

Scenic Watch



Pasco Co: Temporary signs



Photo: Andy Jones/Staff, Tampa Tribune

"...A lawsuit [Gilbert and Reed] filed by a small church in Gilbert, Arizona, is having ramifications for Pasco County and other governmental jurisdictions around the nation..."

Elizabeth Blair, Pasco's assistant county attorney, told commissioners last week that the ruling has implications for Pasco, which amended its sign code in 2002 in an attempt to eliminate sign blight.

January
2016



Fun Festivals and Events

Central and West

- Feb 5
Jazz Friday at Foosaner Museum of Art, Melbourne
- Feb 5-6
Celtic Family Jamboree, Brooksville
- Feb 5-7
The Lake Apopka Wildlife Festival and Birdapalooza, Apopka
- Feb 6-7
Art in the Park and Music Festival, Lady Lake
- Feb 6
DeLand Craft Beer Festival, DeLand
- Feb 6-7
The Mount Dora Arts Festival, Mount Dora
- Feb 12

'Now we are back to the basics of figuring out how to regulate temporary signage,' she said. 'We have issues that need to be resolved'.

Because the county's sign code must be amended in response to the Supreme Court decision, Blair told commissioners, now is the time to review the entire code.

Everything is on the table, she said. County staffers will schedule a series of workshops with representatives of the sign industry and other interested parties in the spring, Blair said.

For County Commissioner Kathryn Starkey, reopening the county's sign ordinance is a chance to right some wrongs she has been battling for years, she said.

Starkey founded the organization Scenic Pasco in the late 1990s to fight billboard blight in the county and ran for county commissioner in 2012 on a platform espousing the need to clean up the county's out-of-control signage.

In addition to targeting so-called snipe signs advertising various services and work-at-home offers, Starkey criticized the use of flutter flags and inflatable dancing people commonly used by car dealerships, and banners advertising discounts at retail businesses, saying they are a distraction and sometimes an obstruction for motorists.

I've seen convenience stores with six to eight banners up at any one time, she said.

County development review technician Pat Wallace agreed there is room for improvement.

We have a very generous sign code in Pasco County with a lot of flexibility, she said. But we do have things that need to be improved.'

-- D'Ann Lawrence White, Tampa Tribune

[Read entire article](#)

Human Sign Wavers: From a more gentle time



Photo: Historic photo of Wakulla Springs State Park

Preservationist Edward Ball bought the springs and built the lodge specifically to conserve and protect the wildlife and habitat found in the spring and along the upper St. Marks river.

The 1937 [Lodge at Wakulla Springs](#) is still open for guests and is located in the [Edward Ball State Park](#).

Legal: Florida's debate on proposed changes to sunshine laws

- Friday Family Fest, Melbourne
Feb 12-13
- Olustee Festival and Re-enactment, Olustee/Lake City
Feb 12-14
- Wine Fest XXVI, Clermont
Feb 13
- Indie-Folkfest, Orlando
Feb 13-14
- Annual Art and Craft Festival, Holmes Beach
Feb 13-14
- Downtown Dunedin Craft Festival, Tampa Bay
Feb 13-14
- Downtown Sarasota Festival of the Arts, Sarasota
Feb 15-21
- Pasco County Fair, Dade City
Feb 19-21
- Silver Spurs Rodeo of Champions, Kissimmee
Feb 20
- Art Walk, Sanford
Feb 20
- Cruisin' Downtown DeLand Classic Car Show, DeLand
Feb 20
- Ozello Chili Cook-Off and Craft Show, Crystal River
Feb 21
- Daytona 500, Daytona
Feb 26
- 4th Fridays in Artisan Alley and DeLand Art Walk, DeLand
Feb 27
- Beer, Bourbon and BBQ Festival, Tampa
Feb 27
- Art Walk on Flagler, New Smyrna Beach

South

- Feb 5-7
- Civil War Heritage Days Festival, Key West
Feb 6-7
- ArtFest Fort Myers, Fort Myers
Feb 6-7
- Pigeon Key Art Festival, Marathon
Feb 7
- SunTrust Sunday Jazz Brunch, Fort Lauderdale
Feb 8-14
- Winter Star Party, Florida Keys
Feb 10-12, 13-14
- Sweetheart Express on Seminole Gulf Railway, Fort Myers
Feb 12-13
- Annual Historic House Tours, Key West
Feb 12-14
- Everglades Seafood Festival, Everglades City
Feb 14
- Edison Festival of Light Junior Events, Fort Myers
Feb 19-21
- Edison Festival of Lights Crafts on the River, Fort Myers
Feb 20



Images: Huffington Post

Position and Analysis of the proposed legislation from the Florida League of Cities:

"The Florida League of Cities SUPPORTS public records reform to discourage or eliminate schemes designed to generate violations of public records laws as well as limit harassing or unreasonable public records requests.

[Legislative Issue Brief](#)

"Senate panel approves weakening Florida's Sunshine Law, making citizens fight for legal fees"

"...Florida law now allows people to sue agencies for records and guarantees payment of legal fees if a lawsuit is successful.

The bill, sponsored by state Sen. Rene Garcia, R-Hialeah, drew criticism.

'No attorney is going to take the case if they aren't sure they're going to get paid,' said Florida First Amendment Foundation President Barbara Petersen.

'We know there are some bad actors who are taking advantage of this, but there are better ways to address the issue,' Petersen said.

Garcia said his bill would trust a judge to determine whether a public records lawsuit was filed in bad faith.

'I'll be more than happy to work out the issues of this bill and come to a happy medium so we can have a policy in place that works and protects the public,' Garcia said. 'I believe in this and I feel like people should have access to public records law.'

St. Petersburg bankruptcy attorney Matthew Weidner, who sued Gov. Rick Scott last year for public documents about Florida Department of Law Enforcement Chief Gerald Bailey's ouster in January 2015, said the bill would end lawsuits seeking public records.

For his suit, eventually backed by a coalition of new agencies, he was faced by a dozen state-paid attorneys that charge \$400 an hour.

'Just imagine your everyday person walking into a room and seeing 12 high-price attorneys staring back at them,' Weidner said.

Garcia's bill passed the Senate Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability on Tuesday with a unanimous vote from a three-member panel.

The bill would require an agency to acknowledge a request within five days of receiving it.

- Punta Gorda Wine & Jazz Festival, Punta Gorda
Feb 20
- Edison Festival of Light Grand Parade, Fort Myers
Feb 20-21
- Annual Upper Keys Gigantic Nautical Flea Market, Islamorada
Feb 20-21
- Street Painting Festival, Lake Worth
Feb 20-21
- ArtsFest, Stuart
Feb 26-28
- Greek Fest Fort Myers, Ft Myers
Feb 26-28
- Conquistador Cup Regatta, Punta Gorda
Feb 27
- Garden Walk 2016, Key Largo
Feb 27-28
- Old Island Days Art Festival, Key West
Feb 27-28
- Swamp Cabbage Festival, LaBelle
Feb 27
- Burrowing Owl Festival, Cape Coral
Dec 6
- Suntrust Sunday Jazz Brunch, Fort Lauderdale
Dec 7
- Christmas Tree Lighting at Whitehall, Palm Beach
Dec 11
- Historic Lighted Inn Tours, Key West
Dec 11
- Boynton and Delray Beach Holiday Boat Parade, Boynton Beach
Dec 11-12
- Florida's Creative Coast Weekend, Pine Island
Dec 12
- Winterfest Boat Parade, Fort Lauderdale
Dec 12-13, 19-20
- Christmas Rail-Boat Trips, Fort Myers
Dec 13
- Peace River Lighted Boat Parade, Punta Gorda
Dec 13
- Barnacle Under Moonlight, Coconut Grove
Dec 15
- Holiday Boat Parade, Key Largo
Dec 16-17, 19-21
- Holiday Pops Concerts, Fort Myers
Dec 16-20
- The Christmas Spectacular, Cape Coral
Dec 17
- Downtown Gallery Walk, Punta Gorda
Dec 18-23
- Flagler Museum Holiday Evening Tours, Palm Beach

That change would prevent lawyers from filing a lawsuit the same day as the request.

Garcia said he filed the bill after hearing from several cities that were flooded with lawsuits. The issue surfaced in 2014 when news sites such as the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting wrote about a law firm owned by South Palm Beach millionaire Martin O'Boyle, which made hundreds of public records requests to local government agencies across the state. An employee hired by O'Boyle accused him of filing the requests so that he could file claims for legal fees.

Gulf Stream received 2,500 public records requests in two years from law firms. Gulf Stream Vice Mayor Robert Ganger brought up during the Tuesday committee meeting a case where a law firm requested all pictures of bicycles. The city replied to the request that it had no such pictures, and then it faced a lawsuit when one was found on its official website.

'The court today has no discretion and because we technically didn't comply, they awarded legal fees,' Ganger said. 'It's killing us.'

Garcia's bill is paired with HB 1021, by state Rep. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, who said the bill should not prevent citizens from waging public records fights in court, Steube said.

'I'm not saying you can't file a public records lawsuit and I'm not saying you can't get attorney's fees,' Steube said. 'I'm simply saying it's up to the discretion of the court just like it says in statute in civil actions in Florida.'

-- Arek Sarkissian, Naples Daily News

[Read entire article here](#)

Indian River Lagoon: National Scenic Byway extended 38 Miles



Image: FDOT

"...The 38-mile extension of the existing 195-mile Byway begins in Titusville and encircles the northern end of the Indian River Lagoon.

The Byway extension includes the last major undeveloped area along the east coast of Florida, as well as the exceptional environmental resources of the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Canaveral National Seashore and the sparsely developed northern reaches of the Lagoon.

The mission of the Indian River Lagoon National Scenic Byway Coalition is to promote and preserve the historical, scenic, cultural, and recreational resources found along the Byway to visitors and residents, which helps to serve as an economic development tool for the area."

Dec 20
Winter Wonders, Islamorada
Dec 26-27
Coconut Point New Year's
Weekend Art Festival, Bonita
Springs/Estero
Dec 27
The Florida Keys Craft Beer &
Bubbly Fest, Marathon
Dec 31
Downtown Countdown, Fort
Myers

North

Jan 30-31, Feb 5-7
Hoggetowne Medieval Faire,
Gainesville
Feb 5-6
Mardi Gras At The Beach,
Panama City Beach
Feb 5-7
Amelia Con, Amelia Island
Feb 12-14
Steinhatchee Fiddler Crab
Festival, Steinhatchee
Feb 13
Artrageous Artwalk, Fernandina
Beach
Feb 20
Amelia Island Chili Cook-Off,
Fernandina Beach
Feb 26
Gainesville Art Walk, Gainesville
Feb 27-28
St Augustine Arts & Crafts Show,
St Augustine Beach
Feb 27-28
Seawalk Music Festival,
Jacksonville Beach

[For many more events and details please visit the Orlando Times Travel Calendar here](#)





-- Space Coast TPO

[Read entire article](#)

