

# 2019 LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

“The 2019 Florida Legislative Session was transformative. Policymakers and a new governor made bold strides cementing Florida as a beacon for conservative principles. Our team at JMI worked overtime in Tallahassee and beyond in ways that will be felt for generations. The Florida Legislature charted a course for patient-centered healthcare reform, expanded school choice in ways every other state is marveling at, protected and encouraged small businesses, took the first step down the path of reform to our criminal justice system, and passed a number of other principled reforms that will touch the lives of Floridians. The Legislature also maintained our status as one of the leanest governments in the country. Thanks are due to Governor DeSantis, Senate President Galvano and House Speaker Oliva for their leadership and commitment to the Sunshine State’s future.”

– **Sal Nuzzo, Vice President of Policy**

**T**his year, we saw an unparalleled level of energy and commitment to the principles that are central to JMI's mission. Policymakers enacted initiatives from five of the six policy priorities JMI had set for this past session. From the parents desperately trying to realize a better future for their children, to the entrepreneurs seeking to expand their business here, to those needing a better choice for their healthcare needs – Florida is a better state as a result of the 2019 legislative session.

## **PRIORITY ONE**

### **Champion market-based healthcare solutions**

- Florida's anticompetitive and harmful certificate of need laws are a thing of the past.
- Telehealth expansion is on the fast-track, with policymakers creating a patient-centered framework for innovation.
- Cost accountability is improving with the patient savings act, allowing patients to share in savings when they participate in cost comparisons.
- Direct Primary Care expands into Direct Health Agreements, allowing networks to partner with specialists and provide greater access to care for patients.
- Patients can now stay in ambulatory surgical centers for up to 24 hours, creating more options and increasing the supply of services at better costs.

## **PRIORITY TWO**

### **Expand educational opportunity**

- Florida adopts a groundbreaking Family Empowerment Scholarship, which offers 18,000 students (many already on the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship waiting list) the opportunity to enroll in a school that their parents consider the "best fit" for their child.
- Florida also expands the Gardiner Scholarship program for special needs students and makes improvements to the Hope Scholarship program for victims of bullying.
- Expansion of Florida's School of Hope program will bring more highly acclaimed charter schools to low-income communities with persistently underperforming district schools.
- Florida's choice programs now serve more families – by far – than any other state, strengthening Florida's position as the national leader in school choice.

## PRIORITY THREE

### Promote innovation and entrepreneurialism

- By keeping expenditures and the \$91 billion budget steady with population growth, the Legislature continues to ensure that limited government is the norm for the Sunshine State.
- The business rent tax, which no other state levies, has been lowered from 5.7 to 5.5 percent – a positive step.
- “Permissionless” innovation expanded with Florida’s micromobility policy, creating a framework for dockless scooters and other innovative transport options.

## PRIORITY FOUR

### Support sensible criminal justice reforms

- Florida’s 33-year old felony theft threshold has been right-sized, from \$300 to \$750 – a step that will allow the correctional system to begin putting more emphasis on higher-level offenders.
- Drivers’ license suspension regulations have been reformed to stop penalizing individuals in ways that create future harm.
- Barriers to assisting those who were formerly incarcerated in gaining employment have been minimized via licensing reform efforts.

## PRIORITY FIVE

### Advance free-market reforms to Florida’s property insurance system

- Abuses permeated in the property insurance arena by fraud and bad actors has finally been addressed through comprehensive reform of Assignment of Benefits provisions.
- Florida is now a national leader in promoting innovation in transportation, via a free enterprise insurance regulatory system and framework for autonomous vehicles.
- Florida’s Supreme Court adopted the Daubert Standard for expert testimony, helping to address the atrocious legal climate and place Florida on a better trajectory to combat overzealous torts.

The results of the 2019 legislative session will speak for themselves – Floridians will continue to enjoy opportunities to achieve unrivaled prosperity and economic progress. While Illinois, Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and so many other states continue their long slow march to insolvency, Florida will continue to serve as an example of good governance. However, there is always more that can be done to secure Florida’s bright future. The 2020 session begins January 14 – and the team at The James Madison Institute will be ready as ever to further promote the conservative principles of limited government, free enterprise, and economic opportunity for all.



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