

2022 Legislative Session The Top Five Issues

The Florida Legislature kicked-off the 2022 Regular Session on January 11 amid another surge in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. However, unlike last year, COVID is not expected to be a dominant force in Tallahassee this time around. From a policy perspective, the Legislature handled the majority of its COVID-related business during a November 2021 Special Session. Operationally, the doors to the Capitol are fully open this year and the halls are bustling once again with citizens from across the state. Look for the following big issues to shape the headlines and outcomes of the 2022 Regular Session.

Redistricting

The Legislature must tackle the once-in-a-decade process of legislative redistricting this year. The politically-charged map drawing contest will see legislators redraw districts for Florida's congressional delegation, including a new seat driven by Florida's population growth.

Redistricting will also impact all state legislative seats for the Florida House and Florida Senate. A byproduct of the redistricting process is that every member of the Florida Legislature will be up for re-election this November. The process will play a large, behind-the-scenes role throughout the 2022 session.



Another Blockbuster State Budget

Florida saw its first-ever \$100B-plus state budget last year, bolstered in part by substantial amounts of federal COVID recovery dollars. This year, we will see

FRSA Member Benefit

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white smartphone. The screen shows a search result for 'Roofing company near me' with the word 'Search' in large, colorful letters. Below the search text is the FRSA logo, which consists of a blue circle containing a white 'f' and the letters 'FRSA' in blue. The background of the phone screen is a light, neutral color.

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another mega-budget driven by better-than-expected tax revenues and continued federal support. Governor DeSantis has proposed a \$99.7B spending plan for the state's upcoming fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022. His top priorities are education spending, the environment and increased pay for law enforcement officers. The Florida Legislature, however, gets the final say on crafting a spending plan. Legislators will advance a number of their own priorities and look to deliver to constituents back home before the November elections.

Immigration Reform

Friction between the State of Florida - particularly Governor DeSantis and Attorney General Ashley Moody - and the Biden Administration has been growing over issues of border security and immigration enforcement. In recent weeks, Governor DeSantis again called on legislators to tighten state laws on immigration enforcement by expanding a law targeting so-called "sanctuary cities" and utilizing the E-Verify system to check workers' immigration status. The prominent state business lobby has expressed concerns on the latter issue in the past but support for reform from Florida voters may push some type of compromise this year.

Education Reforms

Following a tumultuous couple of years with the pandemic, public education will continue to take center stage during the 2022 legislative session. The Legislature will take up several priorities advanced by Governor DeSantis, including a revamping of the state's school accountability system from standardized testing to progress monitoring. The Governor has also requested another round of bonuses for teachers and school administrators. Legislators will take up

priorities of their own as well, led by an effort from House and Senate Republicans to assign party affiliation to school board races. They argue that allowing school board elections to go partisan will give parents a better understanding of what their vote means for their child's education on issues ranging from critical race theory to testing and mask mandates.

Election Year Tax Cuts

A favorite bill of legislators as of late is the annual tax cut package. With elections looming, the Florida Legislature is expected to take up a number of tax cuts and tax policy shifts. Popular sales tax holidays, such as the back-to-school holiday and the emergency preparedness holiday, are almost guaranteed. The Governor has also called on legislators to suspend the state's portion of the gas tax to provide relief to Florida families from recent spikes in gas prices. The proof will be in the final numbers but the Legislature is certain to afford Floridians some election-year tax relief.

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