

THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE



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FLORIDA LEGISLATURE STANDS UP FOR FLORIDIANS, REJECTS UNLAWFUL VACCINE MANDATES

Florida House and Senate send “Keep Florida Free” Agenda to Governor DeSantis

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (Nov. 17, 2021) – Today the Florida Legislature concluded the 2021 Special Session B with the passage of the “Keep Florida Free” joint agenda, announced in partnership with Governor DeSantis in response to the Biden Administration’s unlawful federal vaccine mandates. House Bills 1, 3, 5 and 7 will be sent to Governor DeSantis for signing.

Speaker Sprowls said, “*Working together with Governor DeSantis, Senate President Simpson, House members and our Senate colleagues, we have passed the smartest, strongest legislation in America to combat the Biden Administration’s unlawful vaccine mandate. We are proud to stand alongside every Florida parent and worker and say that forced masking of our kids in schools and forced vaccinations to keep your job stops here in Florida. We are proud to stand alongside businesses and provide some sanity and options to treat their employees as the individuals they are instead of succumbing to a one-size-fits-all federal mandate. The result of this week’s work is simple: No one who is subject to Florida law will be forced to get a vaccine who does not want one. I look forward to seeing the Governor sign these bills to make this the law of the land in our state.”*

Senate President Wilton Simpson (R-Trilby) said, “*Today we are sending a clear message that Florida stands for freedom. To our health care workers, law enforcement, first responders, farmers, truckers, and every other worker who never got a day off and couldn’t work from home during the pandemic – thank you for getting us through this crisis. Thank you for putting your family at risk. You stood with us when we needed you most, and we are proud to stand with you now. The Florida Legislature and Governor DeSantis are fighting for you. We will not allow the Biden Administration to make political pawns of the very people who put their lives on the line to*

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keep our economy running while everyone else was safe at home, and we certainly will never cede the responsibility of parenting to the school system or bureaucrats in the federal government. Florida respects the dignity of work, the responsibility to parent, and the right to live in freedom.”

The Florida House and Senate passed the following bills this week, which will be sent to Governor DeSantis for his signature:

HB 1B/SB 2B: Protects students, parents, workers and employers in our state by creating a framework for employees to make the best decision for their health and affirming the rights of parents to make health care decisions for their children. The bill prohibits COVID-19 vaccination mandates for employees in government and public education and protects parental choice on masks, vaccines and quarantine. Specifically, the legislation prohibits private-sector employers from having a COVID-19 vaccination mandate for employees without providing at least the five following individual exemptions:

1. Medical reasons, as determined by a physician, advanced practice registered nurse, or physician assistant. Medical reasons include pregnancy or expectation of pregnancy.
2. Religious reasons, based on a sincerely held belief
3. Immunity based on prior COVID-19 infection, as documented by a lab test
4. Periodic testing, agreeing to comply with regular testing at no cost to the employee
5. Personal protective equipment (PPE), agreeing to comply with use of employer-provided PPE

The House bill was sponsored by Representatives Erin Grall (R-Vero Beach) and Ralph Massullo (R-Lecanto). Representative Grall said, “*House Bill 1B will ensure Floridians are not subject to an overreaching federal mandate that requires them to choose between a vaccine and providing for their family. It will empower parents to make the best health care choices for their children.*”

Senate bill sponsor Senator Danny Burgess (R-Zephyrhills) said, “*This bill appropriately balances the rights of individuals to make their own health care decisions with the authority of employers to regulate workplaces. No one should lose a job because of a vaccine mandate. A nurse who cared for COVID patients when we were all safe at home should not be let go because of a mandate the White House said would not be coming. This legislation inserts some common-sense into the confusion and contradictions we have seen coming out of Washington by giving workers more options to stay safe on the job and honoring the rights and responsibilities of parents.*”

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HB 3B/SB 4B: Creates a public records exemption for information, including personal medical information and religious information, contained in files created during an investigation of an employer who refuses to provide individual exemptions from COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

House bill sponsor Representative Massullo said, *“House Bill 3B protects Floridians from public release of personal medical or religious information who allege their employers violated Florida’s COVID-19 policies and practices. Preventing disclosure of this information will help protect them from harassment or discrimination if they lose their job because of a COVID-19 vaccine mandate.”*

Senate bill sponsor Senator Burgess said, *“This bill respects Florida’s long, proud tradition of open records and open government, while ensuring that sensitive employee information remains confidential. Florida respects the dignity of work, and employees who have been wrongly fired should have the ability to make a complaint without worrying about their personal health and religious information becoming public.”*

HB 5B/SB 6B: Directs the Executive Office of the Governor to review options for the State of Florida to take responsibility over our own workers’ occupational safety and health issues in light of the misuse of OSHA by the Biden Administration.

House bill sponsor Representative Ardian Zika (R-Land O’Lakes) said, *“Forced firing of Floridians is not the Florida way. This bill takes the first step toward developing a proposal to withdraw from the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and to assert state jurisdiction over occupational safety and health concerns for Florida employers. It puts Florida in the right posture to explore the options available to ensure the safety of our workers.”*

Senate bill sponsor Senator Travis Hutson (R. St. Augustine) said, *“We respect the proper role OSHA plays in monitoring workplace safety. Unfortunately, over the last few months OSHA has been weaponized by the Biden Administration not to protect workers, but to institute an unprecedented and unconstitutional nationwide vaccine mandate. This legislation makes it clear that Florida will not stand for such an egregious, unlawful overreach by the federal government, and instead we are taking the first step toward asserting state jurisdiction over occupational safety and health issues.”*

HB 7B/SB 8B: Repeals the authority of the state Surgeon General to mandate vaccinations.

House bill sponsor Representative Alex Andrade (R-Pensacola) said, *“Floridians are worried by the expansion of executive power we’ve seen from the Biden administration and many local*

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officials. It's an honor to work with Speaker Sprowls and Governor DeSantis to reaffirm for Floridians that we will always stand up for the individual rights of the people we serve."

Senate bill sponsor Senate President Pro Tempore Aaron Bean (R-Fernandina Beach) said, “*Under the leadership of Governor DeSantis and the Legislature, Florida has been a beacon of hope, and we intend to keep it that way. This bill makes our laws even more clear that Florida stands as a refuge for families and businesses who want to live in freedom. No surgeon general has ever used this authority, but this bill takes the extra step to make it clear that no matter what the future holds, vaccines will not be mandated in Florida.*”

For more information, please visit www.FLSenate.gov and www.MyFloridaHouse.gov.

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