

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Florida House Speaker Perez's Organization Session Address: Remarks as Prepared for Delivery

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** (November 19, 2024) — In his address to the House Chamber as Florida House Speaker, Representative Daniel Perez celebrated the Organization Session of the 92<sup>nd</sup> term of the Florida Legislature.

Here is the full text of Florida House Speaker Daniel Perez's speech to the Florida Legislature on Organization Session, as prepared for delivery:

Members, it is my honor to serve as your Speaker. There are many people that I need to thank, but I will do that privately. Today isn't about me or my personal journey.

And I'm not going to talk for very long because I feel like everywhere we turn people are talking. They are opining about what we should think or say or do. So many people talking; so few people listening. And as politicians, we are among the worst offenders. We use too many words but often say so little that matters.

In the last few weeks, reporters have endlessly asked, "What will your priorities be as Speaker?" I understand the question. If I mention 2 or 3 issues, then they have an easy framework for every story they write. It's what's expected. I make a speech, announce a priority, give it a fancy name, promise to spend a bunch of money, and then pat myself on the back when the bill passes, claiming that my speakership was a grand success. Except when the dust settles, the new law doesn't actually make a difference. It doesn't really solve the problem I claimed I was worried about. It's a game of labels and leverage for the purpose of ego and credit. I understand the game. I'm opting not to play.

Instead, let me answer that question in a different way: my priority for the 2025 and 2026 Sessions is to serve the people of Florida. The actual people of Florida. Not the online social media activists, not the lobbyists or interest groups, not the institutions that dominate our political conversations.

I'm more interested in talking about the small business owner in Jacksonville, the abuela in Miami-Dade, the single mother in Orlando, the entrepreneur in Tampa. We are the Florida House of Representatives. We are the People's House, and it is the people of our state who should be our priority. We aren't a debate society, and we shouldn't be the House of Talk. We should be the House of Action. We should pass laws that really matter to the lives of real people facing real problems.

So what do the people of Florida want? Since the creation of the Florida territory, our State has been a destination for people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, and religions. Our growth and prosperity were linked to the network of highways that bound our state together. The people of Florida believe in the promise of the Open Road. Floridians want to decide their own destinations. They want the freedom to travel paths of their own choosing at

their own speed. They expect the government to maintain the road, but they aren't looking for handouts or no-interest loans or income guarantees. The people of Florida do not need or want us to tell them what to think or how to live.

In my experience Floridians are realistic. They understand that there are tradeoffs. They understand that in a state battered by hurricanes, insurance will be a challenge. But they need to know that our state's insurance laws are not being written by and for the insurance companies. They want to own their own homes, not be tenants to private equity firms. They want to open up a business without jumping through endless bureaucratic hoops. They want to pick their own doctors and send their kids to good schools. And they want elected officials who are on their side.

Thousands of years before anyone coined the phrase “crowd sourcing,” humanity assembled in legislative bodies to try to take advantage of our collective wisdom. I'm not standing before you today to announce a program of legislation because that's not my job, it's our mission together.

But that mission isn't an easy one. After all, it is far easier to spend money than to save it. We talk about being fiscally responsible. But are we? Or are we just giving ourselves a free pass in Florida by pointing out that we aren't Washington D.C.?

State government has become so flush with cash that we have lost any sense of discipline. We make purchases following natural disasters with little to no inventory control. We buy land that we can't keep track of, much less manage competently. We spend millions of dollars on failed IT projects. How much money has been spent on Capitol renovations only to have parking garages that leak water and flood?

We need to build a state budget that values value. We need to ensure that the laws we write have actual meaning. For example, there has been some talk about taking the pieces of DBPR and redistributing them to other agencies. We reshuffle the pieces on the board, but we don't change the game. It's a headline not a solution. Let's have real conversations instead of changing the label, let's actually dismantle any license that stifles competition and keeps hardworking Floridians on the outside of jobs looking in.

Floridians want equality of opportunity. They want to believe that if they play by the rules that the deck won't be stacked against them. They want a system that isn't built around the needs of special interests, but one that treats the needs of everyday Floridians as special.

They want a House of Representatives that represents them, believes in them, fights for them. We have two years to show the people that we hear them. We have two years to act. We have two years to widen the Open Road to the Florida Dream. The time for talk is over. It's time to get to work. God Bless you and God Bless the great State of Florida.

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