signed the legislation (HB 991) April 1, just hours after President Trump enacted an executive order intended to create a nationwide list of verified eligible voters and restrict mail-in voting.

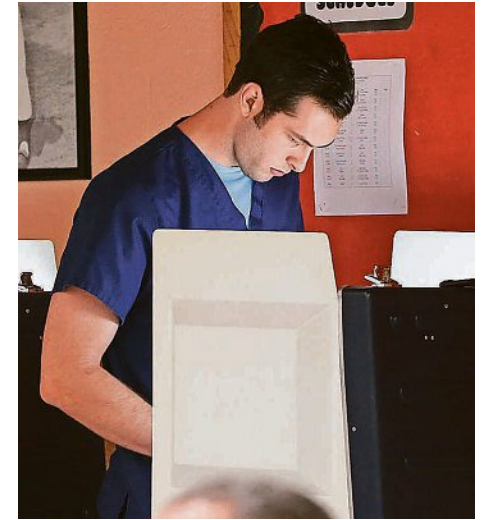
Voting law experts say Trump's order violates the U.S. Constitution by attempting to seize states' power to run elections and is rooted in his false alle-

gations of fraud.

DeSantis sidestepped the president's action when signing the measure in The Villages, the Central Florida retirement community that's frequently used as a welcome backdrop for Republican politicians.

"This bill protects and expands integrity in our voter registration process," DeSantis said, adding, "Our constitution in the state of Florida says only

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**Hunter Burns votes at the Lafayette Community Center for the midterm elections on Election Day, Nov. 6, 2018.**  
ALICIA DEVINE/DEMOCRAT



**Lakeland Regional Health announced March 31 it plans to open a freestanding emergency department in the Winter Haven area by mid-2027, off Winter Lake Road and U.S 17.** PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LAKELAND REGIONAL HEALTH

## Lakeland Regional Health plans 2 more ERs in Polk

### Winter Haven, North Lakeland to get freestanding emergency departments

**Sara-Megan Walsh**

Lakeland Ledger  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Lakeland Regional Health has announced it plans to open two new facilities in Polk County within the next two years.

The Lakeland-based health care provider plans to open its second and third freestanding emergency departments: one in the Winter Haven area and one in North Lakeland.

"We are proud to bring our lifesaving emergency care closer to patients of all ages in Winter Haven and North Lake-

land," Dr. Timothy Regan, LRH's chief medical officer and president of the Lakeland Regional Health Medical Center, said in a news release. "As part of our strategic plan, we continue to expand access to our nationally recognized care."

The Winter Haven location will be off U.S. 17 and Winter Lake Road in neighboring Eagle Lake. It is expected to open in mid-2027. Lakeland Regional's third freestanding emergency department will be off U.S. 98 at Marcum Road in North Lakeland with an anticipated

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**Lakeland Regional Health plans to open its third freestanding emergency department in North Lakeland at U.S. 98 and Marcum Road in early 2028.**

## Polk State considers changing its law firm of 60 years

**Gary White**

Lakeland Ledger  
USA TODAY NETWORK

**BARTOW** – In February, Polk State College trustees bade farewell to Don Wilson, who had served as general counsel for 37 years.

At their next meeting, the District Board of Trustees considered switching to a new general counsel and altering the college's relationship with Boswell and Dunlap, the firm Polk State has employed since its formation in 1964.

Ann Barnhart, chair of the board, made the recommendation during her comments at the March 30 meeting held at the Clear Springs Advanced Technology Center.

Barnhart urged her fellow trustees to forge a deal with Downs Aaron, a firm based in Orlando.

After skeptical questioning during a discussion of more than an hour, trustees voted unanimously to employ Downs Aaron narrowly in the current search for a new president and then decide on hiring the company as general counsel.

Barnhart said that she considered a possible change of counsel as Polk State's contract with Bartow-based Boswell and Dunlap is expiring. She discussed the issue with board chairs at other state colleges, and all recommended either having an in-house counsel or using a firm with a specialty in higher education, Barnhart said.

Anne Kerr, appointed in February as

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