

REPORT SEPTEMBER 2026

Florida is paying for *Donald Trump's* mess.

Affordability is the top concern in Florida – and Trump and Republicans in Congress have spent nearly two years making it worse.

A REPORT · SEPTEMBER 2026

Floridians are running out of cash – and many are answering the only way they can, by *leaving*.

Ask Floridians what worries them most, and many give the same answer: affordability. Trump and Republicans in Congress built the squeeze one decision at a time. First, they ripped away over \$1 trillion from Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (ACA), handing Florida the largest health care coverage loss of any state in the country. They also cut \$187 billion from food assistance and pushed 685,000 Floridians off SNAP in a single year. Then, Trump started a war with Iran that has kept Florida gas prices near \$4 a gallon for over a month and driven diesel to an all-time record. He also put tariffs on the lumber and drywall Florida builders need, and now Trump and Republicans are ending the program that has held down Medicare drug plan premiums for seniors. Now, a year and a half into his second term, Donald Trump is underwater with Florida voters, in a state he won by double digits.

Floridians are running out of cash, and many are answering the only way they can – by leaving. Migration into Florida has collapsed by two-thirds since 2022, and school districts from Orlando to West Palm Beach are closing buildings because families cannot afford to stay. Trump and Republicans in Congress have spent almost two years rewarding their rich and powerful friends at the expense of everyone else, and working families in Florida are the ones paying the price.

— BY THE NUMBERS

The Sunshine State affordability crisis, in figures.

50%

Of Florida voters name affordability and cost of living as the state's #1 problem – top-ranked across parties.

UNF Statewide Poll

2/3

Collapse in migration into Florida since 2022 – from 598,737 down to 201,191 in 2025.

University of Florida

900K+

Lower-income Florida renter households paying more than 40% of income on rent.

UF Shimberg Center

\$10,000

Added to the cost of a new Florida home due to Trump's 2025 tariffs – \$3B+ statewide.

Florida TaxWatch · Business Observer

730,000

Floridians pushed off SNAP in a year – a 25% collapse, second-highest of any state.

Florida Phoenix

560,000+

Floridians already off Medicaid/CHIP or ACA coverage since the Trump-GOP health care cuts.

Florida Policy Institute

1.5M

KFF projection for total Florida health insurance losses from the Trump-GOP marketplace + Medicaid changes.

KFF · Florida Policy Institute

85.4%

Of Florida families spending more than the federal government considers affordable on child care.

Atlanta Fed

SECTION 01 · AFFORDABILITY

Affordability towers over *every other issue* in Florida.

A statewide University of North Florida poll of likely Florida voters found that 50 percent named affordability and the cost of living as the most important problem facing Florida. Affordability ranked first with Republicans, Democrats and independents alike. Meanwhile, Trump sits at 45 percent favorable against 48 percent unfavorable in a state he carried by a whopping 13 points in 2024.

Floridians say they are financially worse off under Trump.

Emerson College found that 45 percent of Florida voters say they are worse off financially than a year ago, against 27 percent who say better off, including 52 percent of independents who say worse. Another pollster recorded 92 percent of Florida voters saying their cost of living has gone up, with insurance and taxes named as the top drivers.

“*92% of Florida voters say their cost of living has gone up. 45% say they are financially worse off than a year ago.*”

– EMERSON COLLEGE · STATEWIDE FLORIDA POLL

SECTION 02 · MIGRATION

The cost of living has *killed growth* in Florida.

Florida's well-known, pandemic-era population boom has stalled out under the weight of high costs. Net migration into the state fell from 598,737 people in 2022 to 201,191 in 2025, a collapse of two-thirds. Miami-Dade recorded the state's largest domestic loss, with nearly 73,000 more residents leaving for other parts of the country than arriving, and other large counties like Broward, Orange, Hillsborough and Pinellas all posting net domestic outmigration.

The middle class is being pushed out.

Pinellas County alone lost about 12,000 residents in a single year, more than any county in America except Los Angeles, and the Wall Street Journal reports that inflation and housing costs combined with stagnant wages are pushing middle-class Floridians out of the state. Researchers attribute the shift to housing costs pushing movers away from Florida's largest counties. Trump and Republicans in Congress inherited a state people were desperate to move to and turned it into one people are leaving.

SECTION 03 · HOUSING

Floridians cannot afford to keep a *roof over their heads*.

Housing costs are burying Floridians. The University of Florida's Shimberg Center estimates over 900,000 lower-income Florida renter households are paying more than 40 percent of their income for rent, and Miami has now passed New York as the most expensive metro area in the country. Property insurance premiums in Florida now average roughly \$3,800 a year, among the highest in the country.

Seniors are finding roommates just to afford housing.

Retirees in Southwest Florida have started finding roommates to keep up with housing costs in retirement, a step that used to belong to college students and now belongs to grandparents.

Trump's tariffs are projected to add \$10,000 to a Florida home.

Trump's 2025 tariffs raised construction costs by more than \$3 billion statewide and roughly \$10,000 on a new Florida home, according to Florida TaxWatch.

SECTION 04 · GROCERIES

Trump has made *groceries a luxury* in Florida.

More than a third of Florida families report buying fewer fruits and vegetables on every shopping trip, and 51 percent say their diet has gotten less healthy over the past two to three years because of high food costs. Florida households are spending \$28.60 more every month on produce alone than they were a year ago, after fresh produce prices rose more than 6 percent in twelve months.

Floridians are going into debt to eat.

A statewide poll for No Kid Hungry Florida this spring found that 82 percent of Floridians say food costs are rising faster than their income and 70 percent say their finances have suffered over the past year because of food costs. Nearly half report that their debt has grown because of grocery bills, roughly half of parents surveyed have skipped meals or eaten less, and 39 percent have put food on buy-now-pay-later plans.

SECTION 05 · FOOD ASSISTANCE

Republicans in Congress took food assistance from *over 730,000 Floridians*.

Trump and Republicans in Congress cut \$187 billion from food assistance, and Florida families absorbed the blow immediately. State enrollment collapsed from nearly 3 million in June 2025 to 2.2 million by July 2026, a nearly 25% collapse and a loss of about 730,000 people. This marks the second-highest collapse of any state in the country, only behind Arizona. Meanwhile, the benefits paid out to those who remain enrolled have fallen 26 percent – from \$541 million a month to \$399 million.

Help went down just as need went up.

Requests for food assistance over the past year have jumped 15.2 percent. Orlando food programs described a surge of new families walking through the door, including parents cut off after submitting every document the state requested. Thanks to Trump and Republicans in Congress, Florida is feeding far fewer people at the exact moment far more are asking.

SECTION 06 · HEALTH CARE

Floridians are rapidly *losing health care* coverage thanks to GOP cuts.

Last year, Trump and the GOP cut Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act by over \$1 trillion. Over the past decade, Florida has built the largest Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace in the country, peaking at 4.7 million people, or more than one in five Floridians. 97 percent of those enrollees depended on the enhanced premium tax credits that Trump and Republicans ripped away last July. Floridians are part of one of the steepest state coverage losses in the nation, with the state losing over 560,000 enrollees in Medicaid/CHIP or ACA coverage since the Trump-GOP health care cuts.

The worst yet to come.

KFF projects that the marketplace and Medicaid changes together will ultimately strip 1.5 million Floridians of their health insurance. Next year, ACA premiums are set to spike again, hiking costs even more for working families.

SECTION 07 · SENIORS

Trump is pulling the rug out from under *Florida seniors*.

The Trump administration announced in July that it will end the Medicare Part D premium stabilization program after this year, having already cut its per-enrollee support. Experts warn that stand-alone drug plan enrollees could face larger premium increases in 2027 than they have seen in years.

Long-term care is slipping out of reach.

Long-term care costs have kept climbing, and Florida assisted living operators report worsening staff turnover that pushes prices higher still. The Tampa Bay Times reported that federal Medicaid cuts put the roughly 700,000 Florida seniors the program covers at risk, in a state where a nursing home bed already runs between \$104,000 and \$117,000 a year.

SECTION 08 · ENERGY & GAS

Trump's war with Iran is *spiking costs* at the pump.

Florida gas sold for \$2.90 a gallon the day before Trump launched strikes on Iran. Eighteen months into his term, the pain has not let up. Florida gas prices topped \$4 a gallon in September, up more than 45% since the start of the year. Three in four Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of gas prices, including 80 percent of independents and 54 percent of Republicans.

Record-breaking diesel is coming for every grocery bill.

Diesel hit an all-time national record in September, and analysts warn it will push freight and food costs higher still. Southwest Florida businesses are eating the fuel increases to shield customers who cannot absorb another one, but the longer fuel costs stay high, the more businesses will be forced to pass onto consumers.

Trump killed Florida energy investments & jobs.

Since Trump's election, over \$122 million in Florida energy investments have been lost, cancelled, or stalled across 5 projects, putting dozens of state jobs on the line.

SECTION 09 · CHILD CARE

Child care costs are *forcing* *Florida parents* out of work.

The Atlanta Fed determined this summer that 85.4 percent of Florida families are spending more than what the federal government considers affordable for child care. The median Florida family would need to hand over 16.8 percent of their income to cover child care costs, and many end up forking over much more. Infant and toddler care in Florida runs \$268 a week, with preschool at \$208. The burden of Florida child care costs has even pushed working parents to cut hours or leave the labor force outright. Raising a child in Florida from birth to adulthood now costs more than \$280,000, up from roughly \$254,000 a year earlier. Child care prices nationally were already outpacing overall inflation over the last five years.

SECTION 10 · SCHOOLS

Florida schools are in crisis due to *cost of living*.

Palm Beach County Schools, one of the ten largest school districts in America, opened this school year with nearly 7,000 fewer students, more than double what it had projected, with district leaders naming the rising cost of living as a key driver. With young families unable to afford to move in and older families unable to afford moving out, school districts are shrinking. The district lost \$66 million last year and could lose more than \$100 million now, even after imposing a hiring freeze and cutting 76 staff jobs. Orange County Public Schools, another massive school district in Florida, counted 7,672 fewer students and closed seven schools outright. Across Central Florida, school districts shed nearly 12,000 students. Likewise, South Florida campuses are now facing closure risks.

DEFEND AMERICA ACTION

DEFEND AMERICA ACTION • SEPTEMBER 2026

Working Floridians are paying the price. It's time to fight back.

Defend America Action is a 501(c)(4) organization dedicated to defending working families from the destructive policies of the Trump administration and Congressional Republicans.

Every figure and citation in this report links to its source – from the University of Florida and the Atlanta Fed to KFF, the Florida Policy Institute, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and Florida's independent newsrooms.

DefendAmericaAction.org

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