



Good Morning!

This past week I joined the St. Johns River Water Management District, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and Indian River Lagoon protection advocates to celebrate the completion of a two-year-long muck dredging project in the Eau Gallie River.

The project has removed more than 600,000 cubic yards of muck from the main stem of the 3.9 mile long Eau Gallie River, a tributary of the Indian River Lagoon. Muck is a mix of fine-grained sediments, sand, clay and organic matter in untreated stormwater runoff that drains to canals and storm drains connected to tributaries in the lagoon. Muck can accumulate nutrients that contribute to algal blooms and create detrimental conditions for seagrasses and organisms vital to the lagoon's aquatic food chain.

The Indian River Lagoon is a unique and precious resource that is vital to the health of our economy. Along with my colleagues, I am committed to improving the health of the Indian River Lagoon with the right policies in place to support a comprehensive restoration plan with long-term funding sources. The completion of the Eau Gallie Muck Dredging Project marks another major step forward in restoring our treasured waterway.

I consider it a great honor to represent all of the citizens and visitors of District 17. Please share [this link](#) with your friends and family so that they too can sign up for the [Mayfield Minute](#).

If you or someone you know needs my assistance, please don't hesitate to contact my office. My staff and I are here to serve you!

Florida Forever Acquisition in Central Florida

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has acquired 1,992 acres located within the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge. The permanent protection of these biologically rich grasslands is part of the Triple Diamond Florida Forever Project. This acquisition conserves dry prairie habitat, and other high-quality habitats, in an area of Florida known for its rare vertebrate wildlife and globally imperiled natural communities.

The parcel is bordered by Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, and other public lands in the near vicinity include Avon Park Air Force Range, Bombing Range Ridge, Fort Drum Marsh Conservation Area, and Blue Cypress Conservation Area. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will be purchasing the adjacent tract.

The conservation of this intact and well-managed landscape will protect thousands of acres of habitat within the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and significantly contribute to the protection of water quality and quantity in the Kissimmee River and Lake Okeechobee watershed.

Florida Forever is the state's conservation and recreation lands acquisition program, a blueprint for conserving our natural resources and renewing our commitment to conserve our natural and cultural heritage.

There is approximately \$122.1 million remaining in the Florida Forever Trust Fund. This year the Florida Legislature invested an additional \$33 million in the Florida Forever program to ensure the protection of our environment and natural resources for generations to come.

From the Desk of Governor Ron DeSantis

This past week Governor Ron DeSantis announced that [U.S. News & World Report](#) has named Florida the top state in the country for higher education. This is the third year in a row Florida's higher education system has earned the top ranking, reflecting the emphasis that elected leaders have placed on student success and affordability.

"Our state colleges and universities have prioritized affordability and pathways for career and life and, as a result, they are transforming our state. I look forward to celebrating continued success as we build on this positive momentum." said Governor DeSantis.

Metrics considered by U.S. News & World Report include the share of Floridians holding college degrees, the time it takes students to complete both two- and four-year college programs, the cost of in-state tuition and fees, and the burden of debt that college graduates carry.

The State University System recently announced a 9.5% five-year increase in graduation rates, as well as a 31% year-over-year drop in the cost-to-the-student for a bachelor's degree. Due to support from elected leaders and initiatives that drive down costs, the average State University System student pays \$9,450 for a bachelor's degree once financial aid is included. U.S. News & World Report also ranks five State University System institutions within the top 100 public universities nationally. Results are largely driven by the State University System's Performance-Based Funding Model, implemented in 2014.

Florida's 28 state colleges are the primary point of access to higher education in Florida, with 65% of the state's high school graduates pursuing post-secondary education beginning at a Florida college.

The Governor also **signed the following bills into law** this week:

[SB 7070: K-12 Education](#) expands educational choice and opportunity for families, and elevates public schools. The bill creates the Family Empowerment Scholarship program to serve low income families and reduce the Florida Tax Scholarship wait list. This legislation also restructures the current Best and Brightest Teacher's Program by eliminating SAT/ACT requirements, and instead focuses this financial incentive program on

recruitment, retention, and recognition of Florida's top teachers and principals. Other components of the bill include expanding options for teacher certification exams, enhancing support for the Center for Community Schools program to support neighborhood public schools with unique community needs; providing school districts with greater flexibility when it comes to locally funded facility construction; and expanding and providing increased flexibility for Schools of Hope.

[SB 7098: Death Benefits](#) implements Amendment 7 to the State Constitution, which was approved by the voters in November 2018, to require the payment of death benefits to the survivors of certain first responders, Florida National Guard members, and members of the United States Armed Forces.

[HB 107: Wireless Communications While Driving](#) authorizes the enforcement of texting while driving as a primary offense. Additionally, the bill specifies that a person may not use a handheld wireless communications device while driving in a designated sensitive area such as a school crossing, school zone, or work zone area while workers are present or operating equipment.

[HB 7123: Taxation](#) provides approximately \$121 million in tax relief by creating a five day Back-To-School Sales Tax Holiday (August 2-6) so families can enjoy savings as they stock up on necessary school supplies, and a seven day Disaster Preparedness Sales Tax Holiday (May 31-June 6) so families may prepare for the upcoming hurricane season. The bill reduces the Commercial Rent Tax from 5.7% to 5.5%, generating an annual savings of \$64.5 million beginning January 1, 2020. The school property tax millage rate is also reduced by 0.148 mills, for an overall tax savings of \$272.3 million. Finally, the bill creates several tax relief benefits to help those impacted by Hurricane Michael.

Currently, Florida's per capita state tax burden of \$1,822 is the second lowest among all states. Governor DeSantis is committed to reducing Floridians' tax burden even further and making Florida the most dynamic economy in the nation.

Governor DeSantis vetoed the first bill of his administration this week, [HB 771: Environmental Regulation](#). The bill originally addressed issues with contaminated recyclable materials, but a provision was added that includes a moratorium on local regulation of single-use plastic straws until 2024.

As a reminder, the Governor is currently reviewing the budget, also known as the [2019-2020 General Appropriations Act](#). If you have any concerns about items included in the Legislature's budget or would like to express your support for certain programs, please [contact Governor DeSantis's Office](#).

District Highlights

Brevard Cultural Summit

The Brevard Cultural Alliance will be hosting the [2019 Cultural Summit](#) on Thursday, May 23rd at the Hilton Rialto in Melbourne.

The highlight of this daylong conference is a luncheon featuring a conversation with Simon Le Bon, lead singer of the iconic rock band Duran Duran. The Summit will also feature

workshops tailored to arts and cultural organizations, artists of all genres and arts-related businesses.

Brevard Cultural Alliance is a nonprofit organization representing Brevard's arts and cultural sector. In addition to convening the Cultural Summit, the Alliance serves cultural organizations and creative professionals through a variety of programs and services; advances Brevard as a cultural destination; and implements arts education programs for Brevard County students.

For more information or to register visit ArtsBrevard.org or call (321) 690-6817.

Teacher of the Year Finalist from Vero Beach High School

The Florida Department of Education named Indian River County educator Dr. Nicole Mosblech, Vero Beach High School, as one of the 2019 Teacher of the Year Finalist.

"Dr. Nicole Mosblech has dedicated her career to ensuring all students have access to a high-quality education and develop an appreciation for the planet on which we live and rely," said Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran. *"Dr. Mosblech not only grew the school's Advanced Placement program, her students' pass rate exceeded the national rate by 13.5 percentage points last year. Her classroom accomplishments combined with her civic involvement make Dr. Mosblech a terrific Teacher of the Year finalist."*

After graduating with her Bachelor's Degree from the University of Scranton, Nicole Mosblech started out her career by teaching English in South Korea. In 2005, she moved back to the United States and began teaching science at the Vero Beach High School Freshman Learning Center before pursuing a doctorate in ecology at Florida Institute of Technology. Upon earning her Ph.D., she returned to Vero Beach High School, where she has been teaching ever since. Dr. Mosblech teaches Advanced Placement and Honors-level Environmental Science, as well as Honors Chemistry. Outside of the classroom, she contributes to her students' growth by sponsoring the Vero Beach High School Green Team and the Science Research Club; leading oyster mat construction with the Vero Beach Power Squadron and coastal cleanups. She also serves as member and chairperson of the City of Sebastian's Natural Resource Board.

This year's five finalists were chosen from more than 176,900 public school teachers throughout the state. After each school district selects its Teacher of the Year, a selection committee representing teachers, principals, parents and the business community reviews each district application on the basis of outstanding ability to teach and communicate knowledge of the subject taught, professional development, philosophy of teaching, and outstanding school and community service.

The statewide Teacher of the Year will be announced at the annual Florida Teacher of the Year Gala on July 18th in Orlando. For more about the Florida Teacher of the Year program, please visit [Florida Teachers Lead](#).

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Contact Information

Melbourne Office

900 E. Strawbridge Ave.
Melbourne, FL 32901
(321) 409-2025
Staff: [Patrick Steele](#)
[Adrienne Cronebaugh](#)
[Yvette Campbell](#)

Tallahassee Office

322 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100
(850) 487-5017

Vero Beach Office

Administration Building B
1801 27th Street
Vero Beach, FL 32962
(772) 226-1970
Staff: [Margaret Mitchell](#)
