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How reform could affect us

The governor's property tax amendment is expected to cost local governments \$5 billion in the first year.

BY CAMILA JOSE GOMEZ
Times Staff Writer

Hiring freezes. Layoffs. Increased taxes and fees. Elimination or reduction of county services such as parks, aging and children's services. Those are some of the ways Hill-

sborough County may be affected by Gov. Ron DeSantis' property tax cuts if they are approved by voters in November. The governor's property tax plan would increase the homestead tax exemption from \$50,000 to \$150,000 in 2027 and to \$250,000 in 2028.

Local officials across Florida have warned this measure would upend the way they fund public services — and it may even be unconstitutional. The plan would cost cities, counties and special taxing districts \$5 billion in the first year alone, a state report found.

Hillsborough County could lose as much as \$367 million in revenue if voters approve the plan, according to a report prepared by the Management and Budget Department. County commissioners saw a glimpse of what possible cuts could occur in the aftermath of the reform during a presentation from Chief Financial Administrator Tom Fesler on Wednesday. Public services would be affected. The county, for example,

would have to shift around revenue to cover public safety services, including the Fire Rescue Department and the Sheriff's Office, Fesler said.

Those departments received \$1.3 billion this fiscal year, accounting for 88% of the property tax revenue collected. With the increased property tax exemptions in place, the county would receive \$1.13 billion which is not See **TAX, 4B**

Florida gas prices went down, back up

Fuel costs have been erratic lately. Here's what experts expect.

BY TEGHAN SIMONTON
Times Staff Writer

Spending a day driving for Uber isn't what it used to be, said Mark Sloane. He estimates it could take anywhere from five to 13 hours of picking up and dropping off people in order to make \$200.

Meeting that goal these days is no small feat. He starts his mornings by filling his tank at a gas station in Temple Terrace, bracing himself for the unpredictable prices. Because drivers buy their own fuel, higher costs mean more hours and more miles — or less profit.

One day last month, gasoline was advertised as \$4.09 a gallon. The next day, it was \$4.60.

"Am I dreaming?" Sloane asked the attendant inside.

Gasoline now averages \$3.73 a gallon in Florida, according to data from U.S. Energy Information Administration.

But prices are still nearly \$1 higher than they were before conflict in Iran effectively halted traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman through See **GAS, 7B**

Who's paying for Ye's Tampa concerts?

The deal for the former Kanye West's shows includes protections around his political views.

BY NINA MOSKE
AND GABRIELLE CALISE
Times Staff Writers

Sen. Rick Scott, continuing his quest to block the former Kanye West from performing in Tampa, showed up to the Florida Holocaust Museum on Monday with a lot of questions.

"Why on Earth would we use tax dollars to fund someone who has called himself a Nazi and praised Adolf Hitler?" he asked at a news conference. "There's countries all over the world that have banned him, and we're going to allow him to come to our state and our city?"

Scott's concerns were echoed in speeches from fellow Florida politicians, Jewish leaders and even some local Holocaust survivors, drawing national attention. They wanted to know why the Tampa Sports Authority — the public agency that manages Raymond James Stadium — had inked the contract for not one, but two concerts. They questioned who's funding the shows. They demanded answers. See **CONCERTS, 5B**



Campers search for isopods and smaller worms in sediment during the University of South Florida's Oceanography Camp Especially for Girls on June 11 in St. Petersburg. (Photos by ASHLEY NEYRA | Times)

Girls in an H₂O world

Oceanography Camp Especially for Girls has long aimed to steer young women into STEM.

BY HENRY FERNANDEZ
Times Staff Writer

The researchers boarded the ship early in the morning. Over a breakfast of cinnamon rolls, they filled out data sheets from the prior day's expedition. Some wore colorful, sparkly T-shirts; others, pink trucker hats.

All 13- and 14-year-old girls, the researchers were preparing to spend the day measuring water quality, collecting sediment samples from the bay floor and analyzing microscopic plankton.

The teens were participating in Oceanography Camp Especially for Girls, a three-week summer program coordinated by the University of South Florida to give girls in Pinellas County a firsthand look at a career in the sciences. The program, which has been tuition-free since its inception, is sponsored by the university and Duke Energy.

"We really want to motivate them to stay interested in math and science, and to understand and see the career paths that are potentially there," said Dr. Teresa Greely, the program's director.

The camp, which includes more than 20 girls this year, started in 1991 as a concentrated effort to increase the number of young women pursuing a career in the sciences.



Oceanography campers compare notes collected during a day on the water.

Many of the staff are former campers who are now working in the sciences.

Eli Gilchrist, a counselor, is majoring in marine science at Eckerd College after two stints at camp — a virtual session in 2020 due to the pandemic and another in

person the following year.

"It's amazing to see young, bright girls be encouraged to not only love science and STEM, (but to) know they have a place in what we do," she said. See **CAMP, 2B**

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What Florida put in a 250-year time capsule, compared to other states

Coins, other artifacts were sealed in an America250 time capsule in Philadelphia to be opened in 2276.

BY PAIGE STEVENS
Times Staff Writer

Among the artifacts in a time capsule that will be dug up 250 years from now is a coin representing Gov. Ron DeSantis and a notecard from the Florida speaker of the House.

To commemorate America's 250th birthday, a national nonpartisan organization

called America250 asked each state and American territory for items that "reflect the people, places, ideas, and innovations shaping the United States at 250 years."

The capsule, a 900-pound cylinder built by a team from the National Institute of Standards and Technology, was sealed earlier this month. On July 4, it will be placed 10 feet underground in Independence National Historical Park in Philadelphia.

Knowing that the capsule would not resurface from the earth until 2276, some states came up with elaborate ideas to reflect life today. See **CAPSULE, 5B**



Items from Florida are among other artifacts sealed in a 900-pound time capsule in Philadelphia on July 4.

(National Institute of Standards and Technology via AP)

CAMP
continued from 1B

Nonprofits team up

The teens worked aboard a boat that was once a Grand Alaskan yacht.

The salon where boaters sipped cocktails is now a retrofitted laboratory where girls calculate nutrients in seawater. The upper deck boasts a crane that drops metal cylinders into the bay to collect samples. The ship's electronics have been updated to accommodate longer, more remote expeditions.

"We set out to create a vessel that we could use to support scientists at sea and take students and teachers on board to experience things hands-on, to get that really up-close and personal education and experience that can be life-changing," said Angela Rosenberg, a cofounder of the nonprofit ANGARI Foundation, which provides and staffs the boat for marine research.

ANGARI began working with the camp in 2017.

"Oceanography Camp for Girls kind of pre-ignites our center of energy and passion every summer. It's a program we really look forward to," said Amanda Waite, ANGARI's director of science education and advancement. "Frankly, we wish it was around when we were kids."

Exploring beneath the waves

Quynh Tollon, 14, squeezed 22 drops of solution into a surface water sample collected by her peers. After adding eight drops of starch, the sample turned a dark purple. She analyzed the vial, calculating that the dissolved oxygen in the water was 5 parts per million.

Bella Iannotta, a graduate student serving as a science mentor, watched over the process — an advanced research technique for a young student. "I didn't start titrating until under-



Students with Oceanography Camp for Girls take part in an icebreaker game aboard a ship where they prepared to study marine science in Tampa Bay. (Photos by ASHLEY NEYRA | Times)



Oceanography campers throw an otter trawl overboard to collect sea creatures.

grad," she said.

The eight teens who made up that day's research staff shared a few things in common.

They're all from Pinellas County. They completed an interview process and six-page application for admittance into the program.

And they have enough of an interest in science to wake up at dawn to spend all day on a research boat.

Otherwise, they were a disparate assortment. Their education ranged from public to private to homeschooled. Some want to pursue the marine sciences,

others medicine. Some don't know what they want to do yet.

The girls spent the day visiting four stops around the mouth of Tampa Bay, including Mullet Key and Egmont Key. At each stop, the girls rotated through a number of stations. One group collected water samples from the surface and bottom of the bay, another used those samples to analyze nutrients and a third analyzed sediment and took readings of wind speed, water visibility and cloud coverage at each stop.

Toward the end of the day, the teens analyzed plankton they had captured earlier. Plankton populations help indicate the health of the bay and are an essential part of the aquatic food chain.

See CAMP, 3B



Quynh Tollon, 14, slowly adds chemical droplets into a vial to test the water.

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Two dolphins leap through the waves created by the boat during the girls' oceanography camp on June 11 in St. Petersburg. (Photos by ASHLEY NEYRA | Times)

CAMP continued from 2B

"We're trying to catch some plankton so we can basically study them and see how many the water has," Dorrah Attia, 13, said.

"Plankton actually supply 80% of oxygen in the world. They're super important," Natalia Sky Aho, 13, said. "Trees get all the credit!"

One of the premier events of the day was the otter trawl. The campers and staff threw a large, cone-shaped net secured by two wooden

boards to the the bay floor. As the ship skimmed across the water, the net collected a variety of sea creatures for the girls to examine and measure.

"I'm manifesting a giant octopus," Quynh said. "I want something big."

"I want something big and cute!" another camper responded.

The heavy trawl was mostly handled by camp and ANGARI staff, though a couple of girls helped haul it in.

"Go Hadley! Go Leila!" the girls shouted.

Crabs, sand dollars and fish sashed around in buckets of water as the girls examined and measured the critters. After they finished their measurements, they threw the animals back into the water.

As the day ended, and the boat headed back to land, a small commotion stirred. The girls rushed to the side of the boat, adhering to their counselors' rule to shout if they saw something cool in the water.

"Dolphins!" one shouted. Campers, counselors,

and crew crowded the starboard side of the ship. One dolphin, then a second emerged, then a third, smaller than the others. A calf.

"It's a family!" one girl shouted. After a few minutes, the dolphins diverted from the ship. The girls and staff were abuzz as they went back inside.

"I don't think I'll ever see anything like that again," Leila Ochocki-Bargman, 13, said.

Contact Henry Fernandez at hfernandez@tampabay.com.



An oceanography camper measures a fish collected by the otter trawl.

Household Chemical Collection



29582 US 19 North, Clearwater
(South of Curlew Rd.)

Saturday, June 27
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Collection may be delayed or canceled due to severe weather

What chemicals to bring (*limits apply)

- Adhesive
- Automotive fluids*
- Fluorescent and projector light bulbs*
- Household cleaners
- Kerosene
- Lawn chemicals
- Mercury-containing devices
- Paints and painting chemicals*
- Pesticides
- Pool and spa chemicals
- Propane tanks under 1 lb.
- Rechargeable batteries
- Smoke detectors
- Solvents
- Stains

Note: Government-issued IDs will be required and scanned for proof of Pinellas County residency

For information on other items, visit the Where Does it Go? Search Tool at Pinellas.gov/wheredoesitgo

BUSINESSES: Visit Pinellas.gov/sqg



Household Hazardous Waste Center
2855 109th Ave. N., St. Petersburg

For a calendar of operating days, visit Pinellas.gov/hhwcalendar or scan this QR code.



For more information about household chemical collection, including quantity limits and safe packaging, visit Pinellas.gov/household-chemical-collection or call (727) 464-7500.

FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY, PARTICIPANTS MUST BE IN A VEHICLE

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