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Trump’s oil-drilling order tests Florida’s resolve

Ledyard King, USA TODAY Published 6:45 p.m. ET April 28, 2017 | Updated 7:06 p.m. ET April 28, 2017

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke (Photo: Carolyn Kaster/Associated Press file photo)

WASHINGTON — With bipartisan fervor, Florida has fought against off-shore drilling to protect the tourist-rich beaches and maritime industries that drive much if its economy.

But a president who won the state less than six months ago on his way to the White House could test that resolve.

Trump issued an executive order Friday that could eventually open up millions of coastal acres off U.S. shores to oil and gas drilling, including Florida. The America First Offshore Energy Strategy directs Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to review the current five-year development plan on the Outer Continental Shelf.

“Our country is blessed with incredible natural resources including abundant offshore oil and natural gas resources, but the federal government has kept 94 percent of these offshore areas closed for exploration and production,” Trump said during a signing ceremony at the White House. “This deprives our country of potentially thousands and thousands of jobs and billions in wealth.”

A White House memo released Friday afternoon suggests Florida is not an immediate target. Interior officials are being directed to review areas closed off by the current five-year plan for sale of oil and gas leases in the Outer Continental Shelf, including the western and central Gulf of Mexico and the Mid- and South Atlantic.

But within hours of the order’s issuance, industry groups were talking up the possibility of drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

“Exploration in this area is critical to our national security, and we continue to see our neighbors in Mexico and Cuba pursue these opportunities,” American Petroleum Institute President and CEO Jack Gerard said. “The eastern Gulf is in close proximity to existing production and infrastructure, and opening it would most quickly spur investment and economic activity, which could create thousands of jobs and provide billions of dollars in government revenue.”

The Gulf of Mexico, which covers about 160 million off-shore acres, houses about 48.5 billion barrels of recoverable oil and about 141 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, according to Zinke. More than 97 percent of the nation’s current leases overseen by Interior are in the Gulf.

About 75 people showed up for Hands Across the Sand in Cocoa Beach in May 2016 to show their support for the environment and stand against offshore drilling and offshore seismic testing. (Photo: MALCOLM DENEMARK/FLORIDA TODAY)

An association representing some 41,000 coastal businesses from Maine to Florida is gearing up to fight the prospect of oil and gas rigs in the South Atlantic.
Frank Knapp, the president and CEO of the Business Alliance for Protecting the Atlantic Coast, said Trump’s directive is far broader and aggressive than those of recent presidents, including Barack Obama, who pushed for similar reviews but opted not to move ahead.

“The Florida coast is going to be involved in this five-year plan,” Knapp said. “That is a major acceleration of the threat to the Atlantic coast.”

Lawmakers will have a lot to say about how far Trump can go since it was Congress that adopted a 125-mile buffer off Florida’s Gulf Coast through 2022.

Florida lawmakers, who remember how the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill tarred Panhandle beaches, poisoned habitats and kept visitors away, will take issue with any expanded drilling they view as a threat to the state’s economy and ecology.

“This announcement by the president will be like a big present for the oil companies,” Florida Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson said earlier this week on the Senate floor. “I hope the president thinks twice before putting Florida’s economy at such a risk. I hope he refrains from issuing this executive order, but if he doesn’t, this senator and a bipartisan delegation from Florida will fight this order.”

Nelson last month led a bipartisan coalition of Sunshine State lawmakers urging Zinke to maintain the current moratorium on offshore oil drilling in the eastern Gulf of Mexico for at least the next five years.

Joining Nelson on the letter to the Interior secretary were Democrats Kathy Castor, Charlie Crist, Val Demings, Ted Deutch, Lois Frankel, Alcee Hastings, Al Lawson, Stephanie Murphy, Darren Soto, Debbie Wasserman Schultz and Frederica Wilson, and Republicans Vern Buchanan, Brian Mast, Francis Rooney, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Daniel Webster.

In addition, Rep. Mark Sanford, a tea party congressman from South Carolina, responded to Trump’s order by introducing a bill to suspend offshore drilling and all related activities in the waters off the East Coast for the next decade.

“One of every 10 jobs in South Carolina comes from tourism and this means $13 billion in impact every year to our coastal counties alone,” he said. “Drilling would put this economic driver at risk.”

Florida GOP Gov. Rick Scott, a Trump ally, has not weighed in on the order.

Shortly following the Deepwater Horizon disaster, Scott said during his first run for governor in 2010 he supported off-shore drilling as long as it could be done safely. Asked where he stood on Trump’s order Friday, a spokeswoman for the governor said the directive was still being reviewed by his office.

State residents are increasingly opposed to off-shore drilling, according to the University of South Florida-Nielsen Sunshine State Survey. The annual poll showed 44 percent support for the activity in 2014 with 39 percent opposed. Last year, 47 percent opposed off-shore drilling compared to 32 percent who supported it.

Eric Draper, executive director of Audubon Florida, said he thinks the president might be surprised to find out how poorly the idea of offshore drilling resonates in the Sunshine State.

“Most Floridians are going to think that it’s more important to protect our beaches from the impact of an oil spill than to allow more energy development off the coast,” he said. “The Trump administration really misreads what’s important to Florida if they allow the Interior (Department) to start looking at leasing land off the Gulf Coast or even the Atlantic for drilling.”

*Contact Ledyard King at lknig@gannett.com; Twitter: @ledgeking*
Rich Campbell: 'Most dangerous highway' close to home  
Rich Campbell, rich.campbell@tcpalm.com Published 12:07 p.m. ET April 28, 2017 | Updated 10:18 a.m. ET May 1, 2017  
Editor's note: This article has been updated from its original version.

If you live on the Treasure Coast, it's impossible to get anywhere in our region without traveling on or crossing U.S. 1. Here's something to keep in mind the next time you venture onto this roadway: U.S. 1 in Florida is the most dangerous highway in America. That is according to a study by Geotab, a fleet management company headquartered in Canada.

Geotab examined road-fatality numbers for dozens of highways across the country, then adjusted the figures for average daily traffic counts. Conclusion: The 13-county stretch of U.S. 1 in Florida — from the southern tip of Key West to the Florida-Georgia line — earned the dubious distinction as the deadliest highway in the United States.

Rounding out the top five were: U.S. 83 in Texas (No. 2), and Interstate 40 in California (No. 3), Arizona (No. 4) and New Mexico (No. 5).

Over a 10-year period, there were 1,011 deadly crashes resulting in 1,079 fatalities on U.S. 1 in Florida, the study found. It did not specify which section of U.S. 1 in our state is the most dangerous.

It’s easy to see why U.S. 1 can be hazardous to your health.

**Angle/left-turn crashes**

I’ve found a recurring phrase in TCPalm stories about U.S. 1 crashes and fatalities:

"The SUV drove into the motorcycle's path"

"Turned left into the path of …"

"Turned left in front of …"

You get the idea.

An angle/left-turn crash occurs when one motorist makes a left turn and broadsides another vehicle (or is broadsided by another vehicle). Not surprisingly, angle/left-turn crashes often are the most severe.

The Florida Department of Transportation conducted a Multimodal Corridor Study of U.S. 1 in Martin and St. Lucie counties. Looking at crash data over a five-year period, the study found that, while "rear-end crashes account for 42 percent of overall crashes" in the U.S. 1 corridor, they result in only 5 percent of fatalities. By contrast, angle/left-turn crashes account for 20 percent of overall crashes in the U.S. 1 corridor, but result in 27 percent of severe injury crashes and 24 percent of fatal crashes.

On U.S. 1, a potential angle/left-turn crash is lurking at every traffic signal, stop sign or cross street.
Red-light runners

I was almost T-boned two weeks ago by a red-light runner in front of the Stuart News building on U.S. 1. I was turning left on a green arrow from southbound U.S. 1 into the newspaper. Just as I was clearing the intersection, a red-light runner traveling north blew past several stopped vehicles and through the red light, narrowly missing my car.

The incident was a wake-up call for me. If I'd been paying attention, I'd have seen him coming.

The next time you're seated in your vehicle at a traffic light at U.S. 1, observe the motorists who run the light after it goes from green to red. There's almost always one or more offenders, especially at rush hour.

“Every day, in the United States, drivers running red lights cause an average of two fatalities and more than 340 injuries,” said Liz Canacciolo, safety general manager for American Traffic Solutions, a road safety camera provider in North America.

Suggestion: When your light turns green, count to three and look both ways before proceeding through the intersection.

Unexpected encounters

Unlike Florida’s Turnpike or Interstate 95, where pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited and there are a limited number of entrances and exits for vehicles, U.S. 1 presents a plethora of potential hazards.

These include:

The motorist in front of you in the left lane on U.S. 1, traveling at 45 mph, who suddenly decides to make a left turn where there is no left-turn lane — and does so despite the "No left turn" sign posted in the median. (Apparently, traveling another quarter mile to make a legal left turn is too much of an imposition.)

The bicyclist riding on the sidewalk that you encounter while turning right (from a side street or parking lot) onto U.S. 1. You are turning right and, naturally, looking left to find an opening in the traffic. The bicyclist is coming from your right and suddenly appears in front of your vehicle.

The vehicle traveling in the opposite direction on U.S. 1 that makes a U-turn and suddenly appears in your lane.

Drop your guard for even a second on U.S. 1 and you're inviting disaster.
Speeders

One afternoon in July 2015, I joined members of the Stuart Police Department for a speed-enforcement exercise on U.S. 1 south of the Roosevelt Bridge. For more than an hour, Stuart Police Cpl. Brian Bossio — the department's public information officer — pointed a laser gun at oncoming speeders and radioed information to patrol officers 100 yards down the road.

The shocker: A majority of all motorists we observed that day were traveling 8 mph to 10 mph over the posted speed limit. I suspect this is true for much of U.S. 1.

The most dangerous highway in America? It's a distinct possibility.

Rich Campbell is the Shaping Our Future columnist for Treasure Coast Newspapers. This column reflects his opinion. Contact him at 772-221-4207 or rich.campbell@tcpalm.com. Twitter: @RCampbelmc58
U.S. 27

continued from A1

15 to 22 trains a day.

A new railroad path in
the western regions would
reduce freight traffic through
the population centers of the
coast between Fort Pierce
and Miami, Busha said.

With Brightline's pas-
genier train service expected
to start this summer, build-
ing a railroad along U.S. 27
would also free capacity on
the Florida East Coast Rail-
way for passenger trains.
Truck traffic could also be
diverted from U.S. 27 and
Interstate 95.

"On a lot of different
fronts, it is a valuable piece
of infrastructure," Busha said.
"It provides more capac-
ity in the rail system, the
freight system, and I believe
it unlocks the potential that
the Glades has been look-
ing for."

The economically
depressed communities
around Lake Okeechobee
would benefit, especially
if an intermodal logistics
center is built in the region.

Basha made a presenta-
tion to the Port of Palm
Beach Commission last week
and said, "It's just a piece of trans-
portation that's missing."

Port commissioners have
said if an intermodal logis-
tics center, also known as
an inland port, is built, they
want it in western Palm
Beach County.

"We want to be very clear
that every time we talk about
this, we are interested in sup-
porting the Glades," Commis-
sioner Wayne Richards said.

Commission Chairman
Blair Cilklin said of the
project, "I wouldn't think
there's anyone in Palm
Beach County who would
be against it."

In 2013, the Florida
Department of Transpor-
tation released a 48-page
report on U.S. 27 alterna-
tives. The report concluded
there were no fatal engineer-
ing or environmental flaws
in the concept and that it
was feasible.

More than a dozen routes
were studied, and the most
feasible one identified was
connecting with the Florida
East Coast Railway west of
Hialeah, running along U.S.
27 to South Bay, and linking
to the existing South Central
Florida Express/FEC tracks
that run along the south side
of Lake Okeechobee.

U.S. 27 connects to Flori-
da's Turnpike, I-95 and State
Road 80, and actually goes
all the way to Indiana.

The project didn't hap-
pen in 2013 because of the
economic downturn and
because some of the freight
shippers solved their own
problems by building their
own facilities, Busha said.

"It was an idea a little bit
before its time, but not
much," Busha said.

Better ways are needed
to get freight from Miami
right to the rest of the state
and elsewhere. But the project
won't be cheap as it would
be going through wilderness,
Basha said. The railroad line
would run through wetlands
and the Everglades Agri-
cultural Area as well.

The project needs to
become reality before a logis-
tics center is built, Busha said.

Basha said another meet-
ing to discuss the project
will be held within the next
couple of months.

"We will also work with
the South Florida Regional
Planning Council and the South-
west Florida Regional Plan-
ing Council. It's a regional
project," Busha said.

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According to the Centers for Disease Control 91 people die every day from opioid related deaths. These numbers are staggering and reflect why FAC declared the opioid epidemic a priority for the 2017 Legislative Session to help get more funding and stiffer penalties for illegal distributors.

Today the Association is proud to announce that Governor Rick Scott declared the opioid crisis a state health emergency qualifying Florida for more than $27 million in federal grant funding. In addition, the Governor directed the state Surgeon General to issue a standing order for Naloxen to ensure that first responders across the state have immediate access to treat opioid overdoses.

To view the Governor’s Executive Order, please click here.
STATE OF FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 17-146
(Opioid Epidemic)

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has declared a national opioid epidemic which poses a severe threat to the State of Florida and requires that measures are taken to protect the communities and the general welfare of this State; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, opioids were responsible for over 33,000 deaths nationwide; and nearly 3,000 deaths in Florida; and

WHEREAS, opioid abuse has required additional resources from local first responders such as law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services; and

WHEREAS, on April 21, 2017, the United States Department of Health and Human Services awarded a grant to the Florida Department of Children and Families in the amount of $27,150,003 per year for two years to provide prevention, treatment, and recovery support services to address this epidemic; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to immediately draw down these federal grant funds to provide services to Florida communities instead of waiting until the start of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2017; and

WHEREAS, on April 11, 2017, I directed DCF, DOH and FDLE to meet with communities and hold workshops to identify additional strategies to fight the rising opioid usage cases in Florida.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RICK SCOTT, as Governor of Florida, by virtue of the authority vested in me by Article IV, Section 1 (a) of the Florida Constitution and by the Public Health Act, and all other applicable laws, promulgate the following Executive Order, to take immediate effect:

Section 1. Because of the foregoing conditions, I declare that the opioid epidemic threatens the State of Florida with an emergency, and that as a consequence of this danger a state of emergency exists in the State of Florida.

Section 2. I give the Florida Department of Children and Families and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement the authority to suspend the effect of any statute, rule, ordinance, or order, to the extent necessary to procure any and all necessary supplies, commodities, services, temporary premises, and other resources, including, but not limited to, any and all statutes, rules, ordinances, or orders which affect leasing, printing, purchasing, travel, and the condition of employment and the compensation of employees, but any statute, rule, ordinance, or order shall be suspended only to the extent necessary to ensure the timely performance of disaster response functions. Any waiver of statutes, rules, ordinances, or orders which affect leasing, printing, purchasing, travel, and the condition of employment and the compensation of employees shall be by emergency rule or order in accordance with sections 120.54(4) and 252.46, Florida Statutes and in no event shall remain in effect beyond the date of expiration of this Order, as extended, or ninety days from the issuance of this Order.

Section 3. Pursuant to section 252.361(1)(a), Florida Statutes, the Executive Office of the Governor may waive all statutes and rules affecting budgeting to the extent necessary to provide budget
authority for state agencies to cope with this emergency. The requirements of sections 252.46 and 120.54(4), Florida Statutes, do not apply to any such waiver issued by the Executive Office of the Governor.

Section 4. I find that the demands placed upon the funds appropriated to the agencies of the State of Florida and to local agencies are unreasonably great and may be inadequate to pay the costs of coping with this severe circumstance. In accordance with section 252.37(2), Florida Statutes, I direct that sufficient funds be made available, as needed, by transferring and expending moneys appropriated for other purposes, moneys from unappropriated surplus funds, or from the Budget Stabilization Fund.

Section 5. I direct the State Health Officer and Surgeon General, Celeste Philip, M.D., MPH, to declare a statewide public health emergency, pursuant to its authority in section 381.00315, Florida Statutes.

Section 6. In accordance with section 381.0011(7), Florida Statutes, I direct the State Health Officer to take any action necessary to protect the public health. Further, I direct the State Health Officer to immediately issue a standing order for approved opioid antagonists to ensure emergency responders have access to this lifesaving medication.

Section 7. This Executive Order shall expire sixty days from this date unless extended.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed, at Tallahassee, this 3rd day of May, 2017.

[Signature]
GOVERNOR

ATTEST:

[Signature]
SECRETARY OF STATE
WHEREAS, on May 3, 2017, Governor Rick Scott declared that the opioid epidemic threatens the State of Florida with an emergency, and that as a consequence of this danger a state of emergency exists in the State of Florida; and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has declared a national opioid epidemic which poses a severe threat to the State of Florida and requires that measures are taken to protect the communities and the general welfare of this State; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, opioids were responsible for nearly 3,900 deaths in Florida; and

WHEREAS, opioid abuse has required additional resources from local first responders such as law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical services; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, Florida enacted the “Emergency Treatment and Recovery Act” which authorized health care practitioners to prescribe and dispense opioid antagonists to patients, caregivers and first responders pursuant to a non-patient-specific standing order for the emergency treatment of known or suspected opioid overdoses occurring when a health care practitioner is not available; and

WHEREAS, pharmacists are authorized to dispense an appropriately labeled opioid antagonist based on a non-patient-specific standing order for an auto-injection delivery system or intranasal application delivery system, which must be appropriately labeled with instructions for use; and

WHEREAS, the Act authorizes emergency responders, including but not limited to, law enforcement officers, paramedics and emergency medical technicians, to possess, store and administer emergency opioid antagonists as clinically indicated; and

WHEREAS, immunity from civil liability is provided under section 768.13, Florida Statutes, the Good Samaritan Act, to any person, including health care practitioners and emergency responders, who possess, administer or store an approved opioid antagonist in accordance with the Act. A health care practitioner acting in good faith and exercising reasonable care is not subject to discipline under the applicable professional licensure statute and is also immune from civil or criminal liability for prescribing or dispensing an opioid antagonist in accordance with the Act.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Celeste Philip, MD, MPH, Surgeon General of Florida and State Health Officer, by virtue of Executive Order Number 17-146 issued by Governor Rick Scott and the authority vested in me by section 381.00315, Florida Statutes, do hereby declare the following:

Section 1: A Public Health Emergency is declared statewide.

Section 2: As directed by Executive Order Number 17-146, the following Florida standing order for Naloxone is issued.
Naloxone Standing Order

This order authorizes pharmacists who maintain a current active license practicing in a pharmacy located in Florida that maintains a current active pharmacy permit to dispense one of the following naloxone formulations to emergency responders for administration to persons exhibiting signs of opioid overdose. Emergency responders include law enforcement officers, firefighters, paramedics and emergency medical technicians.

The pharmacy must maintain a copy of the naloxone Standing Order if dispensing naloxone pursuant to the order.

Incorporated in this Naloxone Standing Order is the expectation that the SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit Five Essential Steps for First Responders be followed.

Approved Options for Intranasal or Auto-Injector Administration:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intranasal</th>
<th>Auto-Injector</th>
<th>Intranasal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naloxone 2mg/2ml prefilled syringe, #2 syringes</td>
<td>Naloxone 0.4 mg/0.4 ml #1 twin pack</td>
<td>Narcan Nasal Spray 4mg, #2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIG: Spray one-half of the syringe into each nostril upon signs of opioid overdose. Call 911. May repeat x 1. Mucosal Atomization Device (MAD) #2 SIG: Use as directed for naloxone administration. Kit must contain 2 prefilled syringes and 2 atomizers and instructions for administration.</td>
<td>SIG: Use one auto-injector upon signs of opioid overdose. Call 911. May repeat x 1. No kit is required. Product is commercially available.</td>
<td>SIG: Administer a single spray intranasally into one nostril. Call 911. Administer additional doses using a new nasal spray with each dose, if patient does not respond or responds and then relapses into respiratory depression. Additional doses may be given every 2 to 3 minutes until emergency medical assistance arrives. No kit is required. Product is commercially available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Executed this 3rd day of May, 2017, in Department of Health Offices, Tallahassee, Leon County, Florida.

[Signature]

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH
Surgeon General and Secretary
‘Finally,’ Scott declares opioid epidemic a public health emergency

By Joe Capozzi, Christine Stapleton and Pat Beall - Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Updated: 8:33 p.m. Wednesday, May 03, 2017 | Posted: 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 03, 2017

Responding to months of public outcry, Gov. Rick Scott declared a public health emergency Wednesday in the fight against the opioid epidemic, a sea change in what had been a hands-off approach by state officials to a crisis that has killed thousands.

“Finally,” said Palm Beach County Vice Mayor Melissa McKinlay, who in February sent the first of nearly a dozen local requests for an emergency declaration in response to a November 2016 investigation by The Palm Beach Post into the epidemic’s toll.

“Today I feel relief — relief that the voices of so many were finally heard, for the pain of loss so many families have faced and to those struggling to overcome addiction,” she said.

Scott’s order came hours after the last of four stops on a state “listening tour” in Florida’s hardest-hit regions. The first workshop, Monday in West Palm Beach, drew a standing-room-only crowd of more than 250 people who demanded help and voiced disappointment that Scott didn’t attend.

The order allows the state “to immediately draw” from a two-year $54 million federal grant awarded to Florida on April 21 to provide prevention, treatment and recovery-support services. Without the order, it would have taken months for the state to distribute the money to local communities, Scott said.

“I know firsthand how heartbreaking substance abuse can be to a family because it impacted my own family growing up,” Scott said in a news release. “The individuals struggling with drug use are sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends and each tragic case leaves loved ones searching for answers and praying for help. Families across our nation are fighting the opioid epidemic and Florida is going to do everything possible to help our communities.”

At an appearance in Riviera Beach Wednesday, Scott, who is expected to run for U.S. Senate in 2018, did not elaborate beyond his statement issued earlier in the day.

The declaration calls for Florida Surgeon General Celeste Philip to issue a standing order requiring pharmacists to have on hand for first responders the overdose reversal drug naloxone, also known as Narcan.

Some recovery advocates have said Scott should have issued the order sooner, following a lead taken by governors in Virginia, New Jersey, Alaska and other states to fight an epidemic that killed more than 33,000 people in 2015.

“Long seen as an issue local to Palm Beach County, this declaration brings to light that this epidemic is a human tragedy not just in the Palm Beach County area, but to the entire state,” said state Rep. Bill Hager, R-
Boca Raton, a sponsor of legislation to crack down on fraudulent marketing and patient brokering in sober homes, which proliferate in the county.

At a March 30 appearance in Palm Beach County, when prompted by a Post reporter, Scott said he was reviewing an emergency declaration.

Less than two weeks later, he and Attorney General Pam Bondi announced plans for the “listening tour” workshops held this week in Palm Beach, Manatee, Orange and Duval counties. But they stopped short of declaring a public health emergency.

That listening tour was widely ripped by local recovery advocates, who said the families needed action from Scott, not more workshops. Philip, however, framed the listening tour in an interview with The Post as a necessary step toward declaring a health emergency and drafting a plan of action.

State Rep. Matt Willhite, D-Wellington, said he thinks Scott’s plan all along might have been to issue a declaration at some point after the workshops. But he said the West Palm Beach crowd might have played a role in the declaration being issued on Wednesday.

“I think (state officials) heard a lot of public outcry on how it has affected so many families. This is a good step,” said Willhite, who participated in Monday’s workshop.

Delray Beach Mayor Cary Glickstein, whose city is on the epidemic’s front lines, said he hoped the state offers more details about what the declaration means for individual municipalities.

“The order is a great start. We’ve been asking for it for some time,” he said. “But how that money is going to be apportioned and earmarked remains to be seen.”

West Palm Beach City Commissioner Shanon Materio, a member of State Attorney Dave Aronberg’s sober-home task force, said Scott’s order “is an important step forward to ensure we have maximum resources to truly take on this crisis with meaningful and serious solutions. This crisis requires all of us to work hand in hand to save lives.”

Jupiter Vice Mayor Ian Kaufer, who led a declaration request by the Palm Beach County League of Cities in March, said families of addicts deserve credit for being so outspoken on the issue.

“I am thankful to all the local leaders and community members who supported efforts to let the governor know how important this step was in saving lives,” he said.

Now comes the real work, said McKinlay, who became engaged in the issue after the overdose death of the daughter of her county aide Johnnie Easton. “I am hopeful that the governor’s direction ... will open the door to a truly meaningful plan to fight this disease.”

The $54 million federal grant tackles the entire opioid crisis, including both heroin and prescription narcotics.

But the Department of Children and Families has to have legislative approval to spend the money — and that approval was tied up in the $83 billion state budget, which stalled Tuesday, forcing legislators to extend the session.

Scott’s emergency declaration allows DCF to begin spending the first year’s $27 million immediately. Much of the money is already earmarked: $17 million is expected to pay for expanding medication assisted treatment for people struggling to get sober.

The money also will go toward addressing the mushrooming problem of babies born in withdrawal from their mother’s opioid use. Many lawmakers said they believed in 2011 that a crackdown on pill mills and in particular prescription OxyContin sales would curb what is known as Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome.
Just the opposite: As heroin has supplanted prescription drugs, cases of NAS in Florida grew by 86 percent to nearly 2,500 between 2010 and 2015.

During those five years, NAS was a $967 million statewide problem for Florida hospitals, a Palm Beach Post investigation found, and almost all of it was billed to Medicaid, the state’s health program for the poor.

In fact, Florida’s already cash-strapped Medicaid — a perennial budget headache for the state — has been pummeled by the opioid crisis. During a period of six years, Medicaid was billed $2.9 billion of $5.7 billion in heroin-related Florida hospital charges. In just the four counties where the Scott-appointed panel held their hearings, drug treatment hospital billings totaled $1.2 billion between 2010 and the first three quarters of 2015.

And on the other side of the state, in Scott’s hometown of Naples, the Medicaid bill for heroin-related hospital treatment grew by 247 percent during that time.

Staff writer Lulu Ramalan contributed to this story.

WHAT THE POST REPORTED

As opioid addiction spread and deaths mounted, The Post dedicated its Nov. 20, 2016, front page to photos of the 216 people who died locally from a heroin-related overdose in 2015. Post reporters uncovered the statewide hospital charges linked to the epidemic — $1.1 billion a year — prompting public outcry for the governor to act. See the coverage at MyPalmBeachPost.com
Governor declares opioid epidemic a public emergency

Governor Rock Scott declared a public health emergency in Florida today over the state's opioid epidemic. The declaration comes as sweeping legislation to fight opioids is stalled at the state Capitol.

Dan Sweeney and Ryan Van Velzer
Contact Reporters
Sun Sentinel
May 4, 2017

Gov. Rick Scott declared opioid abuse a public emergency Wednesday, a move that will bring more money to the fight and sharpen the state's focus on the overdose epidemic.

The declaration means $27 million in federal funds can be freed up for prevention, treatment and recovery services. How the money will be divided has yet to be determined.

In 2016, opioid overdoses killed 582 people in Broward and 592 people in Palm Beach County, officials said.

"I know firsthand how heartbreaking substance abuse can be to a family because it impacted my own family growing up," Scott said in a statement. "The individuals struggling with drug use are sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends and each tragic case leaves loved ones searching for answers and praying for help."

A series of workshops is the area hit hardest by the epidemic began Monday in West Palm Beach.

Scott and Attorney General Pam Bondi support two bills in the Legislature cracking down on traffickers of fentanyl, a powerful sedative being mixed with heroin that is behind many of the overdoses, and on sober homes.

The Senate passed the fentanyl bill Wednesday after giving judges more discretion when sentencing traffickers. If the House approves, the bill then goes to the governor for signing.

The bill on sober homes — halfway houses for people just out of rehab that have spread rapidly in Delray Beach and the rest of South Florida — prevents them from making false statements in their advertising.

That bill passed the House a week ago, but the Senate version has languished since April 20, when it passed its last committee.

"There's still three days left in session," said bill sponsor Sen. Jeff Clemens, D-Lake Worth. "I feel like it's a good legislation and it's something that the entire South Florida community is crying for, so I have confidence in the process."

Senate President Joe Negron, R-Stuart, who can determine what bills are heard on the floor, said he was still contemplating it.

"We're still determining the final bills that will come up for session," Negron said. "I know a number of senators have been advocating for that bill."

The governor had been facing increasing pressure from local governments and state legislators to declare a public emergency.

"The state of emergency coalesces everybody behind the problem," Clemens said last month. "I'm a little perplexed and confused why we have thousands of deaths in Florida and we don't declare a state of emergency, but we have wildfires that have caused zero deaths and we do."

Palm Beach County Commissioner Melissa McKinlay has repeatedly said the state hasn't done enough to act on the crisis.
“I think it sends a message to the Legislature to pass the sober home legislation that is still outstanding as well as fund the sober home, opioid epidemic related items in the proposed budget,” McKlay said Wednesday.

Recovering addict and CEO of Rebel Recovery Justin Kunzelman said that while he appreciates the governor’s action, it should not have taken this long. Kunzelman, who serves on Palm Beach County’s Sober Homes Task Force, said he is looking forward to seeing what actions the state takes next.

“Essentially, declaring a public health emergency is not a win, it’s telling us things that we already knew,” he said. “What are you going to do proactively to fix it?”

Two operators of sober homes in Broward and Palm Beach counties were among three people were sentenced to up to seven years in prison as part of a multimillion-dollar health-care fraud scheme last week.

At the Monday workshop in West Palm Beach, Maureen Kieliian, whose son is in long-term addiction recovery, organized a welcome rally for state leaders. About 30 demonstrators greeted officials with signs encouraging them to bring a message back to Tallahassee: declare a public health emergency.

Wednesday, Kieliian said she is crying tears of joy.

“I’m speechless,” she said. “I can actually say I might be able to sleep a few peaceful hours.”

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Open Arms, No Hands

Florida has positioned itself well for a driverless future, but there’s a long road ahead before autonomous vehicles are commonplace.

By Amy Martinez

In 2012, then-state Rep. Jeff Brandes sponsored legislation to allow testing of self-driving cars on Florida’s roads — the first step toward a day when a car’s occupants might enter a destination into the vehicle’s computer and then sit back and ride, hands-off, as it drives them there safely, choosing the quickest route and adhering to traffic laws along the way. The car might then park itself nearby or head to its base, returning when the riders need to go home.

The legislation was notable: At the time, the only other state that had legalized autonomous-car testing was Nevada.

The Legislature, which passed Brandes’ 2012 bill unanimously, doubled down in 2016. Working with Audi and Google, Brandes — now a state senator and chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development — authored legislation that made Florida the first state to allow fully autonomous cars on public roads.

The 2016 bill, which also passed unanimously, eliminated the requirement for a backup human driver and expanded the legal use of autonomous vehicles beyond testing. The law requires only that a car have a remote operator who can receive alerts of a technical failure. The car must also be able to stop itself in an emergency. The law also requires Florida’s major cities to take driverless technology into account when creating long-range transportation plans.

Meanwhile, the Florida Department of Transportation began hosting annual autonomous vehicle summits to further position the state as a leader in embracing the technology.

Why the full-throttle rush toward driverless? Brandes and other AV proponents speak of potential benefits ranging from easing traffic flow to lowering insurance costs, converting parking lots to green spaces, increasing mobility for the state’s aging population and making roads safer by removing the human element from driving. Some claim driverless cars could eventually reduce Florida’s nearly 3,000 annual motor vehicle accident deaths by 90% or more.

“We’re trying to get to zero fatalities. These technologies are probably our first real shot at making that happen,” says Paul Steinman, the Florida Department of Transportation’s district 7 secretary, covering Citrus, Hernando, Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties.

For at least the short term, Florida’s embrace of AV technology is serving as an economic development tactic to attract automotive research and development — and ultimately, tech jobs — to Florida.

Gov. Rick Scott emphasized that goal in 2014 after taking a test ride in a driverless Audi Sport Quattro Laserlight on the Lee Roy Selmon Expressway in Tampa.

Scott’s vehicle cruised along...
a 10-mile stretch mostly under software control. When a vehicle ahead slowed, the sedan sensed the change and automatically adjusted its speed to avoid a collision. An Audi engineer sat behind the wheel, hands-off, as a precaution.

After the ride, Scott highlighted the state’s desire to become a driverless test lab. “I hope that everyone that thinks about doing this moves to Florida and brings their research here.”

And indeed, test projects have emerged all around the state as Audi, Ford, General Motors, Google, Tesla, Toyota and more than a dozen other large companies invest heavily in driverless cars. At least partially because of the state’s legal stance, industry and government have begun testing the road-readiness of these new cars in Florida.

But so far, most of the basic research functions remain at or near the companies’ headquarters in California and Michigan.

The global autonomous vehicles market is expected to reach $65 billion by 2027, according to Market Research Future, a market research firm.
The road ahead

Aside from one 2012 political attack ad against Brandes, organized opposition to driverless cars in Florida is nonexistent. The ad, paid for by a group called Committee to Protect Florida, suggested that driverless-car testing poses a safety risk to pedestrians. For the moment, public opinion toward autonomous vehicles is positive: A 2015 survey by Florida State University found that Floridians generally hold favorable attitudes toward self-driving cars, with at least half saying they’re comfortable enough to ride in an autonomous vehicle, though seniors tend to be a bit more wary.

That could change, however — some fear a political backlash as the technology impacts the jobs of truckers, cab drivers and other workers.

And for a number of other reasons, widespread use of driverless vehicles on Florida roads appears to be years away.

Experts say there is still much work to do in preparing roads and communications systems for self-driving cars. And while autonomy holds great promise for improving safety, the technology is still imperfect. Last spring, on U.S. 27 Alternate near Williston, a Tesla Model S, operating in self-driving “autopilot” mode, failed to distinguish between the white side of a tractor-trailer and the sky. The Tesla crashed into the truck as the truck crossed in front of it, killing the Tesla driver, a 40-year-old entrepreneur from Ohio.

Tesla says it has since upgraded its software to prevent autopilot-enabled cars from making the same mistake. In January, federal regulators pointed to human error, saying the autopilot system was never meant to handle situations involving crossing traffic.

Other technical challenges involve wireless communication and security. Driverless cars will need to be able to reliably communicate with each other in traffic, requiring more bandwidth capacity. And without data security, autonomous cars will be at risk from hackers.

In addition to the technical challenges, driverless cars face a host of legal and regulatory issues. The federal government has yet to weigh in with national regulations, and questions about liability remain. Who’s to blame, for example, if a self-driving car gets into an accident?

“No system is foolproof. There will still be accidents,” says insurance attorney Ronald Kammer, a partner at law firm Hinshaw & Culbertson in Coral Gables. “There will still be litigation. Was the self-driving mechanism working properly? If not, financial responsibility will fall upon the manufacturer and supplier. The driver may also have some responsibility.

Cost is another challenge. The sensors, cameras, radars and other technical features that make autonomy possible are expensive, adding tens of thousands of dollars to the cost of a car.

Initially, autonomy will come in the form of driverless shuttles in well-controlled settings, such as college campuses, mega-malls and hospital complexes, says Ananth Prasad, who was Florida’s transportation secretary from 2011-15. Prasad now heads the national transportation practice of engineering firm HNTB. Already, some cities and companies in Florida plan to begin testing autonomous shuttles for public transportation. In five years, Prasad says, we may also see driverless cars for commercial ride-share services.

In the meantime, the only autonomous vehicles Floridians are likely to see will be test vehicles, including some trucks. The 2016 law clears the way for tests of truck platoons on the state’s highways — a kind of cruise control in which a group of trucks is linked electronically into a tight convoy, with each truck’s acceleration and braking automated, but with the driver still steering. Dean Bushey who teaches a robotics and computer-programming course for autonomous vehicles at Florida Polytechnic University, says true driverless technology might not be broadly affordable for another two decades. “By 2035, it will be available at a medium premium — like a Lexus,” he suggests. “By 2050, it will be available as a genera upgrade.”

Among the 11 states that have enacted autonomous vehicle legislation, Florida has positioned itself at the permissive end of the regulatory spectrum. Among the other states, Michigan is similar to Florida, while California has taken a more restrictive stance. In California, for example, autonomous vehicle developers must get a testing permit to operate on public roads, have a certified driver, be able to pay damages and meet various other requirements.
Truck Platooning

Last year, Florida enacted legislation that clears the way for tests of two-truck platoons on the state's highways. Software links the trucks wirelessly and allows them to follow each other closely, creating a draft effect and improving fuel efficiency. Each truck's acceleration and braking is automated, but the driver still steers. Experts say the fuel savings can be significant. The new law sets aside, for test purposes, a requirement that trucks maintain a minimum following distance of 300 feet.

"It's like super-intelligent cruise control," says Carl Crane, a mechanical engineering professor and director of the Center for Intelligent Machines and Robotics at the University of Florida. "A lot of people picture giant trucks with nobody in them, but it's not that at all."

UF is working on a platooning study for the state Department of Transportation, and testing could begin next year, Crane says.

Shuttles

The Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority (HART) plans to start testing an autonomous commuter shuttle in downtown Tampa later this year. The Florida Department of Transportation gave HART $1 million to develop the driverless shuttle service. Two electric vehicles will run downtown at low speeds along a 0.6-mile route restricted to buses and other public transit.

Test Track

Florida Poly is partnering with the state Department of Transportation to build a facility in Polk County to test autonomous-vehicle technologies. The state wants to create a high-tech hub for the research, development and testing of emerging transportation technologies related to tolling, intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and automated and connected vehicles. The project includes a 2.25-mile oval track on a 400-acre site near the Polk Parkway in Polk County. Work begins this spring.

Meanwhile, Florida Poly students in a new course called "Autonomous Systems and Self-Driving Vehicles" are learning to program remote-controlled scale-model cars to zip around autonomously.

Each electric car is fitted with the hardware it needs to drive itself: On-board computer, sensors, cameras and radars. The students, working in teams of six, must build the software that ultimately will enable the cars to drive in a straight line, stop at a red light and avoid obstacles. For their final exam, students will release the cars to race on a makeshift track and to navigate around obstacles in a small model city.

Dean Bushey, an assistant professor of computer science, developed the course — believed to be the only one of its kind in Florida — with help from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which provided the syllabus and project work. Bushey, a former Air Force pilot, says student feedback has been positive. "There are very few companies with expertise in autonomous vehicles, and within those companies there are very few people with expertise in the field," he says. "New grads make $65,000 a year, and 10 years down the road, they can expect to make at least $200,000."

Connected Vehicles

In 2015, Tampa won a $17-million contract from the U.S. Department of Transportation to study how wireless communications technology can prevent crashes and traffic jams.

The Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority (THEA) will equip about 1,800 cars, trucks, buses and pedestrians with technology that lets them "talk" to each other and their surroundings — alerting them, for example, when a traffic light is about to turn red or a person is entering a crosswalk.

THEA plans to deploy the pilot project in downtown Tampa next year. The Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida will gather and analyze data.
AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES IN FLORIDA
Status Report

Transit Test
The Jacksonville Transportation Authority is looking to introduce autonomous commuter shuttles to the city’s aging Skyway elevated rail system. JTA executives say the autonomous shuttles will be able to leave the monorail pathway and merge onto roads and dedicated lanes and, thus, expand service to other parts of the city. In February, the authority’s board voted to move into the development phase of the project, dubbed the Ultimate Urban Circulator.

Proving Ground
In January, the U.S. Department of Transportation named central Florida one of 10 proving grounds nationwide for self-driving technology.

The Central Florida Automated Vehicle Partnership — a new venture between the city of Orlando, public universities and other organizations — hopes the designation will help bring automotive research and development to the region.

Potential test beds include:
- NASA’s Kennedy Space Center, which offers a contained road network for testing in extreme weather and unusual situations.
- The autonomous-vehicle research facility that the state plans to build with Florida Poly in Polk County.
- There also could be driverless buses in downtown Orlando and simulations for autonomous vehicles at UCF, officials say.

Babcock Ranch
This fall, Babcock Ranch, an 18,000-acre master-planned community in Charlotte and Lee counties, plans to offer property tours aboard a driverless shuttle bus. The 12-person shuttle, made without a steering wheel or brake pedal, will transport visitors between the sales office and model homes.

The community’s developer, Palm Beach Gardens-based Kitson & Partners, plans to eventually add a fleet of on-demand driverless vehicles to transport residents within Babcock Ranch.

“We think this is a great way to get around,” says Larry Burns, a consultant to Babcock Ranch and a former head of research and development for General Motors. “It’s very convenient for teenagers without a driver’s license or older people who are at a stage in their life where they prefer not to drive.”

Academic Research
The Florida Department of Transportation has initiated at least a half-dozen research projects statewide to prepare for driverless and connected vehicles. Researchers at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, for example, have manually driven a vehicle equipped for autonomous travel to gather data and study whether AVs can be used to inspect highways and perform other roadside tasks.

A team at Florida Atlantic University has looked at how submersibles might help with bridge inspections. And at the University of Central Florida, the Institute for Simulation and Training has explored which methods might be best for sending automated traffic alerts to drivers in connected vehicles.
AUTONOMOUS VEHICLES IN FLORIDA
Status Report

Changing Landscape
Driverless vehicles would reshape cities.

Two years ago, a team of professors and
students from Florida State
University's Department of Urban and
Regional Planning was asked to study
how cities might look and function
if driverless cars become universally
adopted. They interviewed city
planners, engineers, public officials
and professionals in the driverless car
industry and identified six ways in which
autonomous vehicles could reshape
urban infrastructure and roadway design.

1. Smaller rights of way: Cars
that move with robotic precision won't
need extra-wide lanes, guardrails,
shoulders and medians. "Lanes will
only need to be as wide as the vehicles
driving on them," the report says.
Assuming vehicle sizes stay the same,
lane widths could be reduced by as
much as 20%.

2. Drop-off and pickup areas:
Fully autonomous cars will be able to
drop off riders at their destinations, find
a parking spot and return to pick them
up. Designated drop-off and pickup
areas that enable passengers to come
and go quickly will figure prominently in
building and site designs.

3. Fewer traffic signs and
signals: The new cars will "talk" to
each other via wireless technology,
sharing their speed, location, steering-
wheel position, brake status and other
data. Sensors embedded in roads and
mounted on surrounding infrastructure
will provide instant traffic updates and
routing information. Ultimately, wireless
communications technology will replace
traditional signs and signals.

4. Pedestrian and bike crossings:
The prospect of driverless cars traveling
in free-flowing networks, automatically
sensing and responding to the
movements of one another, poses
challenges for non-motorized traffic.
Without red lights and stop signs,
people out walking or biking could be
left waiting at busy intersections for a
break in traffic, the report says. Potential
solutions include dedicated crossing
periods and tunnels or bridges for
bicyclists and pedestrians.

5. Less parking: With a combination
of driverless cars and a shared pay-
as-you-go transport system, vehicles
will stay in circulation rather than park,
continuously picking up and dropping
off passengers, and will drive
themselves to remote staging areas for
maintenance, fuel and storage.

6. Redevelopment opportunities:
Driverless cars offer the potential to
free up space for new residential and
commercial developments, as well
as parks and plazas. City blocks no
longer will feature surface parking lots,
street-side parking and traffic lights, the
report says. "In their place, we may find
drop-off lanes, pedestrian and bicycle
amenities, in-fill development, and safer,
less-cluttered intersections."

The Uber Factor

One very interested party in the
evolution of autonomous vehicles is
Uber. The company is testing self-
driving cars with backup human
drivers on the streets of Pittsburgh
and Tempe, Ariz., highlighting the
potential safety benefits. It also has a
strong financial incentive to develop
robot cars, since most of its revenue
now goes to contract drivers.

In December, after clashing with
California regulators over a plan to
test driverless cars in San Francisco,
Uber moved its 16 self-driving Volvos
to Arizona, where Gov. Doug Ducey
publicly welcomed the fleet "with
open arms and wide open roads."

State Sen. Jeff Brandes, who
hopes to see Florida become
Uber's next hub for autonomous-
car testing, reached out to the
company via social media. "Hey @
Uber; unlike California we in Florida
welcome driverless cars — no permit
required," he tweeted.

Uber, which has no test vehicles in
Florida, has fought a series of battles
with counties in Florida over how
much it should be regulated. The
company is now trying to leverage
Florida's autonomous-car push as
an opening to get statewide,
ride-sharing legislation passed. Only
Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach
and Hillsborough counties, as well
as Gainesville, Tallahassee and
Panama City Beach, have laws that
Uber considers ride-share-friendly.

Colin Tozzi, Uber's director of
corporate affairs, says that before the
company can even consider testing
driverless cars in Florida, it needs
ride-sharing to be legal across the state.

This spring, Brandes introduced
an Uber-backed bill seeking to do
just that. Ultimately, Brandes says,"I see autonomous vehicles spreading
around Florida like electricity."
Addicted to Rehab


By Mike Vogel

On the corner in front of his brightly painted home in the Osceola Park neighborhood of Delray Beach, retiree and newly elected City Commissioner Jim Chard gestures toward a house across the street to the northeast, a “sober house” where recovering addicts live during part of the rehab process.

He points directly across the street to the north to another sober house. He points west. Two more sober houses. His immediate neighbor and the house just beyond to the south are sober houses. “If it were just one house, we would welcome them with open arms,” Chard says, but “it’s destroying neighborhoods.”

All together, eight sober houses and two addiction treatment clinics sit on or adjoin Chard’s block. He pulls out a real estate listing for a house two streets away. About 1,800 square feet, it’s listed for $399,999 and is advertised as capable of holding 13 beds. “Highest & best use as sober living/assisted living/wellness group home... Potential Gross Annual Income $35,000.”

As Delray and other communities around Florida have found out, there are big bucks to be made in the business of housing recovering and relapsed addicts.

The treatment industry and sober houses have a long, mostly good, pedigree in Delray Beach and Florida. Addicts in recovery — once, mostly just alcoholics — found that by living together, they could better encourage one another to stay sober. Research confirmed their view. Delray, with its thriving downtown and small-town charm, drew so many recovering addicts that the New York Times noticed in 2007. The paper called Delray an “oasis of sobri-
Within a quarter-mile of Delray City Commissioner Jim Chard’s home are at least eight sober houses, including these. There are others — a “funky outpost” that “experts consider the recovery capital of America” with more than 5,000 people in 12-step meetings weekly.

But the oasis got poisoned. In 2008, Congress passed and President George W. Bush signed the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act. In 2010, President Barack Obama’s Affordable Care Act became law. Both opened the floodgates of insurance money for addiction treatment, and the injection of money turned sober houses from informal, supportive communities into commercial enterprises.

Additionally, Obamacare’s provision allowing children to be carried on their parents’ health policies until age 26 meant that insurance companies had to begin paying for rehab for many young adult substance users. The law also specified that a relapse should be considered a new medical event, meaning that the insurance benefits began flowing anew each time an addict relapsed.

Meanwhile, the real estate recession had made houses by the thousands cheap for rent or purchase.

Then, Florida began shutting down its pill mills. The state had been the nation’s pill mill capital, home to 93 of the top 100 oxycodone-dispensing doctors. People flocked to Florida to storefront pain clinics. The response: Federal authorities, manufacturers, the Legislature, state Attorney General Pam Bondi — and her drug czar, former state Sen. Dave Aronberg — cracked down on rogue clinics and doctors and made pills harder to get and abuse.

It worked. But many of the addicted turned to heroin, often supplemented on the street with the more potent and lethal fentanyl and carfentanil.

New wave of addicts

Florida became a magnet attracting the new wave of addicts seeking treatment. A study by Minnesota-based health care company Optum found 78% of young adults treated in Florida for substance abuse came from out of state.

Addiction treatment often begins with expensive residential care as the addict detoxes and then progresses to outpatient counseling. Recovering addicts from out of state, or from another region of the state, need a place to stay while outpatients. What developed is known, even in Texas or California, as the “Florida model.” Once out of the rehab facility, recovering addicts become boarders at nearby sober houses and commute to therapy sessions.

A typical scenario: The parents of a young adult addict, living in another state, go online for solutions.

As Delray Mayor Cary Glickstein puts it, they’re directed to Florida facilities that tout “success rates and palm trees and waterfront houses.” Parents call what seem to be addiction help lines that actually are marketers who are paid $1,000 to $5,000 per lead generated.

Deception is common. Even the Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association, a statewide group representing providers and the industry, discovered once that a Google search of its name led to a phone number for a lead generator, says Executive Director Mark Fontaine.

Sending a young adult child with a drug problem to Florida appeals to parents because it removes the user from a destructive social circle, gives the parents a break and seems to make financial sense. An out-of-network provider in Florida will fight insurers for the money to pay for recovery.

“In theory, your kid is getting your best opportunity for success,” says John Lehman, president of the Florida Association of Recovery Residences, another term for a sober house.

The young adults — sometimes arriving via a free plane ticket from a marketer — land in a conflicted industry. Insurance covers their initial treatment at inpatient facilities. Once they complete the inpa-
What Is a Sober House?

Research shows recovering addicts can help each other stay sober by living together for a time in a group. Once out of an inpatient treatment center, many recovering addicts become boarders at sober houses and commute to therapy sessions at the treatment center.

than 700 such sober houses in Delray Beach alone.

Some treatment clinics discovered that by turning a cost center — blood, saliva and urine tests to check if addicts are staying clean — into a profit center, they could soak insurers. Providers subject patients to constant urine tests — billing insurers at $150 to $200 a pop for an instant-results test that costs less than $10 and can be read by a layperson. The providers then send samples to labs for even more expensive “confirmatory” tests at $1,500 to $2,000 a pop.

The grand jury found one well-known clinic that billed $600,000, mainly in drug tests, for a single patient in seven months, which ended when the 24-year-old from Ohio died of an overdose of fentanyl.

Unscrupulous clinics found ways to compound that revenue stream: In many cases, they own or have an interest in the lab that evaluates the tests or they get kickbacks from the lab.

Sometimes clinic employees provide their own spit or urine so that insurers can continue to be billed after a patient has left. Chard says a prosecutor told him, “Your city runs on piss.”

After studying records and data, the Palm Beach Post concluded that at $1 billion annually, substance abuse was the county’s fourth-largest industry.

Drug overdoses typically take between 45-90 minutes to turn fatal.

First responders in Delray went out on 1,400 overdose calls in 2016 — an average of nearly four a day. Above, police respond to a heroin user who has overdosed.

How many?

No one knows how many sober houses there are in Florida, but most are likely in southeast Florida because treatment is concentrated there — 38% of the state’s licensed treatment centers are in Palm Beach County.

In Delray alone, city officials count more than 700 sober residences. If each house has an average of six people, the city of 66,000 holds a “shadow” population of 4,200. Anecdotally, there are clusters of sober houses up the coast to St. Augustine and across the state in southwest Florida and counties in the Tampa Bay area.

Funding the industry, to a great degree, is revenue from urine tests.

Brokers representing multiple sober houses can pull down $10,000 a week. Some sober houses are as advertised. But others are no more than flophouses “where crimes like rape, theft, human trafficking, prostitution and illegal drug use are commonplace,” the grand jury said.

While treatment centers need state licenses, the sober houses are unlicensed and largely unregulated — there’s no government oversight because sober houses provide no formal treatment.

Phrases from Michael Price top: Delray Beach Police Department bottom.
TREATMENT AND RECOVERY

To keep the cash flowing, treatment centers pay sober houses $400 to $1,000 a week per addict, depending on the level of treatment for which an insurer can be billed. When insurance is exhausted, patients are shown the door. Some become homeless. "Body snatchers" prowl recovery meetings and other places, looking for struggling or relapsed people — with insurance — to bring in and repeat the cycle.

The young adults recognize their monetary value and become complicit; they know that being back in treatment can mean free room and board, a phone, cigarettes, clothes, gift cards — and drugs.

"Even legitimate places have felt compelled to offer benefits. All their competitors do it. That's the accepted way of doing business," says Aronberg, now the State Attorney in Palm Beach.

Patient privacy law limits parental meddling and law enforcement investigation. "The cycle continues until someone dies," Aronberg says. Despite the Affordable Care Act's good intentions, he says, it incentivizes relapse, not recovery.

"It's just unbelievably sad," says Lehman. "They convince mom and dad they're going to get excellent care down here and then the kid gets shipped home in a box because he overdoses."

'Relapse industry'

The Optum study found that young adults from out of state who got out-of-network benefits in Florida were readmitted at higher rates — 11% to 40% higher — than Florida residents getting in-network care. It also found that out-of-network care on average cost $36,645 per person, three times in-network care.

Mayor Glickstein describes it as "a perfect business model. It's not a recovery industry; it's a relapse business."

One of the most notorious operators was Kenneth Chatman, a sober house owner and convicted felon who used his wife's name to shield his ownership of a treatment center. Federal authorities allege that from his centers in Lake Worth and Margate he worked with doctors, sober house owners and straw owners of sober houses in West Palm Beach to Delray to tony Parkland in north Broward and other cities. He billed more than 40 health plans.

Some patients told local police he provided them drugs, pushed them to take up prostitution, and oversaw phone calls to families. Chatman's employees took drug tests for some patients and for people to longer getting treatment. Some patients were allegedly kept in locked houses; others got cigarettes, hair services, nail services, gift cards and drugs to stay.

According to court filings, American Clinical Solutions, a lab company based in Sun City Center, billed more than $4 million for testing urine and saliva samples collected by ACS salesman Stefan Gatt from one of Chatman's centers. ACS received more than $3.8 million from insurers, court records say. Gatt provided standing orders for Chatman's medical directors to sign, provided his own spit sometimes for absent or former patients and reaped salary increases from his employer and "hundreds of thousands of dollars" in commissions, according to court filings.

Gatt has pleaded guilty and awaits sentencing. (Efforts to obtain comment from American Clinical Solutions weren't successful. The company, in a statement reported by south Florida media, said it had been unaware of illegal activity, took no part of payments to Chatman and cut him off when he demanded kickbacks.)

Crippling neighborhoods

As sober houses proliferated, so have citizen complaints — about newly homeless addicts in public spaces, needles on streets and sirens as emergency personnel responded to overdoses and suicides. In Delray in 2016, first responders went out on 1,400 overdose calls — about four a day. Nearly 95% were generated by out-of-state occupants of sober houses and treatment centers. Sixty-five ended in
fatalities, about five a month.

It cost the city about $2,500 per 911 call and diverts responders away from serving regular Delray residents. Palm Beach County Fire Rescue in 2015 spent $557,255 to stock Narcan, an overdose antidote, jumping to $182,900 in 2016. “We are now subsidizing the care and treatment of this industry that is reaping millions of dollars in insurance proceeds,” says Glickstein.

“The people are not getting better,” he says. “There are people out there genuinely interested in helping people get over these terrible addictions. The problem is the number of bad actors long ago eclipsed the good guys.”

Chard, for his part, seems as concerned about the recovered addicts as he is with the impact on the city. When Chard purchased his home 15 years ago, not a sober house was in sight, he says. Now, “I call Osceola Park the epicenter of the epicenter.”

His two immediate neighbors— sober houses affiliated with musician Eric Clapton, who is sober after years of addiction and has a foundation to help people like himself—have never caused a problem, he says. But even with them, he questions how well people in recovery can truly integrate back into society when a community is awash in recovering people like themselves.

Meanwhile, the heavy dose of sober housing cripples the neighborhood. “Young families in particular move out. There are just too many bad actors, and it’s just overwhelming our services,” Chard says.

City officials have limited means to address the issue. The city of Boca Raton tried to limit sober houses there, only to get sued in 2003. The city spent $1.3 million on a losing effort in court to defend itself from the American Civil Liberties Union, backed by the Department of Justice under then President Bush. U.S. District Judge Donald Middlebrooks ruled Boca violated the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act, which protect people in recovery. Afterwards, cities came to view sober houses as all but untouchable.

A Boca Raton attorney for sober house operators, Jeffrey Lynne, says cities have approached the issue incorrectly as one of property rights vs. civil rights. He says the real problem is that the state Department of Children and Families, which issues licenses for treatment providers, isn’t qualified to regulate the treatment industry. “Sober homes are simply a byproduct of a bigger issue. The focus has to be on helping this vulnerable class of people,” Lynne says.

Local leaders turned to Tallahassee, which eventually allocated $375,000 for Aronberg to set up a task force to combat the issue. He also empaneled a grand jury. Aronberg attacked the problem on several fronts. His office and federal and local law enforcement went after offenders based on existing laws against fraud and patient brokering. As of March, 21 arrests had been made. Lynne says his clients fear being caught in a witch hunt. “It’s a really bad time. I have a lot of clients scared to death about being arrested.”

Federal authorities arrested Chatman, and in March he pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit health care fraud, money laundering and forcing people into prostitution. He said insurers over time...

Daniel Kandler, owner of Chapters Recovery, a treatment center, was charged with 93 counts of patient brokering for allegedly paying more than $325,000 in kickbacks to sober house owners who referred addicts with insurance to his treatment center.
had disbursed from $9.5 million to $25 million to cover claims by his treatment centers and labs. He's scheduled for sentencing this month by Middlebrooks, the judge who ruled against Boca's sober house ordinance.

Aronberg's grand jury and task force also examined changes that could be made at the state and federal level. The task force's report recommended that the Legislature regulate the commerce between treatment centers and commercial sober house operators. The report says that obtaining a treatment center license should be a privilege rather than a right; sober houses should be licensed just as assisted living facilities are licensed, and oversight of the industry should possibly be moved from the ill-equipped DCF to the state Agency for Health Care Administration.

**Turning tide**

Last year, a new state law took effect mandating that treatment centers licensed by the state can refer patients to independent sober homes only if the houses have voluntarily obtained certification from Lehman's FARR, which evaluates them by national and state standards. As of early April, it had certified 61 programs representing 170 locations and 2,385 beds. Another 4,070 beds are seeking certification, Lehman says.

In November, the federal Justice and Housing and Urban Development departments, at South Florida leaders' behest, released new guidelines on the disabilities and fair housing acts that city officials think will give them greater latitude in crafting ordinances to lessen the concentration of sober houses.

The key, officials and addiction treatment advocates agree, is coming at the problem from the direction of preventing patients from being exploited. "You can't come at this with a not-in-my-backyard argument," Aronberg says. "There's a need for legitimate sober homes to get individuals healthy who have substance abuse disorder."

Meanwhile, in Delray, petty property crime — car break-ins and such — is up 12%. The sober house issue dominated the March municipal elections in Delray and in other southeast Florida cities. Chard advocates an approach to the problem that includes working with area employers to put people in recovery in jobs.

Given the work the city is doing, the arrests, grand jury and task force work by Aronberg, anecdotal reports of some house operators closing down, the new federal guidelines and progress in Tallahassee, Chard's encouraged. "I do think the tide is being turned," he says.

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**Deaths Directly Caused by Opioids**

*Top 10 Counties (2015)*

- Duval: 143
- Orange: 191
- Pasco: 86
- Hillsborough: 133
- Pinellas: 138
- Manatee: 126
- Palm Beach: 305
- Broward: 225
- Miami-Dade: 171

Heroin use by adults 18-25 more than doubled in the past decade. Ten people die each day in Florida from opioid use.

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In Palm Beach County in 2015, there were more than 1,770 opioid-related hospital cases and $79.40 million in drug-related hospital bills.

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State Attorney Dave Aronberg and local police went after offenders for fraud and patient brokering, making 21 arrests.
Employment Summary - Treasure Coast Region
April 21, 2017

Highlights

- Unemployment in the Region decreased to 4.3 percent in March, down from 4.7 percent in March of the previous year.

- Gained 20,000 new non-agricultural jobs year over year from March 2016 to March 2017.

- Job gains were primarily in education and health services, leisure and hospitality, mining and construction, and professional and business services.

- This unemployment summary is derived from: Local Area Unemployment Statistics prepared by the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Overview of the CareerSource Research Coast Region (Indian River, Martin, and St. Lucie counties) and Overview of CareerSource Palm Beach County Region (Palm Beach County) prepared by the two workforce development boards in the Treasure Coast Region. The CareerSource reports follow this regional summary.

- The unemployment rate for the Treasure Coast Region was 4.3 percent in March 2017, down 0.4 percentage points from the March 2016 rate of 4.7 percent. The Region’s unemployment rate was the same as the state’s unemployment rate of 4.3 percent and 0.3 percentage points lower than the national unemployment rate of 4.6 percent. Out of a labor force of 1,003,803 there were 43,321 unemployed residents in the Treasure Coast Region.

- The Treasure Coast Region contains three metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs): the Port St. Lucie MSA (Martin and St. Lucie counties), the Sebastian-Vero Beach MSA (Indian River County), and the West Palm Beach-Boca Raton-Boynton Beach MSA (Palm Beach County). In March 2017, non-agricultural employment in the combined metropolitan areas of the Region was 822,200, an increase of 20,000 jobs over the previous year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Area</th>
<th>March 2017</th>
<th>February 2017</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Palm Beach County</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Lucie County</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Treasure Coast Region</td>
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<td>4.8</td>
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<td>Florida</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Local Area Unemployment Statistics.
*Not seasonally adjusted.

- In the combined metropolitan areas, job gains were primarily in education and health services (+5,000), leisure and hospitality (+3,800), mining and construction (+3,700), and professional and business services (+3,700).

- Job losses were felt in financial activities (-700) and information (-300).

**Port St. Lucie Metro Area:**

The education and health services; manufacturing; professional and business services; and leisure and hospitality industries grew faster in the Port St. Lucie MSA than statewide over the year.

**Sebastian-Vero Beach Metro Area:**

The mining, logging and construction; education and health services; professional and business services; manufacturing; leisure and hospitality; and government industries grew faster in the Sebastian-Vero Beach MSA than statewide over the year.

**West Palm Beach-Boca Raton-Boynton Beach Metropolitan Division:**

In this MSA, construction; manufacturing; leisure and hospitality; and government industries grew as fast or faster than statewide over the year.
Overview of the CareerSource Research Coast Region  
Not Seasonally Adjusted  
April 21, 2017

- The unemployment rate in the CareerSource Research Coast region (Indian River, Martin, and St. Lucie counties) was 4.6 percent in March 2017. This rate was 0.6 percentage point lower than the region's year ago rate of 5.2 percent. Out of a labor force of 275,568 there were 12,782 unemployed residents in the region.

- Martin County had the lowest unemployment rate (4.2 percent) in the CareerSource Research Coast region followed by St. Lucie County (4.7 percent), and Indian River County (4.9 percent).

- The CareerSource Research Coast region contains two metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs); the Port St. Lucie MSA (Martin and St. Lucie counties) and the Sebastian-Vero Beach MSA (Indian River County). In March 2017, nonagricultural employment in the combined CareerSource Research Coast metro areas was 199,500, an increase of 5,800 jobs (+3.0 percent) over the previous year.

- In the combined CareerSource Research Coast metro areas, the major industries that gained jobs over the year were: education and health services (+2,300 jobs); professional and business services (+1,000 jobs); leisure and hospitality (+900 jobs); mining, logging, and construction (+700 jobs); manufacturing (+500 jobs); trade, transportation, and utilities (+500 jobs); other services (+200 jobs); financial activities (+100 jobs). The government (-300 jobs) and information (-100 jobs) industries lost jobs over the year.

Port St. Lucie metro area

- The majority of the nonagricultural employment in the CareerSource Research Coast region was in the Port St. Lucie metro area. This metro area accounted for 147,000 jobs in March 2017, an increase of 3,900 jobs from March 2016 (+2.7 percent).

- The education and health services (+6.3 percent); manufacturing (+6.0 percent); professional and business services (+4.3 percent); and leisure and hospitality (+2.6 percent) industries grew faster in the metro area than the statewide over the year.

- The industries gaining in jobs over the year were: education and health services (+1,600 jobs); professional and business services (+700 jobs); trade, transportation, and utilities (+500 jobs); leisure and hospitality (+500 jobs); mining, logging, and construction (+400 jobs); manufacturing (+400 jobs); financial activities (+100 jobs); and other services (+100 jobs). The government (-400 jobs) industry lost jobs over the year.

Note: All data are subject to revision.  
- The information industry was unchanged over the year.
- The Port St. Lucie MSA had the second fastest annual job growth rate compared to all the metro areas in the state in education and health services (+6.3 percent) in March 2017.

**Sebastian-Vero Beach metro area**

- In March 2017 nonagricultural employment in the Sebastian-Vero Beach MSA was 52,500, an increase of 1,900 jobs (+3.8 percent) over the year.
- The Sebastian-Vero Beach MSA had the fastest annual job growth rate compared to all the metro areas in the state in education and health services (+6.9 percent) in March 2017.
- The mining, logging, and construction (+8.6 percent); education and health services (+6.9 percent); professional and business services (+5.8 percent); manufacturing (+5.3 percent); leisure and hospitality (+4.8 percent); and government (+1.9 percent) industries grew faster in the metro area than statewide over the year.
- The industries gaining in jobs over the year were: education and health services (+700 jobs); leisure and hospitality (+400 jobs); mining, logging, and construction (+300 jobs); professional and business services (+300 jobs); manufacturing (+100 jobs); other services (+100 jobs) and government (+100 jobs).
- The information (-100 jobs) industry lost jobs over the year.
- The trade, transportation, and utilities and financial activities were unchanged over the year.

Note: All data are subject to revision.
### Unemployment Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mar-17</th>
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<th>Mar-16</th>
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<th>change</th>
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<td>5.2%</td>
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<td>Martin County</td>
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<td>0.5%</td>
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<td>St. Lucie County</td>
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<td>1.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
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<td>4.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
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### Nonagricultural Employment by Industry

#### Port St. Lucie Metropolitan Statistical Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
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<td>Mining, Logging, and Construction</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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<td>400</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
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<td>Government</td>
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#### Sebastian-Vero Beach Metropolitan Statistical Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining, Logging, and Construction</td>
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<td>Manufacturing</td>
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<td>1,900</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Professional and Business Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education and Health Services</td>
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<td>Leisure and Hospitality</td>
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<td>Other Services</td>
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<td>Government</td>
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### Population

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<tr>
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<th>2016</th>
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<th>change</th>
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<td>601,808</td>
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<td>Martin County</td>
<td>158,701</td>
<td>155,804</td>
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<td>St. Lucie County</td>
<td>306,367</td>
<td>298,807</td>
<td>7,560</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
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### Average Annual Wage

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<td>Martin County</td>
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<td>$39,099</td>
<td>$1,339</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Lucie County</td>
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<td>$36,728</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>$46,236</td>
<td>$44,810</td>
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Note: All data are subject to revision.
Overview of the CareerSource Palm Beach County Region
Not Seasonally Adjusted
April 21, 2017

- The unemployment rate in the CareerSource Palm Beach County region (Palm Beach County) was 4.2 percent in March 2017. This rate was 0.3 percentage point lower than the region’s year ago rate of 4.5 percent. The region’s March 2017 unemployment rate was 0.1 percentage point lower than the state rate of 4.3 percent. Out of a labor force of 728,235 there were 30,539 unemployed residents in the region.

- In March 2017 nonagricultural employment in the West Palm Bch-Boca Raton-Delray Bch Metro Division was 622,700, an increase of 14,200 jobs (+2.3 percent) over the year.

- The construction (+9.1 percent); manufacturing (+3.7 percent); leisure and hospitality (+3.3 percent); and government (+2.5 percent) industries grew at faster or faster than state over the year.

- The industries gaining in jobs over the year were: construction (+3,000 jobs); leisure and hospitality (+2,900 jobs); professional and business services (+2,700 jobs); education and health services (+2,700 jobs); government (+1,600 jobs); trade, transportation, and utilities (+1,400 jobs); manufacturing (+700 jobs); and other services (+200 jobs).

- The financial activities (-800 jobs) and information (-200 jobs) industries lost jobs over the year.

Note: All data are subject to revision.
## Unemployment Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<th>Feb-17</th>
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<td>Census Source Palm Beach County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
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</table>

## West Palm Beach-Boke Rate-Deer County

### Employment by Industry (not seasonally adjusted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Mar-17</th>
<th>Mar-16</th>
<th>change</th>
<th>percentage change</th>
<th>Mar-17</th>
<th>Mar-16</th>
<th>change</th>
<th>percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Employment</td>
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<td>608,500</td>
<td>14,200</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>8,608,900</td>
<td>8,357,400</td>
<td>251,500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mining and Logging</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
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<td>32,900</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<td>493,260</td>
<td>460,600</td>
<td>32,600</td>
<td>7.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
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<td>19,300</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>562,900</td>
<td>532,400</td>
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<td>Trade, Transportation, and Utilities</td>
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<td>1,088,700</td>
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<td>275,700</td>
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<td>Information</td>
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<td>11,000</td>
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<td>136,700</td>
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<td>Financial Activities</td>
<td>39,800</td>
<td>39,800</td>
<td>-800</td>
<td>-2.0</td>
<td>555,200</td>
<td>541,900</td>
<td>13,300</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional and Business Services</td>
<td>111,900</td>
<td>109,200</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1,913,500</td>
<td>1,870,500</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Health Services</td>
<td>98,800</td>
<td>96,100</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>1,290,300</td>
<td>1,252,800</td>
<td>37,500</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leisure and Hospitality</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>89,100</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1,224,300</td>
<td>1,194,600</td>
<td>29,700</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>33,200</td>
<td>33,000</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>861,100</td>
<td>848,800</td>
<td>12,300</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>65,100</td>
<td>63,500</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1,126,100</td>
<td>1,111,900</td>
<td>4,200</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>change</th>
<th>percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Source Palm Beach County</td>
<td>1,483,810</td>
<td>1,421,649</td>
<td>21,967</td>
<td>1.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>20,632,439</td>
<td>20,544,914</td>
<td>87,525</td>
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</table>

### Average Annual Wage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>change</th>
<th>percentage change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Census Source Palm Beach County</td>
<td>51,373</td>
<td>54,669</td>
<td>-3,296</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>44,236</td>
<td>54,480</td>
<td>-10,244</td>
<td>-1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** All data are subject to revision.  
**Source:** Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Labor Market Statistics.