

FRAMEWORK FOR FREEDOM


FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

Fiscal Year 2023-24 Framework for Freedom Budget

Statewide Overview and Taxes

Q: How does the Governor's Fiscal Year 2023-24 recommended budget compare to the current year?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget is \$114.8 billion. This is a \$3.8 billion increase over the current year \$110.9 billion budget.
- The General Revenue portion of the budget is \$42.4 billion, which is 0.7 percent less than the current General Revenue budget of \$42.7 billion.

Q: How many reserve dollars are included in the budget?

- \$6.9 billion in unallocated General Revenue
- \$3.4 billion in the Budget Stabilization Fund
- \$2.4 billion in unallocated Trust Funds
- \$1.0 billion in the Emergency Preparedness and Response Fund
- \$1.0 billion in the State Investment Fund
- \$1.0 billion in the Florida Optional Reinsurance Assistance Program
- \$15.7 billion in Total Reserves

Q: The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$1 billion for a new State Investment Fund. What is the purpose of the Fund and what are the funds expected to be used for?

- The Fund serves as a funding source for the new Debt Reduction Program which is designed to retire outstanding debt prior to its maturity and to generate savings by avoiding the interest cost on debt being retired. In addition, the Fund is available to the State as a reserve of last resort, accessible only after the Budget Stabilization Fund has been fully exhausted.

Q: How many state positions are included in the budget?

- There are 112,307 state positions in the Framework for Freedom Budget. This is a net decrease of 46 FTE over the Fiscal Year 2022-23 budget.

Q: What trust fund sweeps are included in the Framework for Freedom Budget?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget sweeps \$38 million in surplus funds:
 - Department of Financial Services
 - \$3 million from the Financial Institutions' Regulatory Trust Fund
 - \$10 million from the Regulatory Trust Fund
 - Department of Health
 - \$25 million from the Grants and Donations Trust Fund

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Q: After 11 years of actuarial surpluses ended in 2008, the FRS Pension Plan now has been underfunded for fourteen consecutive years. As of July 1, 2022, the plan's liabilities exceeded its assets by \$38.3 billion, translating into a funded ratio of 82.4 percent. How does the Governor's budget address this deficit?

- For the past three fiscal years, the Governor recommended and the Legislature agreed to fully fund both the normal cost and the unfunded actuarial liability at an additional cost to the state.
- The Framework for Freedom Budget again implements the recommendations of the independent actuary and fully funds both the normal cost and the unfunded actuarial liability by increasing required employer contributions by \$350 million, or 6.7 percent.

Q: Does the Governor's budget recommend any changes to the retirement benefits offered by the Florida Retirement System?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget increases the employer contribution to the investment accounts of employees participating in the FRS Investment Plan by three percent of the member's salary to ensure that these employees are better positioned financially during their retirement.
- This increase raises annual contributions to employee retirement accounts by \$269 million, representing a 40 percent increase over the current contribution level.
- In addition, the Governor increases the pension amounts to be received by retired members of the FRS by four percent to ensure that former employees also will be better positioned to cope with the recent rise in inflation caused by harmful federal policies.

Q: The Framework for Freedom Budget recommends establishing a Debt Reduction Program. What does that program consist of and how is it funded?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget provides \$400 million and establishes the Debt Reduction Program to apply innovative techniques in order to reduce Florida's debt further than currently achievable through scheduled debt service payments. As an example, if favorable market conditions cause the price of an outstanding Florida bond to drop below the value of the debt service remaining, the state could generate savings and reduce its debt by purchasing the bond outright. The program will be funded by interest earned on the State Investment Fund.

Q: Does the Governor's budget recommend any salary increases for state employees?

- There are several salary increases proposed in the Framework for Freedom Budget totaling \$695 million.

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- \$367 million for a 5 percent increase for all state employees.
- \$92 million for recruitment and retention for nurses, auditors, laboratory technicians, paralegals, attorneys, finance and budget, accountants, and Information technology staff.
- \$116.7 million for the Department of Corrections to increase the minimum pay for Correctional Officers to \$47,840, including funding for pay compression.
- \$76.6 million for sworn law enforcement officers to raise the minimum pay to \$55,000, to provide pay adjustments within certain salary brackets, and additional increases based on years of service.
- \$22 million for the Department of Children and Families for recruitment and retention for Child Protective Investigators, Supervisors, Field Analysts and Consultants and Economic Self-sufficiency staff.
- \$18 million for State Attorneys and Assistant State Attorneys, 3 percent increase and pay adjustments within certain salary brackets, respectively.
- \$1.4 million for recruitment and retention for Regulatory Specialists in the Department of Business and Professional Regulation.
- \$1.4 million to increase the minimum pay for the Division of Administrative Hearings Administrative Law Judges and Judges of Compensation Claim to \$172,000.

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Education

Early Learning

Q: What is the budget for early learning?

- The budget includes more than \$1.6 billion in funding for our state's youngest learners.

Q: What additional funding is provided for Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK)?

- The budget includes a total of more than \$451 million for Florida's VPK program. This investment maintains the base student allocation for the school year and summer programs of \$2,803 per student and \$2,393 per student, respectively. VPK will prepare approximately 155,000 four and five-year olds for kindergarten.

Q: How does the budget provide for improvements in the quality of early learning programs?

- The budget maintains funding for the following early learning initiatives:
 - T.E.A.C.H. – \$10 million for early childhood teacher scholarships;
 - Help Me Grow – \$4.5 million to connect children and families with information, resources, and developmental services to enhance health, behavior, and learning in the development of young children;
 - Teacher Training – \$3 million for statewide professional development to improve child care instructor quality; and
 - Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) – \$3.9 million to deliver high quality School Readiness curriculum directly to parents so they may strengthen the cognitive and early literacy skills of at-risk children.

Q: What funding is provided for the School Readiness Program?

- The budget includes \$1.07 billion for students participating in the School Readiness Program.

K-12 Public Education

Q: Does the budget maintain the funding provided in FY 2022-23 for salary increases for Florida's teachers?

- The Governor's proposed budget increases the funding provided to increase teacher salaries from \$800 million to \$1 billion.
 - Under the proposal the Governor will allow school districts to utilize the increase in their allocation to provide salary increases to eligible

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teachers and other instructional personnel in the manner that best fits the school district's needs.

Q: What is the budget for K-12 education in the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP)?

- The budget invests a record \$26 billion in total funding for the FEFP. This results in a per-student funding amount of \$8,453, an increase of \$205 over the Fiscal Year 2022-23 third calculation.

Q: How does the Governor's budget consider the required local effort in the FEFP?

- The required local millage rate is maintained at the Fiscal Year 2022-23 statewide level of 3.262 mills.

Q: Does the budget include an increase in the Base Student Allocation in the FEFP?

- The Governor's budget recommends an increase of \$121 in the Base Student Allocation (BSA) over Fiscal Year 2022-23.

Q: Is there funding for mental health initiatives in the budget?

- Yes, the budget provides an increase of \$20 million, for a total of \$160 million, in funding for the mental health allocation in the FEFP.

Q: Is there funding for school safety in the budget?

- Yes, the budget includes the following safety initiatives:
 - \$250 million, an increase of \$40 million, for the safe schools component of the FEFP;
 - \$160 million, an increase of \$20 million, for the mental health allocation in the FEFP;
 - \$6.5 million is maintained for the Coach Aaron Feis Guardian Program that will be used to certify and train school guardians and provide a one-time stipend of \$500;
 - \$5.5 million is maintained for the Youth Mental Health Awareness and Assistance Training;
 - \$845,000 is maintained for the Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool;
 - \$3 million is maintained to continue providing a centralized integrated data repository and data analytics resources to improve access to timely, complete and accurate information;
 - \$42 million is provided for public school hardening grants;
 - \$3 million for the procurement of a state-wide transparency tool to support the implementation of HB 7, HB 1467, and HB 1557;

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- \$6.4 million is maintained to continue providing school districts access to a mobile panic alert system that is capable of connecting multiple first responder agencies; and
- \$10 million for the Office of Safe Schools to implement the following school safety initiatives:
 - Secure statewide student safety and support portal;
 - Create a web-based tool to satisfy SESIR reporting; and
 - Create a Threat Management System.

Q: Is security funding for Jewish Day Schools included the budget?

- The budget provides a record \$5 million, an increase of \$1 million, in funding to hire school safety officers, enhance safety measures, upgrade equipment facilities and technology, and increase security services to ensure children at Florida Jewish Day Schools can learn in a safe environment. This funding will be available to all eligible Florida Jewish Day Schools.

Q: Does the budget provide funding for initiatives that promote computer science?

- Yes, the budget maintains the \$10 million in funding provided in Fiscal Year 2022-23 to continue providing professional development and fund costs associated with training for teachers to earn educator certificates or industry certifications in computer science. The initiative also provides bonuses to teachers who earned an educator certificate or industry certification who are teaching computer science courses.

Q: Does the budget include funding for initiatives that promote civic education?

- Yes, the budget maintains \$1 million in funding to expand the Florida Civics and Debate Initiative.
- In addition, the Governor's recommended budget includes \$3.5 million in funding to provide support to school districts for the improvement of civic literacy for Florida's students using regional civics literacy captains and coaches.
- Additionally, the Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$3 million for civic education curriculum.

Q: Does the budget include funding for initiatives that provide alternate pathways for individuals to enter the teaching profession?

- Yes, the budget includes \$10 million in funding to implement a first come, first served recruitment bonus for retired military veterans, and retired first responders who commit to joining the teaching profession. Heroes are required to teach a minimum of two years to keep the bonus. Individuals teaching in a critical shortage area may receive an additional bonus.

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- The program will:
 - Provide a bonus of \$4,000 for 2,000 military veterans and retired first responders.
 - Provide an additional \$1,000 for 1,000 individuals teaching in critical shortage areas.
 - Waive the initial certification and exam fees for first responders, which is a current benefit that military veterans and their spouses already receive.

Q. Does the Governor include any initiatives to address the need for additional teachers in Florida’s public schools?

- Yes, the Framework for Freedom Budget includes the following initiatives to recruit and retain great teachers:
 - \$1 billion, an increase of \$200 million, for the Teacher Salary Increase Allocation in the FEFP. Under the proposal the Governor will allow school districts to utilize the increase in their allocation to provide salary increases to eligible teachers and other instructional personnel in the manner that best fits the school district’s needs.
 - \$10 million is provided to implement the Heroes Initiative, which is a first come, first served recruitment bonus for retired military veterans, and retired first responders who commit to joining the teaching profession.
 - \$500,000 is provided for the Department of Education to establish a program that supplements and strengthens the teacher pipeline, as well as the effectiveness of teachers entering the profession through alternative pathways.

Higher Education

Q: Does the budget include any tuition increases?

- No, the budget does not include any increases in tuition or fees.

Q: What does the budget include for Florida state colleges and universities?

- The budget includes historic state operating funding for Florida’s higher education system of \$1.5 billion for Florida colleges, and \$3.1 billion for Florida universities.
- The budget includes a total of \$24.5 million, an increase of \$3.6 million for the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library to provide students with e-resources, technical support, distance learning, with \$11.1 million provided to Florida colleges and \$13.5 million to Florida universities.

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Q: Does the budget provide performance funding for workforce education, colleges, and universities? What metrics will be used to distribute the funds?

- Yes, the budget includes performance funding to reward Florida’s career technical centers, Florida College System institutions, and the State University System institutions for their performance.
- The budget includes performance funding in the following areas:
 - \$6.5 million in funding for district workforce programs to be allocated based on students earning industry certifications in high-demand areas;
 - \$20 million in funding for state colleges to be allocated based on students earning industry certifications in high-demand areas;
 - \$30 million for state colleges, through the 2+2 Student Success Incentive Fund and Work Florida Student Success Incentive Fund;
 - \$560 million in funding for the State University System. Performance will be based on 10 metrics including: percent of graduates employed or continuing education, average wages of employed graduates, and graduation rates; and
 - \$100 million for the recruitment and retention of highly qualified faculty.

Q: Does the budget include funding for the New College of Florida restructuring?

- Yes, the Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$15 million, of which \$10 million is recurring, for hiring faculty, offering student scholarships, and covering any other necessary costs during the transition.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include funding for the Open Door Grant Program?

- Yes. The Governor’s Budget Recommendation includes a total of \$25 million in funding, \$10 million for School District Workforce Education Institutions and \$15 million for Florida College System institutions, to continue the Open Door Grant Program. The program is designed to create a demand-driven supply of credentialed workers for high-demand occupations and expand the affordability of workforce training and credentialing.

Q: Does the Governor’s budget include funding for the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program?

- The budget includes \$20 million, an increase of \$5 million, for the Governor’s Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program to establish or expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs for high school and college students. The increased funding will allow for the development of the Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program for individuals who currently hold and associate’s degree and wish to enter the teaching field.

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Q: What does the budget include for Florida's Historically Black Colleges and Universities?

- The budget provides approximately \$126 million for Florida's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, including:
 - \$16.96 million in operating funds to Bethune-Cookman University.
 - \$7.4 million in operating funds Edward Waters College.
 - \$7 million in operating funds to Florida Memorial University.
 - \$95.3 million in operating funds to Florida A&M University.

Q: Does the Governor's budget include funding for the Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute?

- Yes, the budget maintains Fiscal Year 2022-23 funding of \$20.6 million for the Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute to continue providing research and education related to cancer.

Student Financial Aid and Assistance

Q: What student financial aid funding does the budget include for private higher education institutions?

- The budget provides \$104 million for the Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grants, which will provide approximately 41,000 eligible private school students with an average \$2,500 in tuition assistance.
 - Of the total funding, \$10 million is provided for eligible students to receive an additional \$1,000 for pursuing degrees in high-demand fields.

Q: What other state funded scholarship programs are in the budget for the Student Financial Aid?

- The budget includes funding for the following state scholarship programs:
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Public Full and Part Time: \$236 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Private: \$23.6 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Postsecondary: \$6.4 million
 - Florida Student Assistance Grant – Career Education: \$3.3 million
 - The maximum award of the above four Florida Student Assistance Grants is \$3,260
 - Children and Spouses of Deceased or Disabled Veterans: \$14.4 million
 - Florida Work Experience: \$1.6 million
 - Rosewood Family Scholarships: \$256,747
 - Florida Farmworker Scholarship Program: \$272,151
 - Honorably Discharged Graduate Assistance Program: \$1 million
 - Randolph Bracy Ocoee Scholarship Program: \$305,000
 - Dual Enrollment Scholarship: \$15.5 million

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- Law Enforcement Academy Scholarship Program: \$5 million
- Out-of-State Law Enforcement Equivalency Reimbursement Program: \$1 million

Q: What does the budget include for the Bright Futures Scholarship?

- The budget includes a total of \$614.5 million, for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.
 - Funding ensures the Florida Academic Scholars award will continue to cover 100 percent of tuition and fees and the Florida Medallion Scholars award will continue to cover 75 percent of tuition and fees for qualifying students, for all semesters, including summer.
 - However, a Florida Medallion Scholar enrolled in an associate degree program at a Florida College System institution is eligible for an award equal to the amount necessary to pay 100 percent of tuition and fees.
 - Funding ensures Gold Seal Vocational Scholars awards and Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards will continue to be awarded to eligible students enrolled in a career education or a certificate program.

Q: Is the Governor recommending any new scholarships or financial assistance programs?

- Yes. The budget includes \$3.5 million in funding to establish the Dual Enrollment Teacher Scholarship Program to support public school teachers in obtaining their master's degree in their area of certification to allow them to teach dual enrollment courses on their public high school campus.

Education Infrastructure

Q: How are Public Education Capital Outlay Funds (PECO) utilized in the budget?

- The August 2022 Public Education Capital Outlay Estimating Conference identified the cash amount available for appropriation from the PECO Trust Fund for Fiscal Year 2023-24 to be \$788.1 million.
- The PECO program addresses educational facility construction and fixed capital outlay needs for school districts, state colleges, state universities, and other public education programs.
- The budget includes more than \$830 million in funding for capital initiatives funded through PECO and other sources:
 - **School Safety Grants**
 - \$42 million for school safety grants provided to school districts to assist with costs associated with improving the physical security of K-12 school buildings.

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- **Special Facility Construction**
 - \$105 million for Special Facility Construction projects for Glades, Gadsden, and Putnam counties.
- **Higher Education Construction**
 - \$93.1 million for Florida College System remodeling and renovation construction needs.
 - \$81.3 million for State University System remodeling and renovation construction needs.
- **Maintenance**
 - \$220.9 million for public charter school maintenance;
 - This funds the necessary infrastructure for charter schools without utilizing any of the school districts' local funds.
 - \$136.9 million for maintenance at the state colleges;
 - \$136.9 million for maintenance at the state universities;
 - \$8.6 million for lab school maintenance;
 - \$595,549 for Division of Blind Services maintenance; and
 - \$4.5 million for the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind maintenance.

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Environment

Q: What is included in the budget to reach the Governor's new goal of \$3.5 billion investment in Everglades restoration and water resources over the next four years?

- The budget includes more than \$1.1 billion for Everglades restoration and protection of water resources. This includes:
 - \$614 million for Everglades Restoration;
 - \$370 million for targeted water quality improvements, including TMDLs;
 - \$50 million for an Alternative Water Supply grant program;
 - \$50 million for Springs projects; and
 - \$65 million for water quality monitoring and to combat harmful algal blooms including blue-green algae and red tide.

Q: How does the budget specifically address water quality improvements?

- The budget includes \$370 million for targeted water quality improvements:
 - \$200 million for the wastewater grant program for projects to construct, upgrade or expand wastewater facilities, to provide advanced wastewater treatment and connecting septic tanks to sewer systems are prioritized.
 - \$100 million for the new Indian River Lagoon (IRL) Protection Program for priority projects to reduce excess nutrients and improve water quality in the IRL.
 - \$50 million will focus specifically on achieving the Department of Environmental Protection's scientific nutrient reduction goals, called Total Maximum Daily Loads, as part of the plans set forth in adopted Basin Management Action Plans (BMAPs).
 - \$20 million for wastewater and storm water projects that address water quality impairments and coral reef restoration in Biscayne Bay.
- On top of this investment, the budget includes \$50 million for projects to restore Florida's world-renowned springs.

Q: How much is in the budget for Everglades Restoration?

- The budget provides more than \$614 million for Everglades Restoration. This funding includes:
 - \$326 million for Everglades Restoration, including the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan, C-43 Reservoir and Restoration Strategies.
 - \$152 million for the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) Reservoir project.
 - \$50 million for projects in the Lake Okeechobee Watershed.
 - \$86 million for Northern Everglades and Estuaries Protection Program.

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Q: What does the budget do to address harmful algal blooms and discharges from Lake Okeechobee?

- The budget includes more than \$65 million to specifically address algae blooms and red tide, including:
 - \$10 million for innovative technologies and short-term solutions to address algae blooms.
 - \$10 million to assist county governments with their responses to emergency conditions associated with harmful algal blooms and red tide events that may impact public health, Florida's environment and fragile ecosystems, including beaches and wildlife.
 - \$30 million for harmful algal blooms mitigation to implement water quality treatment technologies to combat harmful algal blooms in Lake Okeechobee.
 - \$4.2 million for the Center for Red Tide and to support the Harmful Algal Bloom Task Force.
 - \$10.8 million for increased water quality monitoring, a water quality public information portal, and to support the Blue-Green Algae Task Force to focus on expediting progress toward reducing adverse impacts of blue-green algae blooms.
- Additionally, the budget invests \$370 million for targeted water quality improvements and \$614 million for Everglades Restoration, including \$86.3 million for continued investment in the C-43 reservoir, which will provide more than 55 billion gallons of water storage east of Lake Okeechobee. These projects will help reduce nutrient loading and provide critical water storage.

Q: How does the budget reflect recommendations of the Blue Green Algae Task Force?

- \$370 million for targeted water quality improvements
- \$10.8 million for increased water quality monitoring
- \$10 million for innovative technologies to address algae blooms
- \$1.5 million for Mobile Irrigation Labs to increase water supply planning and conservation

Q: What does the budget do to address water supply needs?

- The budget provides \$50 million for an alternative water supply grant program to help communities plan for and implement vital conservation, reuse and other alternative water supply projects.
- DEP will engage local governments, industry, citizens and other stakeholders through a targeted education and outreach campaign that focuses on the importance of conservation and reuse efforts and encourage Floridians to implement these efforts in their homes, businesses and communities.

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Q: How much does the budget include for land acquisition?

- The budget contains \$100 million for the Florida Forever Program, including:
 - \$75 million for Florida Forever through DEP's Division of State Lands
 - \$15 million for the Florida Communities Trust component of Florida Forever for funding to local governments and eligible non-profit environmental organizations for the acquisition of community-based parks, open space and greenways that further outdoor recreation and natural resource protection needs.
 - \$10 million for the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), which provides competitive recreational grants to local governments for the acquisition and/or development of land for public outdoor recreation.
 - In addition, springs protection and water quality improvement projects may include land acquisition to protect water resources.

Q: How does the budget address resiliency?

- The budget provides \$406 million for the Resilient Florida Grant Program, which will assist local governments with sea level rise planning and coastal resilience projects, in addition to protection of coral reef health.
- Coastal protection projects, include:
 - \$156 million for beach restoration projects
 - \$3 million for removal of tires and other waste currently posing a threat to coral reefs
 - \$1.3 million for Florida's Coastal Zone Management Program

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include money for water storage south of Lake Okeechobee?

- The budget includes \$324 million for several water storage projects, many of these around Lake Okeechobee, which will collectively provide nearly 190 billion gallons of water storage once completed. Examples of these projects include:
 - \$86 million to continue the C-43 Reservoir, which will provide 55 billion gallons of water storage to protect estuaries
 - \$86 million for dispersed water management, which will provide more than 24 billion gallons of water storage when projects are operational
 - \$152 million for the EAA Reservoir, which will provide a minimum of 78 billion gallons of water storage when complete

Q: How much is included in the budget for beach restoration?

- The budget includes \$50 million for statewide beach restoration to continue to address Florida's critically eroded shorelines and \$106 million for Hurricanes

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Ian and Nicole beach erosion recovery projects fully funding DEP's *Hurricanes Ian and Nicole recovery Plan for Florida's Beach and Dune System*.

Q: How much is included in the budget for state parks?

- The budget dedicates \$45 million to infrastructure improvements and resource management for the award-winning Florida State Park system.

Q: How much does the budget provide for waste management?

- The budget includes the following for waste management:
 - \$180 million – Underground Petroleum Storage Tank Cleanup
 - \$9 million – Dry Cleaning/Site Cleanup
 - \$5.5 million – Hazardous Waste/Site Cleanup

Q: Does the budget include funding for springs restoration?

- The budget provides \$50 million for springs protection and restoration projects.

Q: How does the budget address the implementation of Volkswagen Clean Air Act settlement?

- The budget includes \$15 million for continued implementation of the State Mitigation Plan for the \$166 million Volkswagen Clean Air Act settlement, which will assist with the reduction of diesel emissions and further improve Florida's air quality.

Q: Does the budget address manatee management and rehabilitation?

- The budget includes \$911,000 and three positions for enhanced manatee management activities including aerial surveys.

Q: How does the budget address removing invasive Pythons from the Everglades?

- The budget includes up to \$3.4 million for the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission to remove pythons from the Everglades. Pythons are an invasive species that disrupt the natural food chain balance and have no natural predators, causing them to multiply without impediment and further threaten endangered species.

Q: Does the budget dedicate any additional funding to coral reef restoration?

- The budget includes \$10.2 million to implement Florida's Coral Reef Restoration and Recovery Initiative to restore 25 percent of Florida's Coral Reef by 2050.

Q: How much does the budget include for Agriculture?

- The budget provides more than \$2.7 billion to support Florida's agricultural industry.

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Q: How much does the budget provide for the Citrus Industry?

- \$29.5 million for citrus, including:
 - \$8 million for Citrus Research
 - \$6.5 million for the Citrus Health Response Program (CHRP)
 - \$15 million to support consumer awareness efforts

Q: What is in the budget for wildfire prevention?

- The budget provides \$16.4 million for wildfire prevention efforts.
 - \$11.5 million for replacement of wildfire equipment
 - \$4.9 million for road and bridge maintenance to allow for better access for land management and wildfire suppression activities

Q: How does the budget use Land Acquisition Trust Fund dollars?

- The budget provides more than \$1.8 billion of Land Acquisition Trust Fund dollars for a variety of conservation and restoration programs including Florida Forever land acquisition and management, Everglades restoration, springs restoration projects, beach management projects, and improvements to Florida's award-winning state parks.

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Transportation and Economic Development

Q: Does the budget include funding for affordable and workforce housing?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$402.7 million to fully fund affordable and workforce housing. This includes \$121.7 million to fully fund the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) Program and \$281 million to fully fund the State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP).
- The budget also includes \$100 million for the second year of the Hometown Heroes Housing Program, which helps make homeownership more affordable for eligible frontline community workers.

Q: What does the budget include for emergency management?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$2.1 billion in federal and state funding for open federally declared disasters, so the state can continue to respond and recover from these disasters, as well as mitigate the impact of any future disasters or emergencies.

Q: Does the budget include Job Growth Grant funds to support Florida's continued economic recovery and development?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$100 million for the Job Growth Grant Fund to support local infrastructure and job training projects targeted towards economic recovery and development.

Q: How much funding is in the budget to promote Florida tourism?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$100 million to continue the vital state marketing and promotion efforts of VISIT FLORIDA.

Q: Is there funding in the budget targeted specifically to help small businesses?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$170.9 million for the second phase of the State Small Business Credit Initiative, providing Florida's small businesses with essential access to additional growth and support funding.

Q: Is there funding in the budget to help recruit law enforcement officers to work in Florida?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$30 million for a second round of bonus payments for law enforcement officers who are new to the profession in the state, including those relocating from other states. This initiative will provide bonus payments of \$5,000 to eligible law enforcement officers.

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Q: What is included in the budget to help Florida's rural areas grow and prosper?

- An additional \$25 million, for a total of \$30 million, for the Rural Infrastructure Fund, to support local rural infrastructure projects such as roads, storm and wastewater systems, and telecommunications facilities.
- \$100 million for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program, providing funding to expand high-speed internet deployment and access to Florida's unserved and underserved communities.
- \$13 million for the Digital Capacity Grant Program, providing resources to implement the Digital Adoption and Use Plan to achieve statewide digital literacy.

Q: Does the budget include Community Development Block Grant funds for hurricane recovery and mitigation?

- The budget includes \$362.6 million in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds directed toward local hurricane recovery and hardening efforts throughout the state. These funds include several CDBG programs, including CDBG Disaster Recovery Program for all named hurricanes since 2017 and CDBG Mitigation Program.

Q: What is in the budget to help ensure safe and secure elections in Florida?

- The budget includes \$22.5 million for state-level election oversight activities, with a focus on cybersecurity enhancements to Florida's election system. This amount includes:
 - An additional \$3.1 million and 27 positions to fully staff the Office of Election Crimes and Security, responsible for receiving notices and investigating instances of potential election fraud and irregularities, and where warranted referring cases to the appropriate authorities for prosecution.
 - \$3 million for Florida Voter Registration System modernization.
 - \$811,750 for Election Websites modernization.
 - \$1.3 million for Campaign Finance System modernization.
 - \$962,969 for live call center services supporting the Statewide Voter Fraud and Assistance Hotline.
 - \$106,650 for cybersecurity awareness training for Supervisors of Elections.
 - \$100,000 for an Elections Signature Verification Training Program.

Q: What is the total budget for the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for Fiscal Year 2023-24?

- The budget includes \$14.7 billion for the Department of Transportation. Of this amount, \$13.4 billion goes toward the Transportation Work Program which supports transportation and infrastructure projects throughout the state.

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- This investment will provide for the retention or creation of more than 244,000 jobs. Every dollar invested in transportation is estimated to result in a return of up to \$4 in user and economic benefits to Florida's residents and businesses. Additionally, this helps to diversify Florida's economy.

Q: What Florida transportation initiatives are supported in the budget?

- The budget provides \$13.4 billion for the Transportation Work Program, used for the construction and maintenance of Florida's roads, bridges, rails, seaports and other public transportation systems that grow the state's economy and improve the quality of life for our citizens. This includes:
 - \$5.4 billion for highway construction to include 119 new lane miles.
 - \$1.6 billion in resurfacing to include 2,657 lane miles.
 - \$150.5 million in seaport infrastructure improvements, to ensure Florida's ports continue to have capacity while the rest of the nation struggles from supply chain backups at seaports.
 - \$405.8 million for aviation improvements.
 - \$553.2 million in scheduled repairs for 64 bridges and replacement of 19 bridges.
 - \$807.4 million investment in rail/transit projects.
 - \$236.5 million for safety initiatives.
 - \$167.3 million for community trail projects.

Q: What is the Moving Florida Forward Initiative?

- The Moving Florida Forward Initiative is a traffic congestion relief plan announced by Governor DeSantis. The *Moving Florida Forward Initiative* will accelerate the development and completion of 20 priority transportation projects over the next four years that will provide additional highway and road capacity to meet the needs of Florida's ever-growing economy and population. This initiative invests \$4 billion of general revenue, which will be leveraged for a total of \$7 billion.

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Health and Human Services

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget Include support for Cancer Research?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget invests more than \$166 million in cancer research funding, with \$20 million in funding to establish the Florida Cancer Innovation Fund to support innovative cancer research.

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include funding to support maternal health?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes more than \$12.7 million to expand services to an additional eighteen counties for women at risk of maternal morbidity with the goal of improving maternal health outcomes for women at high risk of maternal morbidity. Funding is currently available for Duval and Orange counties for this purpose.

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include any funding for children's services?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes nearly \$130 million to improve access to critical care services for infants and children, support quality improvement initiatives for children birth to 36 months who have a developmental disability and expand school health and dental services.
- Additionally, the Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$3.8 million to support premiums for families who receive services through the Florida Healthy Kids program and were impacted by Hurricane Ian.

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include any additional funding for hospitals?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes more than \$76 million for hospitals that provide in-patient services for acutely ill newborns and pediatric patients.

Q: How much does the Framework for Freedom Budget include for Behavioral Health Services?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget provides more than \$531 million to provide additional support for the mental health treatment facilities, competency restoration services and to enhance the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline services. Additionally, funding will provide evidence based comprehensive treatment that seeks to reduce overdoses, unemployment and the incidence of hospitalization and homelessness.
- In addition, the budget provides \$5.4 million in enhanced funding to support pediatric behavioral health services.

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Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include any initiatives related to the Opioid Settlement Agreement?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$147.4 million from the Opioid Settlement Agreement to establish an Opioid Recovery Office to oversee the settlement funds, and to create an accredited Graduate Medical Education program to increase the number of psychiatric residents. These funds will support other initiatives that support education, treatment, and prevention for individuals with substance use disorders.

Q: What does the Framework for Freedom Budget include to address the continuation of the opioid crisis?

- In addition to the funds gained from the Opioid Settlement Agreement, the Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$187.3 million to ensure access to treatment, prevention services, medication assisted treatment, recovery support and to continue research and surveillance activities.

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include funding for children who receive services through the Child Welfare Program?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes more than \$96 million to provide services for those served by the child welfare system. Funding will support foster parents and caregivers, community-based services, local prevention grants and additional family navigators to connect high risk families and children to resources and supports through collaboration with front line child protective investigators.

Q: What does the Framework for Freedom Budget include to support individuals who need housing assistance?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes an additional \$19 million to support individuals who are in need of housing assistance and are at risk of becoming homeless. Funding will support emergency shelter services, rental assistance and housing relocation and stabilization services in addition to case management.

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include funding for victims of human trafficking?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget includes an additional \$1.5 million to expand an existing program that provides services for victims of human trafficking. Services include individualized clinical treatment, in addition to behavioral supports such as cognitive behavioral treatment and motivational interviewing.

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Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include funding for seniors?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget invests an additional \$9 million in funding to expand services provided by the 17 Memory Disorder Clinics and the Brain Bus to enhance diagnosis and prevention strategies for those impacted by Alzheimer's disease and other related dementia. Additionally, \$5 million is provided to increase services through the Community Care for the Elderly Program and the Home Care for the Elderly Program. Funding will allow more seniors to receive services such as case management, home delivered meals, caregiver support, and home modifications allowing them to continue to live in their homes.
- Additionally, the Framework for Freedom Budget invests more than \$1 million in funding for the Florida Alzheimer's Center of Excellence (FACE). The FACE program supports caregivers and individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in the community using evidence-based practices and a no wrong door approach. The FACE initiative focuses on equipping communities and the medical system to provide early diagnoses and treatment in addition to quality care management that supports linkage to community services and access to programs for support.
- The Framework for Freedom Budget invests more than \$400,000 in funding for Hope Navigators to join seniors and caregivers in receiving services and resources to ensure enhanced quality of life. These Navigators will assist seniors to overcome barriers to living independently and promote quality care while aging in their home or place of their choosing.

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include funding for individuals served through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget provides more than \$79.6 million in new funding to allow an additional 1,200 individuals in crisis to be served through the Agency for Persons with Disabilities waiver program.
- Additionally, the Framework for Freedom Budget provides nearly \$3.4 million to support individuals who have a co-occurring mental health diagnosis with a developmental disability to ensure they receive the services they need.

Q: Does the Governor's budget eliminate the Low-Income Pool Program?

- The Governor's recommended budget continues the Low-Income Pool Program (LIP). The funding may be accessed through a budget amendment up to the total amount that is federally authorized which is \$2.1 billion.

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Q: Does the Governor's budget contemplate the enhanced FMAP increase of 6.2 percent?

- The Governor's Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24 is based on the most recent Social Services Estimating Conference projections. The most recent SSEC occurred in August 2022 and did not assume any enhanced FMAP for Fiscal Year 2023-24. At the time, it was assumed that the enhanced FMAP would expire at the end of 2022, therefore there is no enhanced FMAP assumed for the upcoming fiscal year. The 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act, signed on December 29, 2022, provided for the phasing-out of the enhanced FMAP, which will be included in the projections of the upcoming SSEC.
- The Fiscal Year 2022-23 (current year) General Revenue reversion included in the back of the bill contemplates the surplus projected at the August 2022 SSEC and adds the estimated General Revenue savings resulting from one additional quarter of enhanced FMAP (through the third quarter of FY 2022-23).

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Public Safety

Q: What is the recommended budget for public safety?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget recommends an additional \$436.3 million for necessary investments in public safety, including funding for safer and more modern correctional facilities, information technology enhancements, workload, and statewide prosecution issues.

Department of Corrections

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget cut funding for the Department of Corrections?

- No. The Framework for Freedom Budget recommends an additional \$146 million (not including pay issues and compression) above base to improve officer retention, increase inmate programming, make correctional facilities safer, enhance inmate mental health services, and make technology upgrades.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget address high Correctional Officer turnover and retention issues?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$111.5 million to address staffing issues. This includes:
 - \$107.2 million to increase the base rate of pay to \$23 an hour for specified positions;
 - \$3.4 million to provide a retention step plan for the Correctional Officer series, the Correctional Probation Officer series, and the Inspector series that will provide a \$1,000 pay increase at two years of service, a \$500 pay increase at five years of service, and a \$1,000 pay increase at eight years of service; and
 - \$1 million to allow the Department to repurpose existing FTEs for additional statewide recruitment staff to support recruitment efforts.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funds for inmate programming?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes an increase of \$20 million in budget authority within the State-Operated Institutions Inmate Welfare Trust Fund in order to allow the Department of Corrections to improve inmate health and well-being and decrease inmate idleness and violence through increased investments in inmate programming.

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Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include any funding for private prisons?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$11 million for a price level increase for increased per diem amounts from contract rebids at certain privately operated correctional facilities. Three out of the seven private prison contracts will have increased per diems prior to the beginning of Fiscal Year 2023-24.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide any funding for maintenance and repair?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$33.6 million for Fixed Capital Outlay projects. This includes:
 - \$13 million to fund year one of a four-year Critical Safety Infrastructure Initiative to address major maintenance and repair projects.
 - \$13.1 million for environmental systems, renovations, and evidence facilities.
 - \$7.5 million in budget authority within the State-Operated Institutions Inmate Welfare Trust Fund to make facility improvements.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget address contraband issue in state prisons?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$10 million for a variety of security equipment, including drone detection equipment, thermal fence cameras, drone support for K-9 operations, and license plate readers.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include any funding for inmate mental health services?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$1.4 million to repurpose existing FTEs to create two additional Behavioral Risk Management Teams. These teams would work to provide specialized on-site monitoring of high-risk facilities to ensure inmates with mental health needs have access to appropriate services.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide funding to improve the safety of correctional probation officers (CPOs)?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$2.3 million to develop a comprehensive statewide plan to provide all certified firearms carrying CPOs with a Department issued weapon, holster, and other required accessories. Provided funds are anticipated to be able to purchase approximately 2,137 firearms, holsters, duty belts, and magazines.
- Additionally, the Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$1.4 million to provide Department-issued uniforms to CPOs.

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Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget include any funds which would improve the day-to-day operations of Correctional facilities?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$2.3 million to modernize and enhance training provided at the Florida Corrections Academy.
- Additionally, the Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$1.3 million to allow the Department of Corrections to repurpose existing FTEs for additional professional development, training, and support staff to continuously produce quality instructional products that ensure staff are both initially trained and that they maintain the requisite certifications over time.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide funding for technology upgrades?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$21.5 million for year two of a five-year plan to modernize the 40-year-old Offender Based Information System (OBIS).
- The budget also includes \$3.4 million for the Department to pilot statewide network and wireless access for officer stations at six sites.

Department of Juvenile Justice

Q: Does the Governor’s budget cut funding for the Department of Juvenile Justice?

- No. The Framework for Freedom Budget recommends an additional \$52 million above base (pay issues and compression not included) to create a unified education system for juveniles in the care of the Department, increase access to mental health evaluations for youth being considered for residential placement, and improve facility safety and security.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide any salary increases for Department of Juvenile Justice contracted provider staff?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$19.2 million for pay increases for contracted provider staff.

Q: Does the Governor’s recommended budget provide any funding for maintenance and repair?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$12 million for repairs and security maintenance projects.
- The budget also includes \$17.4 million for life safety and security projects.

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Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget enhance education provided to juveniles in the care of the Department?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$12 million to create a unified education system across the Department's 37 residential programs. The Florida Scholars Academy provides various educational opportunities, and trade skills in high-demand occupations.

Department of Law Enforcement

Q: Does the Governor's budget cut funding for the Department of Law Enforcement?

- No. The Framework for Freedom Budget recommends an additional \$80.7 million (law enforcement pay and compression not included) to protect Floridians from dangerous fentanyl entering our state, apprehend human trafficking and human smuggling operations, enhance law enforcement officer safety, and continue the state's investments into invaluable crime database systems such as completing the statewide expansion of the sexual assault kit tracking system and modernizing the biometric identification solution.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide a pay increase to state sworn law enforcement?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$11.3 million for pay increases for the Department of Law Enforcement which includes a 4 percent increase to Special Agents and Law Enforcement positions, special pay adjustments based on salary ranges, and an increase for years of service.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding to advance the implementation of Gail's Law (statewide sexual assault tracking)?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$500,000 for the final phase of the implementation of Gail's Law. Funds will allow the system to expand the program to forensic labs statewide.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding to support the enforcement of E-Verify?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$1 million and 11 FTE at the Department of Law Enforcement to support the verification of employment eligibility authorized in section 448.095(3)(e), Florida Statutes.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding to combat the trafficking and sale of narcotics in Florida?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes an investment of \$20 million for the creation of the State Assistance for Fentanyl Eradication (S.A.F.E.) in Florida Program. These funds will assist local law enforcement in

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combatting the illicit trafficking and sale of fentanyl within Florida. Funds will be provided to the Department of Law Enforcement to be distributed to local agencies, with priority given to fiscally constrained counties.

- The Framework for Freedom Budget also authorizes the Department of Law Enforcement to expand the mission and capabilities of the Anti-Heroin Task Force statewide to enhance regional efforts in the battle against the opioid epidemic affecting Florida's communities.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding to enhance the safety of law enforcement officers?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$2 million for the Department of Law Enforcement to provide body armor to local law enforcement agencies, with a focus on agencies within fiscally constrained counties.

Department of Legal Affairs

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget provide salary increases to the Department of Legal Affairs?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$15.5 million for an increase in salaries and associated benefits for various positions at the Department of Legal Affairs.

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include funding for the prosecution of cold cases?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$767,515 and five FTE to establish the Cold Case Unit within the Office of the Statewide Prosecutor to pursue viable cold cases that have not yet been closed in order to bring justice for victims.

Florida Commission on Offender Review

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget include any new funding associated with clemency?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes 24 new FTE and an additional \$1.8 million to support the increased number of cases coming to the Clemency Board for consideration.

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Justice Administrative Commission

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget address the needs of the state attorneys?

- Yes. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$18 million to provide salary increases to State Attorneys and Assistant State Attorneys:
 - \$17.8 million to provide special pay adjustments based on salary ranges for all Assistant State Attorneys; and
 - \$207,204 to provide an additional 3 percent increase to State Attorneys.

State Courts System

Q: Does the Governor's recommended budget cut funding for the State Courts System?

- No. The Framework for Freedom Budget includes \$15.7 million for the State Court System to provide salary increases for due process staff, including court reporters, court interpreters, case managers, trial court staff attorneys, and court program specialists.

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Government Operations

Financial Services

Q: Does the Governor's budget include funds for the FLAIR Replacement project, PALM?

- At the direction of the Legislature in the 2022 Session, the PALM project is currently in the process of developing a new project scope and timeline, which is scheduled to be reviewed and approved by the project's Executive Steering Committee in March 2023; therefore a cost for next fiscal year is currently unknown. The Governor's budget does include \$10 million statewide for agencies to continue readiness efforts to integrate agency systems with PALM once the new plan is finalized.

Q: When is PALM going to go into effect?

- Prior to the decision to redevelop the project scope and timeline, PALM was targeted to be completed in Fiscal Year 2026-27; however, a new target completion date will be determined in March 2023.

Military Affairs

Q: What does the Governor's budget include for National Guard community-based programs that serve Florida's youth?

- The Governor's budget includes \$5.8 million in funding for the Florida Youth Challenge program. Florida Youth Challenge offers services to high school aged youths to ensure they have technical and job readiness skills as well as mentoring to ensure they get their GED or graduate high school and move on to secondary education, the workforce or the military. The community-based program helps Florida's youth succeed.

Q: Does the Governor's Budget include funding for repairs and maintenance of Florida National Guard readiness centers?

- Yes, the budget includes \$16 million to support ongoing maintenance and repairs at readiness centers throughout the state, which are used year-round for training and operations of the Florida National Guard.

Q: What is the Revitalization and Modernization Program (REVAMP) at the Department of Military Affairs and why is it necessary?

- REVAMP is a new initiative, supported by year one funding of \$7 million, to begin the multi-year project to renovate all 62 Florida National Guard readiness centers throughout the state. Major renovations are necessary to

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address inadequate infrastructure, life safety and ADA code compliance, and improved security to ensure the safety of our guardsmen and visitors.

Q: Which readiness centers will be renovated as part of REVAMP in year one?

- Year one will provide major renovations to the following readiness centers: Leesburg, Ft. Myers, Ft. Lauderdale, Crestview, Marianna, Flagler, Eustis, Sanford, and Winter Haven. All of the above readiness centers were last renovated in 2004 or 2006.

Q: How much funding is included in the Governor's budget for the Florida National Guard's Camp Blanding?

- \$178 million is recommended as year 1 and 2 of a multi-year plan to modernize and expand training capabilities at Camp Blanding. This includes investments in live-fire ranges, infantry battle courses, and barracks, among other things, to support simultaneous training of 5,000 guardsmen. Camp Blanding is currently not meeting its designated Level 2 facility standards; therefore, additional training infrastructure is necessary to maintain Florida's response readiness and force allocation.

Q: What does it mean for Camp Blanding to be a Level 2 facility and why does it currently not meet those standards?

- The National Guard ranks each of its facilities as Level 1-5 Training Centers (Level 1 being the highest standard) based on the types of training and facilities utilized at each location. Most of Florida's existing facilities are categorized between Level 5 and Level 3. Camp Blanding is currently the only location categorized as a Level 2 facility, meaning it supports simultaneous training for 5,000 to 11,999 guardsmen. Currently, Camp Blanding does not have the infrastructure to support this level of training, with only 3,000 beds and small live-fire and multi-purpose ranges and training facilities available.

Q: What happens if Camp Blanding continues to not meet Level 2 facility standards?

- Although Camp Blanding currently retains its Level 2 status, a continued failure to meet federal standards may result in the removal of the facility's Level 2 federal designation and a potential reduction in the current Florida National Guard force allocation, which reduces the overall readiness of our Florida National Guard.

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Q: Why does the Governor’s budget not fund new readiness centers for the Florida National Guard?

- The Department of Military Affairs is currently in the process of building three new readiness centers located in Panama City, Immokalee, and Zephyrhills; therefore, additional funds were not allocated for additional readiness centers. However, the Governor’s budget includes \$195 million to renovate, repair, and construct new training facilities at existing readiness centers statewide.

Q: Does the Governor’s Budget fully fund the National Guard tuition assistance program?

- Yes, the budget includes an additional \$3 million, for a total of \$6.2 million to provide tuition assistance to all applicable Florida National Guardsmen pursuing higher education.
- The budget also expands the program to allow a Florida National Guardsmen to transfer their unused tuition assistance benefit to either their spouse or a dependent.

Q: How does a Florida National Guardsmen’s spouse or dependent (designee) qualify for tuition assistance?

- To qualify, the Guardsmen transferring the benefit must be an active drilling member and in good standing for the duration of the academic term. The designee must be a legal spouse or dependent of the Guardsmen and must be 17 years or older and complete a memorandum of agreement to comply with all tuition assistance program rules.
- A Guardsmen may only transfer the benefit to one designee for the duration of the program.

Q: Does the Framework for Freedom Budget include funding for Veterans’ health care?

- The Framework for Freedom Budget invests more than \$14.7 million to support nursing home residents, and provides for medical and non-medical equipment upgrades, capital improvements, and the remainder of the staff needed for the Ardie R. Copas and Alwyn Cashe State Veterans’ Nursing Homes. Funding is also provided to continue more than \$2 million to assist veterans in training, networking and mentoring throughout the state.

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The Florida State Guard

Q: What is the Florida State Guard?

- The Governor’s Budget recommends the continuation of the Florida State Guard, which is a volunteer organization within the Department of Military Affairs, under the purview of the Governor, to assist in state-specific emergencies.
- Specifically, the State Guard support units related to search and recovery, medical, logistics, communications, and other support functions that are needed during responses to hurricanes, natural disasters, and other state emergencies.

Q: How many members are currently in the Florida State Guard?

- Due to the vast interest in the Florida State Guard, over 3,000 applications for membership have been received to date; however, the current year funds only support training and equipment resources for 400 members. Full-time program staff is in the final stages of establishing program guidelines, training manuals, logistics, and equipment acquisition to begin initial membership onboarding over the next several months.

Q: How many members will the Governor’s budget support in the Florida State Guard?

- The Governor’s budget includes training and equipment resources for up to 1,500 members.

Q: Why does the Florida State Guard need maritime and aviation equipment?

- The Florida State Guard’s role is to respond to and assist in a wide variety of state emergencies, which requires a readily available and diverse fleet of equipment. The maritime and aviation resources will be especially critical during times of search and recovery, life-saving supply and resource transportation, and other response needs.

Q: Why does Florida need a State Guard and a National Guard?

- Florida is currently ranked 53 out of 54 in the ratio of service members (12,090) to population (22.9 million) as set by the federal government. For a proportional level of service members to population ratio, the Florida National Guard should have 18,000 to 21,000 service members.
- Due to the lack of service members during major disasters, the Florida National Guard has required assistance on multiple occasions from other states through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

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- The State Guard will instead augment areas of support needed during times of emergency response to reduce the reliance on other state's assistance and ensure public safety and wellbeing.

Management Services

Q: Does the Governor's budget include funding for state facilities?

- Yes, the budget includes \$23 million to provide employees and visitors at state owned office buildings a safe and efficient working environment.
- The budget also includes \$22 million to design and acquire new state-owned office buildings to reduce the state's dependence on costly private leased space.
- The budget also includes \$9 million to expand visitor and training capabilities at the Florida State Fire College, including the revitalization of the Fallen Firefighters Memorial grounds, the expansion of dormitories, and the replacement of outdated equipment.

Q: Does the Governor's budget proposal make changes to health benefits for state employees?

- No, the budget does not make changes to the health benefits for state employees. The budget does include a transfer of \$169 million from General Revenue to the State Group Health Insurance Trust Fund to cover projected needs.

Q: Does the Governor's budget include funding to address the increasing number of cyber threats?

- Yes, the budget includes \$149 million in various state agencies to continue to build on its investment to harden Florida's cybersecurity framework through security intelligence, modernization, training, and resiliency. As cybersecurity threats continue to become more sophisticated, it is vital that both state and local governments have the tools necessary to protect critical public resources and sensitive information.