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March 31, 2026

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2026 Florida Legislative Session Wraps with Farm Bill Wins for Small Businesses, But Budget Gridlock Leaves Tax and Fee Relief Uncertain

Florida's 2026 regular legislative session, which convened Jan. 13 and adjourned sine die on March 13, produced fewer than 200 general bills amid partisan gridlock – the fewest in recent memory – and failed to deliver a state budget for the second straight year. Lawmakers will return for special sessions on the budget, redistricting and property taxes. Yet one measure stood out for its direct benefits – and some



new costs – to small businesses, especially in agriculture, landscaping, pest control and rural economies: the 2026 Florida Farm Bill (SB 290).

Gov. Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill 290, the comprehensive Florida Farm Bill sponsored by Sen. Keith Truenow (R) and Rep. Danny Alvarez (R), on March 23 in Highlands County. The bill passed the Senate unanimously and the House 94-10. It takes effect July 1 and focuses on protecting Florida's agricultural industry from local overreach while bolstering food security, rural land use, public safety and consumer privacy.

For small farms, family ranches, landscapers, pest-control operators and related service businesses – many of them mom-and-pop operations – the bill delivers targeted regulatory relief mixed with a handful of new compliance costs. Here is the expanded breakdown:

- **Gas-powered equipment preemption:** Counties and municipalities are now barred from banning or restricting gasoline- or diesel-powered farm and landscape equipment (tractors, leaf blowers, chainsaws, pumps, etc.) or treating it differently from electric alternatives. This directly shields small landscaping companies and farmers from costly local mandates pushing electric equipment, which many say are less reliable and more expensive for heavy-duty rural work. DeSantis and Agriculture Commissioner Wilton Simpson called it a win for "freedom" and practical small-business operations.

- **Land access and development protections:** The bill allows review and potential sale (under agricultural easements) of certain state-owned conservation lands for farming, aiming to make land more affordable for young and small-scale producers. It also defines "ecologically significant parcels" in roughly 110 low-density rural municipalities, requiring developer attestations before administrative approval of high-density projects and restricting suburban sprawl to preserve space for agriculture.

- **Cash-flow protections for subcontractors and suppliers:** New criminal penalties and a suspended-vendor list target licensed contractors who knowingly fail to pay small subcontractors or material suppliers within 30 days after receiving payment. This helps family-owned suppliers and service providers in construction and ag-related work stay solvent. We are still trying to discover how or if this connects to pest control firms contracting sub-contractors for services such as wildlife and fumigation services.

- **Permanent Farmers Feeding Florida program:** The state will continue buying Florida-grown produce for food banks and families in need, creating a stable market channel for small producers. Quarterly and monthly reporting requirements were added for transparency.

- **Fumigation insurance and penalty changes (new cost for pest-control small businesses):** Pest-control companies that offer fumigation services as part of their regular operations must now carry significantly higher insurance coverage when applying for or renewing a business license. The new minimums are:

- Bodily injury: \$1,000,000 per person and \$2,000,000 per occurrence;
 - Property damage: \$1,000,000 per occurrence and \$2,000,000 in the aggregate;
- or
- Combined single-limit coverage: \$2,000,000 in the aggregate.
 - (Previous limits were roughly half those amounts.) The bill also raises the maximum administrative fines FDACS can impose on licensed pest-control companies and unlicensed operators for violations of the practice act, moving them to a higher Class III category. Small fumigation operators may face higher insurance premiums as a direct result.

- D2D signage / No-Knock Homestead Act (new protection for homeowners, new restriction for door-to-door small businesses): The bill creates a statewide uniform standard protecting private property rights by prohibiting commercial solicitation (door-to-door sales) on any dwelling that displays compliant "No Solicitation" signage. The required sign must read: "THIS DWELLING IS DESIGNATED PRIVATE PROPERTY. NO COMMERCIAL SOLICITATION IS PERMITTED PURSUANT TO SECTION 501.062, FLORIDA STATUTES."

- First offense: noncriminal violation with a \$500 fine.
- Repeat offenses: second-degree misdemeanor.
- The law does not apply to political, religious or charitable solicitation. This shields homeowners from high-pressure door-to-door sales (including some pest-control, solar, roofing and other small-service pitches) but adds a new compliance layer and potential fines for small businesses that rely on in-person canvassing.

Taxes and fees saw limited movement for small businesses. A proposal to repeal Chapter 205 and eliminate local business taxes (occupational license taxes and related fees) passed the House but died in the Senate, leaving many small firms on the hook for these annual costs. No broad corporate or individual tax-rate cuts advanced, and larger tax-package negotiations collapsed along with the budget. Targeted sales-tax holidays and technical updates to conform with federal tax law were the only relief that cleared both chambers.

Insurance impacts were narrowly targeted in the Farm Bill (higher fumigation requirements noted above). Broader insurance markets remained largely untouched this session – viewed by leaders as a positive sign. Previous tort and insurance reforms continue to deliver results, with workers' compensation rates down for the ninth straight year and commercial lines seeing double-digit drops in some categories. Lawmakers signaled they are waiting to see further rate relief materialize before pursuing new changes, offering stability rather than upheaval for small-business owners facing property and liability premiums.

Broader regulatory wins included clearer standards for calculating local impact fees (helping developers and small construction firms plan costs) and the D2D signage preemption detailed above, easing burdens for some entrepreneurs while restricting others.

Business groups such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce and NFIB described the session as incremental progress: key anti-business rollbacks were defeated, permitting processes saw some streamlining, and the Farm Bill provided concrete regulatory breathing room for rural small businesses – even as it introduced new insurance costs for fumigators and new restrictions for door-to-door operators. Still, they noted the lack of a budget and stalled tax relief as unfinished business heading into special sessions.

As of March 31, the session's legacy for Florida's 3.8 million small businesses hinges on those upcoming budget talks. For now, the Farm Bill stands as the clearest – if mixed – victory: a targeted shield against local red tape for equipment and land use, permanent food-security markets, subcontractor payment protections, and homeowner privacy rules, balanced against higher insurance mandates for fumigation firms and new limits on door-to-door sales. DeSantis and Simpson called it "a win for the people who feed our state and protect our homes," and many small-business owners in the heartland appear to agree.

Thank you, Missy Timmins, for your representation of us throughout it all!

FSU's DeVoe L. Moore Institute Launches Redesigned FloridaOpenGov.com for Greater Government Transparency

The DeVoe L. Moore Institute at Florida State University has unveiled a fully redesigned **FloridaOpenGov.com**, a digital transparency platform that makes it easier for Floridians to access and analyze state and local government data.

The updated site features interactive visuals and searchable datasets covering Florida's K-12 education system, state and local payroll, public spending, and other key areas. Users can now explore complex information through modern, user-friendly tools designed for policymakers, journalists, educators, parents, and everyday citizens.

Florida Open Gov was developed by the institute's **Data Analytics Group (DAG)**, a faculty-mentored, student-led initiative within FSU's College of Social Sciences and Public Policy. The redesign improves layout, navigation, and data visualization to help users better interpret government operations and spending.

"One of our goals with the revamp is to build capacity for Florida teachers, parents, and students to tell compelling stories with the data – stories that can inform policy decisions within and across school districts," said Crystal Taylor, director of research for the DeVoe L. Moore Institute.

The platform draws all its datasets directly from official sources, including the Florida Department of Education and other state agencies, ensuring reliability and accuracy. Years of collaborative work by faculty mentors and successive student teams have expanded the site's scope while enhancing usability and visual clarity.

New visualizations include:

- District Grades Over Time

2026 Special Session(s)

Gov. DeSantis Warns Legislators of Up to 6 Weeks in Tallahassee for Special Sessions on Budget, Redistricting and Property Taxes

Gov. Ron DeSantis delivered a blunt message to Florida lawmakers Tuesday: expect to spend significant time in the capital this spring – potentially four to six weeks total – as they clean up unfinished business from the recently concluded 2026 regular legislative session.

Speaking in Tampa, DeSantis made clear that the regular session, which adjourned March 13 without passing a state budget for the second consecutive year, left critical issues unresolved. He urged legislators to focus on results rather than political posturing.

"There'll be a lot of people in Tallahassee over the next probably four to six weeks, and there's a lot of things that need to be addressed," DeSantis said. "No more posturing, let's just get the job done."

The governor outlined several priorities for the upcoming special sessions:

- **Budget:** A dedicated special session will be required to pass the state spending plan. DeSantis indicated this should happen sooner rather than later, separate from other scheduled work. House and Senate leaders have previously signaled a return in mid-April to resolve disagreements over spending priorities.
- **Congressional redistricting:** A special session is already scheduled to begin Monday, April 20. DeSantis views this as a timely opportunity driven by an anticipated favorable U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Louisiana v. Callais*, which could open the door to redraw maps by eliminating certain minority-access districts. The candidate qualifying deadline falls in the second week of June, creating a narrow window for action.

- Free Lunch Rates vs. Grades
- District Grades vs. Salary
- District Enrollment Map
- Graduation Rate By Special Category Map
- And additional interactive charts and maps

Alexis Staveski, Data Analytics Group Manager, highlighted the new tools: “These visualizations make it simpler to compare trends and outcomes across districts.”

Key features of the redesigned platform include:

- Searchable datasets on education, payroll, and public spending
- Interactive Tableau charts and maps for side-by-side comparisons
- Featured blogs that demonstrate how data can drive informed policy discussions

Taylor emphasized the educational value for student interns: “As part of our research internship, we believe that data and storytelling go hand in hand. Our data analytics interns learn data cleaning and visualization skills while being challenged to answer the question: ‘What does this data mean for Floridians?’”

Relevance to Small Businesses and Recent Legislation

The launch of the enhanced transparency tool arrives at a timely moment for Florida’s small-business community. With the 2026 legislative session recently concluded and special sessions on the budget, redistricting, and property taxes looming, tools like FloridaOpenGov.com can help business owners, associations, and citizens track how public funds are allocated and how regulations are implemented.

For example, small **pest control operators** – including those offering fumigation services – are directly affected by changes in the newly signed **2026 Florida Farm Bill (SB 290)**. The bill, signed by Gov. Ron DeSantis on March 23, raises minimum insurance requirements for pest control businesses that perform fumigations as part of their regular operations. New coverage levels are set at \$1 million per person / \$2 million per occurrence for bodily injury and \$1 million

- **Property taxes:** Lawmakers may tackle a proposed constitutional amendment aimed at delivering relief, potentially placing it on the November ballot. DeSantis has long advocated for significant cuts, particularly for homesteaded primary residences, though details on the exact proposal remain under negotiation.

DeSantis also left the door open for “other issues” that “fell through the cracks” during the regular session, suggesting additional items could be added to the special session agenda.

The redistricting session was called by proclamation back in January, with the Legislature limited to considering congressional maps and related legal funding. It is not expected to overlap with the budget session.

For Florida’s small businesses – already navigating the mixed outcomes of the regular session, including the recently signed **Florida Farm Bill (SB 290)** – the extended legislative calendar adds both uncertainty and potential opportunity. The Farm Bill, signed by DeSantis on March 23 in Highlands County, provided regulatory relief for agricultural and landscaping operations by preempting local bans on gas-powered equipment, while also imposing higher insurance requirements on fumigation services and new restrictions on door-to-door commercial solicitation via compliant “No Solicitation” signage.

Small-business advocates continue to watch the special sessions closely for movement on stalled tax and fee relief proposals, insurance market stability, and regulatory streamlining. The lack of a completed budget leaves questions about funding for economic development programs, small-business grants, and any new fee structures unresolved.

DeSantis stressed that voters expect action. With the 2026 mid-term elections approaching and candidate qualifying deadlines looming, the pressure is on lawmakers to deliver tangible outcomes on the budget, fair representation through redistricting, and property tax relief that could ease costs for homeowners and small-business property owners alike.

The extended time in Tallahassee comes with costs – both financial for taxpayers and in terms of lawmakers’ availability for district work – but the

per occurrence / \$2 million in the aggregate for property damage (or a \$2 million combined single-limit policy). Administrative fines for violations of the Structural Pest Control Act were also increased to a higher Class III category.

Platforms like FloridaOpenGov.com could eventually help users monitor related state agency data, such as licensing, enforcement actions, or spending by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), which oversees pest control regulation. Greater transparency in regulatory compliance and public spending data may assist small fumigation businesses, landscapers, and agricultural operators in understanding the real-world impacts of new rules on insurance costs, fees, and operations.

Visitors can now explore the redesigned platform at www.FloridaOpenGov.com. The site serves as a valuable resource for holding government accountable and empowering data-driven conversations on issues ranging from education funding to regulatory oversight that touches Florida's diverse small-business sectors.

Interesting Links:

To see the summaries of the 2026 Senate Bills:

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Committees/BillSummaries/2026/>

Florida Democrats Dream Big after Mar-A-Lago District Flip:

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2026/03/post-mar-a-lago-flip-florida-and-national-democrats-dream-big-for-midterms-00845082?site=pro&prod=alert&prodname=alertmail&linktype=article&source=email>

DeSantis Signs Gas-Powered Equipment Bill Into Law:

<https://www.wuwf.org/text/2026-03-24/desantis-signs-farm-bill-protecting-gas-powered-equipment-into-law>

Between the Lines with Dara Kam: The Fate of Florida Unions:

<https://pro.stateaffairs.com/fl/podcast/rich-templin-union-rights>

governor framed it as necessary to address Florida's priorities efficiently.

As of March 31, exact start dates beyond the April 20 redistricting session have not been finalized, but DeSantis made clear that legislators should plan for a busy spring in the capital.

Pest PAC

As Florida pest control professionals, we operate in one of the most regulated industries in the state. Every piece of equipment we use, every job we perform, and every product we use is shaped by decisions made in Tallahassee. That is exactly why the Florida Pest Management Association's Pest-PAC exists – and why it needs our collective financial support right now.

Established in 1982, Pest-PAC is FPMA's political action committee. It pools voluntary contributions from industry members and strategically donates to candidates and causes that understand and defend our profession. With recent changes in Florida law allowing PACs to give up to \$1,000 per election cycle (\$3000 for candidates to statewide office such as Governor, Cabinet, Supreme Court) to candidates (and unlimited contributions from donors to the PAC itself), every dollar we put into Pest-PAC multiplies our voice where it matters most.

This 2026 legislative session has already proven how critical that voice is. The Florida Farm Bill (CS/CS/CS/SB 290) passed the Senate unanimously on February 19 thanks in large part to years of consistent industry advocacy for key provisions involving gas powered equipment.

Throughout the years, these are not small wins. They directly protect our ability to serve customers efficiently and profitably. Without a strong, well-funded PAC supporting pro-business legislators and building relationships across both parties, these victories would be far harder – if not impossible – to achieve.

FPMA's Governmental Affairs Committee (GAC), working hand-in-hand with Pest-PAC and our lobbyists at Timmins Consulting, gives us "boots on the ground" in the Capitol. The PAC funds strategic contributions, bill sponsorship efforts, and rapid-response advocacy when threats arise. In recent

election cycles, Pest-PAC-backed candidates have won more than 74% of the time – a track record that proves the investment works.

Our 2026 Goal: \$70,000

To maintain and expand this influence during a critical election year and the remainder of the session, FPMA has set an ambitious but achievable target of \$70,000 in new Pest-PAC contributions. This war chest will allow us to:

- Support key committee chairs and legislators who carry our bills
- Prepare for the 2026 elections where term limits are creating open seats
- Respond quickly to any emerging threats (local equipment restrictions, overly burdensome regulations, or ballot initiatives)

Every contribution counts – whether \$50, \$250, \$500, \$1,000 or more. Personal and corporate checks are accepted, and donations can be made securely online through the FPMA website (<https://secure.anedot.com/pest-pac/donate>) or mailed to the address listed on the Pest-PAC donation form. (Contributions are not deductible for federal income tax purposes.)

If you own or operate a pest control company in Florida, this is one of the smartest and most direct investments you can make in the future of your business. When we stand together through Pest-PAC, we are no longer individual operators – we are a unified, respected industry with real power in Tallahassee.

Let's hit the \$70,000 mark together. Visit www.flpma.org today, click on Advocacy then Pest-PAC, and make your contribution. The session is moving fast, and our work is not finished.

Together, we protect what we've built.