

# Governor DeSantis's Session Priorities

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Happy New Year, FRSA! May this new beginning bring peace and prosperity to you and your families in 2022. I am very excited for many great things ahead for our industry, beginning with another successful legislative session.

Over the last several weeks, Governor DeSantis has outlined an expansive agenda for lawmakers to consider, including policy changes and a myriad of funding priorities for the state's 2022-2023 spending plan. Let's explore the top issues and appropriations laid out by the Governor and his team.

## Policy Priorities

The Governor plans to use his significant political capital to weigh in on some big policy initiatives, including the re-institution of a Florida State Guard (FSG). The FSG is a state-governed civilian volunteer force that assists the National Guard in state-specific emergencies. The guard was most recently active during WWII to supplement deployed National Guardsman.

The Governor also recently outlined an aggressive immigration plan for the Legislature's consideration. His proposal would impose penalties on companies and organizations that transport immigrants from the US Southern Border to Florida. Further, it would prohibit local governments and state agencies from entering into taxpayer-funded contracts with such entities. The Governor is also asking the Legislature to tighten requirements for use of E-Verify by granting enforcement authority to the Department of Economic Opportunity.

## Funding Priorities

Economic indicators forecast an abundance of state funding for legislators to allocate during the 2022 session. As required by the Florida Constitution, the Governor has outlined a spending plan for his administration in the next fiscal year, which commences July 1, 2022. The Governor's "Freedom First Budget" clocks in at a whopping \$99.7 billion – with total reserves of \$15 billion. It prioritizes familiar initiatives, such as water quality projects and teacher pay raises. Additional funding recommendations include:

- **\$105 million**, an increase of \$100 million over the current year, for the Rural Infrastructure Fund to support local rural infrastructure projects such as roads, storm wastewater systems and internet access for rural communities.
- **\$100 million** for the Florida Job Growth Grant Fund to support projects that create workforce

training opportunities and invest in critical infrastructure.

- **\$50 million** in recurring funding for VISIT FLORIDA, Florida's tourism marketing agency.
- **\$226.7 million** to provide salary increases for those working in public safety – including 25 percent raises for all veteran state sworn law enforcement; 20 percent salary increases for entry-level state sworn law enforcement.
- **A \$5,000 signing bonus** for every recruit who is new to the law enforcement profession in Florida once they complete their training and they officially become a law enforcement officer.
- **More than \$660 million** for Everglades restoration.
- **\$195 million** for targeted water quality improvements.
- **\$35 million** to improve water quality and combat the negative impacts of harmful algal blooms, including blue-green algae.

All eyes now shift to the Legislature as they evaluate the Governor's priorities alongside their own policy and funding initiatives. Additionally, Legislators are tasked with redrawing all state house, state senate and congressional district boundaries through the decennial legislative redistricting process. Lastly, it is also an election year where all four statewide Cabinet offices are on the ballot. It is going to be a bustling 2022 legislative session indeed.

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