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Fla. 'sanctuary cities' ban passed

Gov. DeSantis now has chance to fulfill key promise of his campaign

Lisa Nellesen Savage Pensacola News Journal
 USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

TALLAHASSEE — Legislation that would give Florida one of the strictest laws in the nation against so-called sanctuary cities is headed to Gov. Ron DeSantis, giving him a chance to fulfill a

key campaign promise. The governor praised the final passage of the bill Thursday by the House and Senate after emotional debate in both chambers during the final days of the legislative session. He thanked House Speaker Jose Oliva and Senate President Bill Galvano, as well as the sponsors of the bill for "recogn-

nizing the importance of the issue." "Local law enforcement agencies can and should work with the federal government to ensure that accountability and justice are one in our state," the governor said in a prepared statement. The governor's desire to force local and state officials to fully cooperate with federal immigra-



DeSantis

See **SANCTUARY, Page 4A**

Food hardship in SWFL widespread



Veronica Roblero, of Golden Gate, picks up groceries with her son Alejandro Estrada, 1, at lower right, on Friday at Grace Place Food Pantry in Golden Gate.

PHOTOS BY JON AUSTRIA/NAPLES DAILY NEWS USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Feeding America maps out struggles across the U.S.

Liz Freeman Naples Daily News
 USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Southwest Florida residents struggle to feed their families despite myriad agencies helping to put food on the table, according to Feeding America.

The nation's largest hunger-relief organization has released data about food insecurity across all states and communities to provide insight into how many people face hardships.

People who are food insecure lack access at times to enough food and may make trade-offs with other expenses to buy healthy food.

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Canned goods are stored on shelves on Friday at Grace Place Food Pantry in Golden Gate.

Collier school district rolls out new bus tracking app

WheretheBus lets parents follow routes from departure to arrival

Rachel Fradette
 Naples Daily News
 USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

After years of concern about when her son, Henry, would get to school, Kerry Burkley finally feels some relief just by opening an app on her phone.

Every morning and afternoon, Burkley looks to see when Henry, 12, will arrive home. She can follow his route until she sees him step off the bus.

It's something she's always wanted, she said. The new app launched by Collier County Public Schools allows parents like Burkley to track their child's school bus from departure to arrival.

WheretheBus app provides parents and guardians ETAs, bus locations, bus routes and option to switch from bus to bus if you have more than one child.

About 20,000 students in Collier County ride the district's 364 school buses every day, for many it's twice a day.

Parents can download WheretheBus from the app store or Google Play. Only parents or guardians with valid student information will be permitted in the app.

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New Monday deadline set for Barr

Attorney general threatened with contempt if full Mueller report is not provided. **6A**

Cohen's prison reality

Ex-Trump attorney to begin sentence Monday. **12A**

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Sanctuary

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tion authorities exposed a sharp partisan divide in the Legislature on how the state, which has about 800,000 undocumented immigrants, should enforce immigration laws. The legislative debate also came amid national battles about President Donald Trump's attempts to curb illegal immigration.

The Senate voted 22-18 to pass the bill, with Sen. Anitere Flores, R-Miami, the only Republican to vote against it. About two hours later, the House approved the measure in a 68-45 vote, with Rep. Vance Aloupis, R-Miami, and Rep. Rene Plasencia, R-Orlando, the only lawmakers to cross party lines.

Though the votes were almost totally partisan, House and Senate Republicans had to reach a compromise on the final version to send to the governor. That compromise involved stripping out penalties that the House had sought to include.

Those proposed penalties would have included fines for local governments and allowed lawsuits against local governments when people are killed or injured by undocumented immigrants because of sanctuary policies.

House sponsor Cord Byrd, R-Nephtune Beach, said the governor's staff worked with lawmakers to ensure DeSantis would have the power to start "judicial proceedings" against local or state officials who fail to cooperate with federal immigration authorities, something included in the compromise.

"The most important thing for the governor was that he be given the authority for removal under the Constitution, and we conferred in that and gave him that authority, so I am confident

that he will sign it," Byrd said.

The legislation, which the governor's office said Thursday night DeSantis will review, would require local law-enforcement agencies to share information with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement about undocumented immigrants who are in their custody. That would include campus police agencies and the Department of Children and Families, whose exclusion from a Senate version of the bill this week drew opposition from the House. The exclusion was eliminated Thursday.

Senate sponsor Joe Gruters, R-Sarasota, said the Department of Children and Families would not be impacted under the bill, but that the agency should not be excluded because of "optics" and "perception" that would suggest it could act as a sanctuary for undocumented immigrants.

"In order to land this plane, this is the bill we have to pass," said Gruters, who doubles as chairman of the Republican Party of Florida.

House and Senate Democrats spent hours fighting the bill, which they argued threatens undocumented immigrants --- including asylum seekers and young people covered by the federal Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals policy --- for minor state violations like driving without a license or driving with a broken taillight.

During debate, Hispanic Democrats shared personal stories about the struggles their families have faced in the United States. One of the most poignant testimonies came from Rep. Cindy Polo, a Miramar Democrat whose Colombian parents overstayed their visas and temporarily lived in the United States without documents.

"To my parents, thank you for not following the law, thank you for fighting a broken procedure," Polo said. "And I am sorry we could not do more."

Other Democrats argued the bill does not aim to fix any problem, but rather is focused on feeding the Republicans' conservative political base. In Florida, no cities or counties have so-called sanctuary policies. When asked, Gruters could not point to any that would currently be in violation of the bill.

"This is a proactive bill that panders to fear," said Sen. Darryl Rouson, D-St. Petersburg. "It panders to the specter of what is not."

Gruters, however, argued that this bill will only target "criminal illegal aliens" who break the law and will force county jails to honor federal immigration detainers that would hold undocumented immigrants for up to 48 hours.

"In talking about fear, it goes back to breaking the law," Gruters said. "People should fear breaking the law. Because if you are not breaking the law and you are not getting arrested, you have nothing to fear."

Gruters, however, said the bill added protections for undocumented immigrants who are victims and witnesses of certain crimes, which he said were the "most vulnerable members" in Florida.

"Nobody should ever be in fear of reporting injustices, and I hope that language can give people, and hopefully the press, that we are providing the protections needed for these victims and witnesses," Gruters said.

In debate, Rep. Evan Jenne, D-Dania Beach, vowed to keep fighting the bill and said he looks forward to the day this "law is stripped from statute." He also indicated the legislation passed Thursday will likely face constitutional challenges in court.

"That seems to be the way things go, and I expect there to be challenges," Byrd, an attorney, said. "I am firm in my belief that this will meet constitutional muster."

Entrepreneurs

Continued from Page 3A

visit venues that held weddings and other events and offer to play.

Gibson said she had 50 events booked at one point. Gibson's sister helped out during some of the performances.

Gibson said it wasn't until late 2017 that she realized her ability to play the violin could lead to a lucrative business. She said she filed the paperwork creating her business in 2018, but she struggled with what to name it before settling on Jade Strings.

"People think that's my name now," she said. "I go into meetings, and people are like, 'Oh, Miss Strings, right this way.' Now, I'm Jade Strings."

Gibson believes she has found what she is meant to do. She has been on three career tracks --- music therapy, marketing and finally entrepreneurship --- since coming to FGCU.

She said her plan is to focus solely on her business and expanding it when she graduates in December.

"I love music, but I realized I didn't



Sapphire and Jade Gibson select music while Sarah Ball plays in Naples on April 19. MORGAN HORNSBY/FORT MYERS NEWS PRESS USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

really like studying music," she said.

Rough start leads to success

For senior Sofia Blanno, the road to getting a business off the ground has been a little bumpy. She wanted to create an app, but she said she ran into issues getting it started.

Blanno said she was frustrated about the fate of her business, so she talked to one of the entrepreneurship program's mentors. She said he didn't beat around the bush about what she should do.

"He basically said, 'Listen to me,' Blanno said. "You are going to fail at this idea. You are going to spend all your money. You either need to pivot, or you need to find someone who knows what they are doing in regards to technology on your team."

Blanno decided to pursue a new idea.

She has launched a website for a clothing subscription company. It's called Best Dressed. Blanno's customers fill out a style survey, and she sends them a box of clothes to rent with an option to buy.

Blanno, 22, said she started sending out clothes in October, and so far, she has made about \$20,000 in gross revenue.

"I think that it's rapidly going to increase the amount of revenue that we earn," she said. "By the end of this year, I think it's going to be great. I see ... the company going a lot of good places by the end of December of this year."

Blanno said her success is the result of all the things she has learned through the entrepreneurship program about technology, accounting, taxes, social media advertising and building a website.

Bus app

Continued from Page 1A

Palmetto Ridge High School, Corkscrew Middle School, Cypress Palm Middle School, Corkscrew Elementary, Estates Elementary and Palmetto Elementary schools piloted the program last month.

"We rolled it out when we thought it was the right time," Collier County Schools spokesman Chad Oliver said. "We wanted to get it out with the remaining few weeks of this year."

The app, which is distributed by Tripspark, cost the school district \$28,000 for the 2018-19 school year, according to Oliver. It will be an annual contract, but no amount is set for next year yet.

"This is a way to reduce stress and reduce uncertainty," Oliver said. "You can track, and it will show you minute by minute, mile by mile minute how close your bus is to your bus stop."

In August, Lee County schools started using the WheretheBus app after testing its system on two elementary schools during the 2017-18 school year. The app costs Lee County Schools \$35,000 annually.

The app helps Burkley and Henry with their daily routine while giving Burkley peace of mind.

"For parents with kids in the MC3 program who ride the bus, I think this could be really helpful for them if they're like me and worry a lot," Burkley said.

Henry attends North Naples Middle School where he participates in MC3, a modified curriculum program for students with special needs. He suffers from a seizure disorder.

"He just loves the bus," Burkley said. "It helps us in the morning. I can show him, 'Henry, look it's 10 minutes away.'"

Burkley downloaded WheretheBus app shortly after it launched last week. Henry is already integrating the app into his morning plans.

"It helps him kind of schedule how much time he has," Burkley said.

Burkley's 14-year-old daughter, Lilly, takes the bus to Barron Collier High School every morning and afternoon. She doesn't always feel a need to check up on her, but having the option is helpful.

"It's very useful, especially if you've got a child and you're not home to be there for them," Burkley said.

After some minor confusion, Burkley said she's finally navigating the app with ease.

"I think it's user-friendly," Burkley said. "They give you directions and it's very easy because I'm not the most technological person."

Superintendent Kamela Patton said the district received positive feedback throughout test runs.

"We want to encourage our parents to get on and try it from now until the end of the year, so as the first day of school rolls around we already know what it's about," Patton said at a school board planning meeting.

Burkley said she wished the app had been around sooner, but she's happy to have it off the ground.

"I didn't even know something like this was even possible," Burkley said.

Algae

Continued from Page 3A

■ James Sullivan — Executive director of Florida Atlantic University's Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Fort Pierce and an expert on marine ecosystem health.

■ Valerie Paul — Director of the Smithsonian Marine Station in Fort Pierce.

Following the governor's announcement Monday, First Lady Casey DeSantis praised the move and explained the governor's motivation.

"We have a 2-year-old and 1-year-old," she said. "We talked about leaving our environment to God better than we found it. We feel an obligation as parents and we feel we should work on behalf of all the parents of this great state to make sure their children have a clean environment and clean water to grow up on."

Already there are signs of the same cyanobacteria, microcystis aeruginosa, gathering and blooming in Alva, on the freshwater side of the W.P. Franklin Lock and Dam on the Caloosahatchee River, on the west side of Lake Okeechobee.

What's next?

While the task force members could not say for certain when or where they would start to address the nearly annual problem of algae blooms in Florida waters, they know there are several components of the problem they will attempt to address.

"There's a lot that has to be dealt with," explained James Sullivan of Harbor Branch, whose scientific training is working with harmful algae blooms. "There has always been algae in freshwater in Florida, but these blooms are becoming more and more severe every year, and it has been a relatively new development for Lake Okeechobee."

Sullivan said there are steps to the process to begin to clean Florida's waterways:

"We know there are nutrient loads to the lake," Sullivan said. "We need to identify what the current sources are, what the current plans are to stop those, or to develop plans to do so, and what is the biology behind it all."

Sullivan said he is excited to be a part of the Task Force. He thinks it is the best way to address the problems and fix them.

"It really is the way to do this," Sullivan said. "You need differing opinions in



Gov. Ron DeSantis and Secretary of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Noah Valenstein announce a Blue-Green Algae Task Force during a news conference Monday at the Nathaniel P. Reed Hobe Sound National Wildlife Refuge in Hobe Sound. LEAH VOSS/TCPALM

the science world to advance the research and solve problems."

DeSantis said the task force will:

■ Identify opportunities to fund priority projects with state, local and federal funding;

■ Build on DEP's updated Basin Management Action Plans;

■ View and provide the largest and most meaningful nutrient reductions in key waterways.

Gaiser is hopeful this team can make progress quickly.

"There have been decades of research done on the water problems in South Florida, the Everglades and Lake Okeechobee," Gaiser said. "This team is coming in with a backdrop of knowledge we can build off of including the incredible work that has been done just in the last few years to address this most recent extreme bloom."

It's a launch pad, she said.

"The reconstructed South Florida Water Management District Board of Governors, among other changes by the governor, give us great hope," Gaiser said.

Parsons said the solution to these problems will involve a collaboration of more than just the task force members and their institutions.

"Bring in the public input and their interests ...," he said.

Parsons believes the work at hand will be based on priorities.

"We have to lay the ground rules on how we're going to identify problem areas, identify projects, find a way to prioritize those and then how to hand the ball off to (DEP Secretary) Noah (Valenstein) in terms of funding," Parsons said. "I don't even know if we'll be involved with that part of it."