

**For Immediate Release**

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**The Florida Senate Marks Opening Day of the 2025 Regular Session**

*President Albritton calls for a Rural Renaissance Across Florida, Session Focused on Government Efficiency, Accountability & Fiscal Responsibility*

**Tallahassee**—The Florida Senate today marked the Opening Day of the 2025 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature. In remarks addressing the Senate, President Ben Albritton (R-Wauchula) outlined several pieces of legislation currently advancing in the Senate, including bills to encourage a rural renaissance; promote government efficiency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility; address mental health challenges in the criminal justice system, and enhance services for youth in Florida’s child welfare system, among others. Excerpts of President Albritton’s remarks, as prepared for delivery, are below.

**About the Senate’s 2025 Opening Day Sitting**

President Albritton offered a moment of silence to honor the memory of Senator Geraldine Thompson who passed away last month following complications from a recent surgery. The President announced that the 2024-2026 [Senate Handbook](#), an educational resource for visitors to the Capitol, including the many student groups who travel to Tallahassee, is dedicated to Senator Thompson, in honor of her life’s work in education. The Senate will hold a formal Memorial Service for Senator Thompson on Thursday, March 13, 2025, at noon in the Senate Chamber.

The opening prayer was given by the Senator Rosalind Osgood (D-Fort Lauderdale). The Presentation of the Colors was led by Department of Agriculture Law Enforcement Officers, including Lieutenant Jason Wade, Special Agent Timothy Scaggs, Corporal Justin Duke, and Officer Joe Johnson, under the direction of Colonel Lee Adams. The National Anthem was played by students from the Florida State University College of Music. The saxophone quartet included Micah Cheng, AJ Nguyen, Owen Robinson, and Matthew James. The Doctor of the Day was Dr. Alicia Bishop, an emergency medicine physician in Tallahassee. Dr. Bishop’s husband, John Hincee, is a long-time staffer in the Senate. President Albritton was joined by Mrs. Missy Albritton, First Lady of the Florida Senate, for the opening sitting.

**Excerpts from President Albritton’s Prepared Remarks**

Full remarks are available on the [Senate website](#).

“As I’ve said before, I was born and bred in Florida citrus and this vital industry is not going down on my watch...Research and new technologies are offering a new hope for the future of Florida citrus. We’re on the edge of something special. Florida Citrus is making a comeback, one tree at a time.”

...

“Senator Simon’s legislation is kicking off a rural renaissance across Florida. This comprehensive package creates opportunities for our rural communities to expand education offerings, increase health care services, and modernize commerce, in addition to an investment in farm-to-market roads to support the agriculture supply chain that feeds communities across the state.”

...

“I’m proud of the fact that Florida has a great framework for accountability. Our state has been well served by the performance metrics, planning requirements, and accountability standards Governor Bush and Legislative leaders put in place nearly 30 years ago.”

“Florida has grown and changed a lot since that time, and today technology continues to revolutionize nearly every facet of our economy and our lives, at a pace never seen or felt before. To be clear, we will take the opportunity to build on and modernize some of Florida’s longstanding accountability processes. Now’s the time to do it.”

...

“The Government Efficiency Task Force, on which Senators Brodeur, Rouson, Hooper, Burton and I served, recommended modernizing the Long-Range Program Plan to improve flexibility, simplify processes and shift a focus to measured outcomes, rather than simple outputs. These enhancements will allow our agencies to respond to changing situations quickly and efficiently, spending less time on bureaucratic paperwork and more time on their core mission to get the job done for Floridians. It’s not enough to know government is completing a task or providing a service, we need to know if that service is being provided well, which means we need to have new, innovative ways to measure performance.”

...

“Over my time in the Legislature, we’ve tried many different ways to manage IT. From the Agency for State Technology to the Florida Digital Service, and despite everyone’s best efforts, we can’t seem to get it quite right. Along the way, I’ve learned a lot by just paying attention. There is no doubt in my mind, it’s time for IT to be a Cabinet-level agency.”

...

“Under no circumstances, and I repeat, under no circumstances, do I want to create an expensive, bloated bureaucracy of former C-Suite executives from Silicon Valley. But, without fail, we must have top talent to win this battle against those who seek to use technology to harm us ... When it comes to cybersecurity, Floridians’ personal data, and the IT infrastructure of our state – our citizens expect us to get that right. They deserve it.”

...

“Florida’s rulemaking process can and should be modernized to better serve our state. Senator Grall is sponsoring legislation by which all state agencies would be required to complete a five-year full and complete rule review process. Each agency will review 20% of all rules each year to identify if any changes, amendments, or repeals are necessary. Improved oversight of administrative rules will go a long way towards keeping government more accountable to Floridians. That’s the way government is supposed to work, in its foundation.”

....

“As I speak, our economy is going through major changes, a reset in way, and it’s going to take time for things to stabilize, or normalize. With that being said, there are things we can and will do to help. We’ll hold insurance companies accountable for the rates they charge and the services they provide when disaster strikes. They aren’t going to manipulate the system. And, neither is any other industry. Not on my watch. We’ll explore options for Floridians to vote to lower their own property taxes. We’ll continue to pass a balanced budget, that will include new measures for accountability, transparency and outcome measures. We’ll continue to pay down debt. We’ll continue to maintain robust reserves to be prepared for any emergency that may happen. We’ll continue to pass meaningful, broad-based tax cuts that benefit families, seniors, and those less fortunate in Florida. Every little bit helps to make Florida more affordable. We’ll do our part, you have my word on that.”

...

“Senator Harrell is sponsoring legislation to increase early detection, intervention, and support opportunities for children with autism and their families.”

...

“Senator Burgess is sponsoring legislation to expand support services for veterans and their families, with a focus on mental health training and increasing the availability of Adult Day Health Care Programs that serve veterans who require full-time care.”

...

“Senator Bradley is sponsoring the Tristin Murphy Act, critical mental health legislation, which creates model processes for diverting defendants into mental health treatment.”

...

“Senator Grall is sponsoring important child welfare legislation to combat child exploitation, create a recruitment program for child welfare professionals, and establish professional foster care to better serve children with difficult behavioral needs.”

...

“Senator Brodeur is sponsoring legislation to affirm our state’s unwavering commitment to Everglades Restoration.”

...

“Senator Simon is sponsoring legislation to create administrative efficiencies in public schools, or as I like to say De-reg 2.0. I’m proud of the collaborative, bipartisan work of the Senate to rally around our legacy, neighborhood public schools... Hear me clearly, our public school teachers deserve to be freed of needless bureaucracy. Let them teach, let them compete, so our children win!”

For more information, please visit [www.FLSenate.gov](http://www.FLSenate.gov).

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