



OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL

REGGIE GAFFNEY, JR.
COUNCIL MEMBER, DISTRICT 8
Office: (904) 255-5208
Email: rgaffneyjr@coj.net

117 West Duval Street
Suite 425, 4th Floor, City Hall
Jacksonville, Florida 32202

Executive Briefing Sheet
Florida Laws Effective October 1, 2025
From the Office of Jacksonville City Councilman Reggie Gaffney Jr.

Jackson, Roshanda - CCSS
rjackson1@coj.net

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Starting October 1, Florida is enacting nearly 30 new laws. For our district, the biggest changes are stronger housing protections, mental health reforms, tougher DUI penalties, disaster safeguards, and fairer rules for development. These laws touch real lives here in Jacksonville. My office will be sending out a compact breakdown of each of these new laws and you can also find it on my [coj website](#).

Top 5 Key Impacts for District 8 & Jacksonville

1. Flood Disclosure & Housing Protections (SB 948)

What Changed: Landlords and sellers must disclose flood risk and past flood damage.

District 8 Relevance: Protects families in flood-prone neighborhoods; strengthens renters' rights.

2. Mental Health Diversion – “Tristin Murphy Act” (SB 168)

What Changed: Expands alternatives to incarceration for people with mental illness or disabilities; requires crisis intervention training for officers.

District 8 Relevance: Directly connects to ongoing debate about jail placement vs. treatment options.

3. Stronger Penalties for Repeat DUI & Hit-and-Run (HB 687 / HB 479)

What Changed: Harsher penalties for repeat DUI manslaughter offenders and restitution required for fleeing crashes.

District 8 Relevance: Protects families and children along busy corridors like Dinsmore/Trout River, Dunn Avenue and Lem Turner, Bradley Cove and Lady Lakes.

4. Animal Welfare During Disasters – “Trooper’s Law” (SB 150)

What Changed: Makes it a felony to abandon a chained animal during hurricanes or disasters.

District 8 Relevance: Supports storm preparedness efforts across neighborhoods.

5. Land Development Permit Deadlines (SB 1080)

What Changed: Cities must process development permits within 30 days or refund fees.

District 8 Relevance: Impacts neighborhood growth, zoning hearings, and accountability in development.

Other Laws

- Human Trafficking (SB 1804): Creates capital felony for child trafficking under 12.
- Utility Worker Protections (SB 1386): Harsh penalties for assaulting JEA and infrastructure workers.
- Sexual Image Crimes (HB 757 / HB 1451): Stiffer penalties for deepfake porn and child exploitation.

Community Handout or Email Blast

A breakdown of nearly 30 new Florida laws (effective Oct. 1, 2025) in policy areas, and a highlight on how they may impact Jacksonville constituents and city governance.

1. Criminal Justice & Public Safety

- Tougher penalties for fleeing police, tampering with ankle monitors, luring children, distributing sexual images/deepfakes, and using drones illegally.
- Expanded aggravating factors in death penalty cases (schools, religious sites, government gatherings).
- Human trafficking of children under 12 or those mentally impaired becomes a capital felony (life or death penalty).

Local Impact: District 8 and Jacksonville as a whole, may see shifts in law enforcement training and resource needs (ankle monitor enforcement, drone regulation, and victim protection services).

2. DUI & Traffic Safety

- “Trenton’s Law”: Harsher DUI/BUI penalties, especially repeat offenders causing death.
- License plate devices & fake traffic stops: Now higher-level crimes.
- Restitution for leaving the scene of a crash.

Local Impact: Public safety campaigns in Jacksonville could emphasize awareness around DUI repeat offenders and new traffic penalties.

3. Mental Health & Alternatives to Incarceration

- “Tristin Murphy Act”: Expands diversion programs for defendants with mental illness or disabilities. Requires crisis intervention training for officers.

Local Impact: Supports Jacksonville’s conversations around jail alternatives.

4. Housing, Flooding & Land Use

- Flood disclosure law: Landlords and sellers must disclose flood risks and past damage. Tenants may cancel leases if disclosures aren’t made.
- Land development permits: Local governments must process within 30 days, refund delays, and can’t slow projects with limited hearings.

Local Impact: Big for Jacksonville’s flood-prone neighborhoods (like District 8). This strengthens tenant rights and transparency for families vulnerable to flooding. Also ties into city planning and growth debates.

5. Child & Family Protections

- Foster care: Faster approval when families move within Florida.
- Sex crime laws: Mandatory minimums (10–20 years), quarterly address checks, expanded reporting for sexual predators.

Local Impact: Foster families in Duval get smoother transitions, while law enforcement faces more reporting duties.

6. Animal & Utility Worker Protections

- “Trooper’s Law”: Felony to abandon chained pets during natural disasters.
- Utility worker protections: Harsher penalties for assaults at critical infrastructure.

Local Impact: Jacksonville, with hurricanes and storm prep, will need clear communication with residents about animal laws. JEA workers also gain stronger protection.

7. Technology & Privacy

- Tracking devices: Using without consent during a crime = felony.
- Cyberharassment/Deepfake porn: Upgraded penalties, lawsuits allowed.
- Financial Tech Sandbox: Keeps business records exempt from public disclosure.

Local Impact: With Jacksonville pushing fintech and cybersecurity growth, this keeps Florida attractive for business while strengthening digital privacy.

8. Public Records & Transparency

- Exemptions extended for: endangered species locations, housing program data, insolvent insurers, minors' abortion waiver requests, and state cybersecurity.

Local Impact: City transparency advocates may raise questions about the balance between safety/privacy and public access to records.

Summary:

Florida is doubling down on tough-on-crime penalties, tenant rights, mental health alternatives, and protection for children, animals, and workers. For Jacksonville, the most immediate effects will be felt in housing/flood disclosures, mental health diversion programs, and expanded criminal enforcement responsibilities.