

LOCAL & STATE

Memorial ceremony to resume

By Andy Fillmore
Special to Ocala Star-Banner
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Quarterly Memorial ceremony at the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park will be held again on Saturday after the May edition was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The quarterly ceremonies typically are a chance for the public to honor local veterans who died in the previous three months. Saturday's ceremony is scheduled to

If you go

WHAT: Quarterly Memorial Ceremony
WHEN: 10 a.m. Saturday
WHERE: Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park, 2601 E. Fort King St., Ocala

include the solemn reading of the names of all Marion County veterans who died during the first two quarters of 2020.

Guests will be accommodated according to CDC safety guidelines.

"We want to honor

these veterans," said Jeffrey Askew, director of the Marion County Veteran Service Office and overseer of park.

Quarterly memorials have been held for about 12 years at the park. Local military and veterans groups, including the Marine Corps League, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and several local honor guards, have participated.

Lewis Alston, a Marine Corps veteran of the Vietnam War and a Purple Heart recipient, said the

Marion County Honor Guard will be on hand for Saturday's ceremony.

Bruce Lamoureux, a Vietnam War veteran and chairman of the board of the local chapter of the Vietnam War Veterans of America organization, said his group will read the veterans' names aloud during the ceremony.

Lamoureux is also a member of the Patriot Guard Riders, which provides flag lines and escorts for veterans' funerals.

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Dave Bice, of the Marine Corps League Marion Detachment, rings a bell as names are read aloud during the roll call to honor the deceased during the Quarterly Memorial ceremony in January 2019 at the Ocala-Marion County Veterans Memorial Park in Ocala. [FILE]

A group effort



CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion and Phoenix Rising YouthBuild program members lift and place the first wall of the Jimarie Cruz-Sanchez home as about 30 people took part in the Habitat for Humanity Marion County Inc. Raise The Wall event in Silver Spring Shores Thursday. Over 250 homes have been built or rehabilitated locally since 1989 by Habitat for Humanity. [DOUG ENGLE PHOTOS/OCALA STAR BANNER]



Darrell Wilkerson, with CareerSource Citrus Levy Marion and the Phoenix Rising YouthBuild program, writes a message on one of the studs used in a wall after about 30 people took part in the Raise The Wall event for the Jimarie Cruz-Sanchez home in Silver Spring Shore on Thursday.



Jimarie Cruz-Sanchez hammers the first nail into her home as about 30 people took part in the Habitat for Humanity Marion County Inc. Raise The Wall event for the Cruz-Sanchez home in Silver Spring Shore on Thursday. The home, an 1,100-square-foot, three-bedroom and two-bath home will be built between 6 to 8 months. Jimarie will be moving in with her two sons when the home is complete.

Jobless claims down in Florida as layoffs loom

By Jim Turner
News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Florida continues to see declines in first-time unemployment claims, even as the state braces for permanent layoffs over the next few months of workers — many in tourism and hospitality jobs.

The U.S. Department of Labor announced an estimated 36,541 first-time unemployment claims in Florida during the week

that ended Sept. 5, while 884,000 new applications were filed nationally — a number that remained unchanged from the previous week.

The state's latest number is down from an adjusted total of 45,590 first-time claims during the week that ended Aug. 29 and 51,647 claims during the week that ended Aug. 22. The federal agency initially estimated Florida had 39,335 claims during the week that ended Aug. 29.

The state peaked in first-time claims when it received 506,670 during the week that ended April 18, about a month after the pandemic caused businesses to begin closing down or dramatically scaling back.

While the number of claims has decreased in recent weeks, the state is anticipating at least 11,000 layoffs across the state to become permanent between now

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\$2.7 billion state budget shortfall looms

By John Kennedy
Sarasota Herald-Tribune
USA TODAY NETWORK

TALLAHASSEE — Florida lawmakers approved a three-year financial outlook for the state Thursday that is its worst since the Great Recession, with a \$2.7 billion budget shortfall looming next year which is certain to force cuts in schools, health care and social programs.

The Florida Constitution requires that the Legislature formally adopt the three-year outlook annually. While Thursday's action included no real discussion of what should happen next to bring revenue and spending into balance — which also is a constitutional mandate — the most obvious path forward includes spending reductions.

The outlook amounts to a trail map filled with financial markers showing how the coronavirus sent Florida's economy into an abyss.

"The big driver is clearly the pandemic," said Amy Baker, coordinator of the Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, which prepared the 132-page outlook.

The most jarring number is the \$2.7 billion shortfall in the 2021-22 year, followed by forecasts that revenue comes up \$1.9 billion short the next year and \$1 billion under state needs in 2023-24.

It sets up the Legislature for an extended period of bare-bones spending.

And it also puts Gov. Ron DeSantis on course to seek re-election in 2022 with the state still awash in red ink from a COVID-19 crisis he is attempting the steer

Florida through, based largely on directions from President Donald Trump.

The state last faced similar financial troubles during the 2008 housing collapse, when a \$3.3 billion budget shortfall eventually led to years of spending reductions and increases in the state's cigarette tax, motor vehicle taxes and fees and courtroom charges.

Tax and fee increases will be an option for lawmakers to consider when they start work on the budget next year, along with a delay in tax breaks handed out to corporations and consumers, and with reductions in education and health and human services, the biggest spending areas.

Sweeps of state trust funds are likely and could yield \$300 million — with affordable housing and environmental funds frequent targets of the Republican-led Legislature even in good years. A push could be soon underway again to enact a new gambling compact with the Seminole Tribe, which could annually take in \$350 million for the state.

"We assume you'll have a mixture of different things," Baker said of the balancing act facing lawmakers.

The roots of the sobering three-year forecast were seen just a month ago, when state economists slashed a stunning \$5.4 billion from expected state revenue over the next two years, with tax collections cratering as the coronavirus froze tourism and forced consumers to sharply cut household spending.

The state's current

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