

Speaker 1 ([00:02](#)):

All right.

Governor DeSantis ([00:05](#)):

Is this Oh, good. Okay. Well, good afternoon. We're back again today. Yesterday was great. I think many of you saw probably either online or on the news, the utility trucks pouring across the Santa Be Causeway. Nobody thought we'd be able to do that this soon, but we're doing that massive numbers of people working there as well as, Pine Island. And we understand how important that is. We also, though, understand, and from the time this was just disturbance by, I think it was probably like at the coast of Columbia or somewhere in South America, we started our mobilization with the state of emergency, which of course, people think about, okay, the search and rescue, the power restoration, the food and water and that's obviously very important, and we worked hard on that. But Dan Eagle, from the time we did that, was working on mobilizing, whatever support we would need from an economic, and we hoped that we wouldn't need a lot.

Governor DeSantis ([01:07](#)):

I mean, we hoped it was gonna be more in the Gulf, but, you know, it is what it is. I mean, these are things that are happening, So, you're prepared for that. And so we'll talk about some of the things that we've rolled out, but then listen to some of the challenges and the concerns that people have here. I think that there are a lot of challenges that we're gonna have to deal with, but I also think you're seeing people bounce back quicker here than anyone thought was possible. So we just gotta keep that momentum going, that's gonna let us deal with these challenges more effectively. And sometimes these things are just like hopelessness sets in, and then there's kind of, people are mired in some rut, and I'm not seeing that here. There's a lot of things that we've gotta do, and we didn't ask for this, but, we've got so many people coming together to want to really get this get this area back on its feet.

Governor DeSantis ([01:59](#)):

So of course, I have Dane Eagle, his hometown, we're here, ceo or he's the Secretary of the Department of Economic op Opportunity. We have the Deputy Secretary of Commerce. Laura Debella is here. The Dbpr secretary, Melanie Griffin is here. And then our Commissioner of Education, Manny Diaz, and then many other folks who will Dan will go around and introduce, as you guys are able to talk about, some of the things that you see clearly. It's been a very disruptive time for everybody, but particularly when you look at businesses, pretty much had to close leading into the storm without power some days, and some, unfortunately, the power restoration did better after this storm than we've ever done. But still, I mean, it's a big, big interruption. Other types of services in Lee County were interrupted. And then of course, people are displaced from their homes.

Governor DeSantis ([02:57](#)):

I mean, that's a major, major thing. You know, you have employees that come in as a business, they may all of a sudden have their house in four feet of water. That's not something that is just, you know an easy thing to deal with. So there's a whole bunch of interruptions. And so we understood that there would be need for, financing for businesses to be able to either stay or reopen. There's also damage, of course, to physical structures. And there's different safety concerns that happen. And I would say the barrier islands and the more waterfront infrastructure, of course, got hit, got hit very hard. You know, as you get more inland, it was, you know, you get away from the coast. I mean, obviously we had a lot of flooding that occurred. I've been saying this, but I think it is true.

Governor DeSantis (03:45):

You know, some of the newer construction, I think did much better than people probably thought. And it's interesting, you know and I, cause I've been saying the older construction didn't necessarily fair. If you look at Fort Myers Beach, some of those places got totally wiped out. Sandal got totally wiped out. But I actually was talking to folks and they did make a good point. You know, sometimes the stuff built in like the forties and fifties did better than the stuff built in the seventies and eighties. You know, there was definitely a period where some of the structures that were going up, and not just in Florida, across the country, maybe not built for the long haul, but at the older, sometimes those are. But then as you get, there's definitely a period where it's good. But nevertheless, I mean, I do think that that some of the updated building and that I do think that that performed better than people thought it would.

Governor DeSantis (04:35):

So that was at least a little bit of a ray of sunshine. Then we mention, of course, the workers. And so I asked Dane to convene this meeting because we understand that we have certain programs. There's fema, there's different things, but there's probably gonna be a lot more need. Not all of it's can be done, or even most of it can be done by government per se. But I think you've seen, we have the Florida Disaster fund.org that people have donated to, I think it's like 42, 43 million now of support. There's already been awards made to some of these great groups that are helping folks every day. We're gonna have some good announcements, this week about how we're helping some other folks right here in this community get back on their feet.

Governor DeSantis (05:22):

So there's a lot of different things that can be done. And then from a government regulatory perspective, you know, if there's things we can ease up on or do things, we obviously want to be helpful in that regard. And we'll absolutely be looking to do that. So far, we have done things pretty much immediately. The business Damage assessment survey immediately after landfall was done to gather the information about how the storm impacted local businesses. So we've had 2100 businesses respond to deas Business Damage Assessment Survey. We also activated the Emergency Bridge Loan program. So these are zero interest short term loans. I mean, with inflation like it is now, you're not getting a zero interest loan anywhere else. I mean, this is a big, big deal to help businesses stay open or reopen until revenue starts to flow in again and again.

Governor DeSantis (06:21):

Look, I'm optimistic, we're gonna see a quicker bounce back than most storms of this magnitude see, but we know that there's gonna be a period of transition and these loans are important. You can meet payroll, keep your employees there, immediate repairs, whatever you need to get that business going. And we've awarded over 106 awards to businesses already that have been impacted by the storms. That's millions and millions of dollars. And I know Dane talk about there's more in the pipeline for folks that have been been impacted. We've also opened Disaster Recovery Centers in conjunction with fema. Our footprint there is really significant from the state's perspective. We've got dea, we've got DBPR Enterprise, Florida, Small Business Development Council, Career Source Florida, small business administration along with fema, which is really significant. We're also waiting federal approval of a 30 million request for the Dislocated Worker grant program.

Governor DeSantis (07:23):

This will provide disaster relief employment in the form of temporary jobs to Floridians who are impacted by Hurricane Ian. But we're just waiting on that approval. But I do want to thank everybody here in the business community real large because what you saw, I mean, you saw a lot of the businesses spring into action to help with the relief in terms of what people needed. See these restaurants serving massive amounts of food to people and not just some of the big change. You have some of these family restaurants, you know, that are doing that. So that's made a big difference. And we really appreciate that. So we are here to listen, here to have suggestions, what can be done better on the economic front. And I will kick it over to Dane to be able to begin that conversation.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([08:10](#)):

Well, governor, thank you. I think I speak for all of us as a southwest Floridian for your work and the First Lady's work and effort and focus on this area. It has been a breath of fresh air. It's a resilient community and we're gonna rebuild, and I know everybody at the table's gonna help in doing so. But with your leadership, I know it'll be done quicker and faster than ever. So, let's hear from them. But thank you Governor for convening this. I wanna start with Steve Rye Mercola, who graciously hosted us. Steve's the CEO here and he also welcomed twins last week. So he's had more than one storm blow through his household. But Steve, what are you seeing kind of as a general idea as a large employer here in southwest Florida? How are you feeling?

Steve Rye (CEO of Mercola) ([08:55](#)):

Yeah, thanks again for being here. You know, certainly this has been a lot to digest and it's kind of a day by day thing where you see more and more as far as like what the impacts truly are. You know, we had already been impacted by Covid a lot as far as logistics go, material supply, there's a lot of complications that were already kind of sitting there. From what I'm hearing so far, you know, there's been a lot of displacement. We already had a housing crisis here. So you try and plan the future of like, what's this going to mean where you've got the displaced people looking for homes, You've got all the people that are trying to move into Florida, thanks to all the success Florida has had, trying to find homes. And then on top of, we got all the construction people that are also coming in looking for temporary place as well. So we kind of returned to housing crisis into a little bit of a housing chaos, I think. So that's one of the areas of concern that I have. And I think generally with all materials and logistics that have been complicated throughout, this obviously puts a little bit more pressure on that as well. So to me, that's probably one of the things that will be really challenged here, is trying people's homes fixed, trying to find them homes, affordability of homes, all that kind of collectively is likely one of my top concerns.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([10:01](#)):

Uh, and then, uh, we've got Marty Herty here, uh, and his partner Mark, uh, Marinello. And, uh, of course they, uh, own, uh, restaurants along Sandil Captiva in Fort Myers Beach. Some of the hardest hit areas. Uh, and of course you're a large employer as well. Uh, what do you see in Marty? Well,

Marty Harrity ([10:17](#)):

Thank you governor for getting that causeway. I mean, that's our umbilical cord and you, I mean, it's miraculous what you've done. Absolutely miraculous.

Marty Harrity ([10:31](#)):

I mean we went, you know, in a matter of hours from five restaurants to one. But it is what it is, as you said. And I think the biggest thing is momentum and what can we do to help our people and get back in

business again? And I think, you know, we're doing everything we can to keep the momentum going forward, to stay positive. We're coming back. It's just, you know, one of the things we look at is how the supply chain of equipment and stuff that we're gonna need because it's all ruined. And then it's just, we're in the process of opening another store up at St. Pete right now, and we know how difficult it is getting stuff. And now we've got four more restaurants that we've gotta come up with equipment and so forth. And my people, the people that we have, it's hard to tell them what's going on and where their future lies and that kind of stuff.

Marty Harrity ([11:15](#)):

And we were talking about making things simple. I said a lot of times when you get on the computer, you try to do unemployment or different forms and everybody's computer literate, you think until you get talking to them. And you know, you address a crowd up here and you know, they understand down here and that's where I am. You know, so the simpler we can make things and cut the red tape and so forth, which you, you're notorious for doing that. I mean, you've seen that just keep it going and, you know, and cause we're coming back and it's just gonna take time and it's concern for the people and the rebuild and the community. I mean it's, you know, we're in an economy that depends on tourism and we gotta get the people back here and get 'em working here. But thank you you for everything you're doing.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([11:52](#)):

Thank you Marty. And Jay Johnson, the owner of Above us, his father is also a Bernard Johnson who owned, I should say Bert's Bar, unfortunately a staple here in the Matt Leche community. Along with we've got Tommy Colar who has a business on Matt Leche, she as well as Fort Myers Beach. Lima Lovegrove, Lima she is Lily Pulitzer to West Palm Beach as she is to Matt Leche, so she, we all know Lima in her arts and then Captain Cathy and Matt Leche as well. But, Jay, what are you seeing from, from your point of view as a restaurant here and the Matt Leche community?

speaker 6 ([12:30](#)):

Thank you. First of all, go. Thank you very much. The, um, I even mentioned the tourist industry for us is extremely important. And the part that we wanna make sure is Sure continue Dana had one is to be out there saying that that here, and it's important that people know state's, Spencer Greg is the owner of Ish Resorts, which recently purchased, uh, so Seas and I know you guys were looking at making a very big investment into the, uh, the northern tip, the Captiva you own what Northern

Dane Eagle FDEO ([13:47](#)):

Four miles of Captiva Highland basically. And of course, that's right near the eye, the storm went and a large employer in the area. So, Greg, tell us what your experience.

Greg ([13:55](#)):

Absolutely. Thank you very much. Thank you for the opportunity and just getting everybody clean, just huge. So, for that we do represent a third of the, and ironically our one year we had a announcement planning to go lemonade. So that's what we're to do. Ironic resiliency, Utah. So, we have ready identify projects that we're going to make sure that we're working. No, and we push. So as far building, I've financial partners, we, it's going to be anywhere from million to billion to uh, not rebuild property but to build to what current standards are, we're to do that the challenge we're facing is key.

Greg ([15:09](#)):

We can do it. How much deploy, number one is construction, debt construction is and lender super appetite investing hurricane. So we discuss that's actually had a conversation today and you know, I'm asking them you what would entice to is we can't take 12 months on that extremely within the county are the restrictions were years. So we think a lot of people gonna be surprised that they had a two three house might not be to flood. So that's something that's not back. We're very, to say that're 100s clean. Aren't companies extremely the billion? We respectfully not employees stock those. Thank you Greg. Matt and Claire, he's a local custom builder in Claire Homes. Uh, I know he and uh, Matt

Dane Eagle FDEO ([17:26](#)):

Simmons who's a local property appraiser, Jar Hole who's a local engineer you probably got some issues with permitting. What seeing Matt?

Marty Harrity ([17:36](#)):

Well, construction that not only cost us money, but waste standard regardless of the county municipality to get displacement homeowners homes and unfortunately municipalities are weigh down the counter permits. We need to find a way for everyone to work together and have the same rules that basically get everything quicker to the builders who get everything done. Is that city or county more? I would've to say city's really tough right now. They brought in the new software over last year and it really was really technical, and it really turned a lot of upsides down. Turned permits around and then they got lots the two so much which in basically excellent workflow permits over counter and getting everybody, I relocated more. I've numerous phone calls from people wanting down here to work, no problem, suffering of people all the way around. And you got 10 Truckstop on the also. Thank you for great, great. And thank you Matt. Robbie Rope store. She is the president of Medicine National Bank which a local, you don't anymore, but it's leadership sand as well.

Robbie Roepstorff ([21:26](#)):

Well, I have been through sandal except to my house and back by boat and that's not pretty. But uh, I've touched base with all the banks and the good news is, uh, banks at all, the banks in the Fort Myers market have a bank to service their customers. So that's the really good news on sandal. Unfortunately, not, I've spoken with the two big banks chase in Wells Fargo. They really haven't been able to assess their situation. The other community bank is actually doing some business in the parking lot because customers need to get in their safe deposit boxes. He had minimal damage compared to our office damage. And I just cannot, from liability standpoint, let anyone in until such time as it's safe. And so, governor, first thing that we need is, I was ecstatic to see all of those utility buses go across because we were leaving our house and looking over there and thought it was a mirage.

Robbie Roepstorff ([22:27](#)):

I'm telling you <laugh>, they just, I didn't think they were on that big bridge, but there they all were. But we have invested in a huge generator. If I could get the generator people, and I'm sure there's plenty of places on sandal that have generators, but they may be flooded out or they just may need gas, that that's a priority. And then we're not as dependent and let the, the electricity trucks work on residential areas. And then the other thing is commercial restoration. Just my house, I was showing Marty some of the mole's pictures. I just can't even imagine what's happening in our bank. I need to get our commercial restoration people in there. If I could get those two things in there, then we can be self-independent in,

in servicing customers to get into safe deposit and do limit cash transactions. I have also spoken with a lot of small businesses, and they need to make payroll first and foremost.

Robbie Roepstorff ([23:28](#)):

They're scared and concerned to death about it. It took 'em a long time to get employees to come back to work. They finally got them working, they got good people, they were affected in their place of where they rent. They now don't have a job. They're gonna leave us if we don't get them on a good payroll. So, in order to help them, I would love to see our Edo office locally do like we did in the Charlie days and pull a meeting of a representative from every bank to go over these programs and to tell us, give us the shortcuts of how we can do 'em quick and easy to fund. If I know all the other bankers are like us, we'll set up escrow accounts to make sure that the money gets applied to the subcontractors, etcetera, etcetera. So, there's just ways to do this that I think we all get creative on.

Robbie Roepstorff ([24:21](#)):

And I was happy to see. I was not going to be the only one to also bring up my county may kick me out of the county, but <laugh>. Cause the second thing I'm going to say there is people do not need to get their tax notices in November and see what their taxes were based on their beautiful properties prior to this storm. It's going to be devastating for people. So, if that, if those notices could be deferred until after they do reassessments or, or do some abatements or forbearance or something, that's just going to be devastating to people whose lost their income, lost their roof, and now they get a property tax notice. So

Governor DeSantis ([25:01](#)):

Yeah, we're going to do at the state level we will take action on there. We're working through exactly what all we can do. I think probably in terms of relinquishing it, I think the legislature would probably have to come in and ratify if we put on all, but, you know, I think there's a bunch of stuff on the table. So, we're working through that. So, we will definitely do something so people can rest assured that there'll be accommodations. Well

Robbie Roepstorff ([25:29](#)):

I hate to say these things because you've done so much for us and how I wanted to close was you need to tell us what we can do to help you. Help us. Okay. Okay.

Governor DeSantis ([25:39](#)):

Well look, I mean I think it's just a desire to bounce back as quickly as possible. I mean, we're working hard. I mean, when you have a storm like this, of course the first thing it hits and you want to save people and make sure people are safe, of course then you want to get the power and the water and all that. And just so that, because yeah, there's a lot of people, the community that didn't have catastrophic damage to their home. So, when they have the power and the water, then they're going to be okay. We are in a situation where when you have infrastructure damage like these bridges, I mean we viewed that as very significant. So, we're good in Pine Island and where, you know, sandal was great yesterday.

Governor DeSantis ([26:19](#)):

They'll be more, probably trucks be able to go, but it's going to be open. You know, people thought maybe at the end of October now we know it's going to be sooner. And you know, look, I'm pushing them to do it as soon as possible. I think, because think about you do a ferry, all this other stuff, it's like,

honestly, just fix the causeway. I mean, I would do a ferry, but it's like people are saying, oh, it's going to be out for six months. Well, no it's not. We're going to be able to do that, so people are going to be able to go. But I think that what I'm seeing is Santa Fe, you're going to need to, and they're doing it now, but you're going to have to reconstitute a lot of the electrical infrastructure. I mean, you'd see these concrete poles just snapped in half lines everywhere.

Governor DeSantis ([27:03](#)):

Pine Island was hit hard, but sandal was an order higher than that. And so, it's just going to require, that's why you have all those trucks go because it's not just re hooking up a line on a pole, it's having to rebuild a lot of this stuff new, which is fine. That's why you have FPL is helping Duke Energy on Pine Island. Like they're all in this together because it requires a lot of manpower. So, you could do that. But then like on sandal you just need massive debris removal because there's so much vegetation. So, you have debris is everywhere. And then some of like, you know, those really nice structurally, you know, we're fine, but like they flooded so there's damage, they're going to have to do stuff for that. And then some of the ones that weren't built as well, I mean, man, some of them just got totally wrecked.

Governor DeSantis ([27:53](#)):

So that's, that's just debris everywhere. But I think though the fact that we got people on the island via helicopter and via barge until the causeway yesterday. So, they have been working for many days and they're going to continue to do it. And my view is if we, if you restore access to the, to the islands, which we're in the process of doing, and then you have the electrical and the debris working on that around the clock, you know, you're in a situation where, you know, all these other things become easier to do. It's hard to do and you just have massive debris everywhere or you don't have, uh, the, the, the infrastructure in place. So, we've put a premium on that. We were standing there out by the causeway yesterday to make the announcement and obviously you see a lot of damage around you.

Governor DeSantis ([28:44](#)):

Even in the midst of that, it's hard not to look and just see what a beautiful part of the world this is. You know? So, we're very fortunate to be able to have that here in this part of Florida people. There's a reason why, where we're, I mean, there's probably like maybe of the top five places that have had homes, this has got to be one of the top five in the last couple years. I mean, right here, people just coming, wanting to build and buy homes and there's a reason for that. And so, a lot of challenges, but I think the desire to bounce back quickly and get the debris cleared, the power, all that stuff on the islands, you know, you are going to be able to have, there's going to be people that when they see that they're going to actually want to come down and check it out.

Governor DeSantis ([29:28](#)):

We're just working really hard. So, I just say, and that we put this out with the counties very early on, get your debris contracts activated and they have done that. I'll tell you, we were on Fort Myers Beach last weekend, massive piles of debris, which is like the first step to have that. Then they get hauled off. And so that's something that's really, really positive to see. I can tell you Michael and granted Michael was a tough one, but I mean, massive debris, that was a very difficult debris thing. And I think this area's much ahead of where Michael was with the debris cleanup and then that just makes things so much easier. So, we're, I mean I'm just pleased what I've seen, I think that they have got, and we get a hundred percent local government get a hundred percent reimburse for the first 60 days from the time the disaster was declared. So that would be the Saturday, Friday or Saturday before the storm hit 60 days out. Look, if we

need to ask for more, we can, but I think the White House understandably is like, okay, we'll use what you have and then if you need more, maybe we'll do it, but don't, you know, ask for more when you're not even doing well. We're showing the sense of urgency here on the local level. So, I think it's been really, really positive.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([30:46](#)):

Jeff, real estate, I guess you need a mic there. We'll pass one down to you. Now, you and your company have been a staple here for a long time. What, what do you see immediately long term?

Jeff ([31:01](#)):

Well, I see so far everybody's brought up the challenges that we're going to have with housing. We see a lot of people that are looking for rentals in our area it's not one block, it's almost every block. And some of the houses are livable, some of them are not. And when you got some of the older population, they're more worried than others. And really, housing is a big shortage right now. And that's what we're seeing along with the building prices, the permitting and all the other things. But we're going to bounce back. You've done an incredible job and we're just happy you're our governor.

Governor DeSantis ([31:47](#)):

Yeah. So, just on the like temporary, so these affected areas have been approved for what's called TSA Transitional Sheltering Allowance. And that was approved. I and Kevin Guthrie can correct me on the exact figure, but I think that that was approved at 250% of the per diem rate for this area. So, a lot of these hotels are going to be able to offer those rooms and they're going to do very well. Now, part of the challenge initially is just you had all the first responders, everyone's staying in hotels that obviously as the search and rescue has happened. Now you're do recovery, you know, you're seeing a decompression of some of that. Of course, we see far fewer power trucks in most parts of the affected area, of course, because the power's restored most of them on the barrier islands at this point and the beaches.

Governor DeSantis ([32:46](#)):

So, you are going to see that open up more. But there is going to be, to the extent that, you know, tourism isn't what it would be in the apps of this store. You know, a lot of those hotels, and I know Carol's work to get him to participate, but I mean they really, from a business directive, you'll make, you know, you'll make money doing this. It'll be good for you. And then it gives people the ability and sometimes look, the goal is to get a stable situation as soon as possible. But, you know, some of the sheltering, I mean, you're talking could be six months to a year sometimes, depending on how things hung, how things are going. There's also, FEMA typically runs the housing mission. Kevin Guthrie is working with them about flexibility to maybe let the state do some more innovative things.

Governor DeSantis ([33:31](#)):

You know, they can build these trailer cities almost, and people can go and, and, you know, look, that's better, better than nothing. But I think a lot of people, if they're rehabbing their house and it's going to take six months, you know, they'd rather that trailer just be on their property. You can hook up all the utilities. I mean, then the problem with that is not all local governments and local communities allow that to happen. And so that's going to be an issue for the county, the city or whatever, you know, can somebody in a subdivision had four feet of water? Can they just put the trailer like in their front yard

while all that stuff's being rehabbed? They're not, I could tell you the residents generally just want to be on their property. They don't want to be in some random place.

Governor DeSantis ([34:13](#)):

But nevertheless, that's going to be something to work through. So, all of that is happening. There's going to be a little bit of relief on the hotel side, I think, as the days go on, just because there'll be a decompression of the people that are here helping. But you know, this is on the flip side of that, while we're not, they're not doing rescue missions like they were for the first week. You have so many of these private non-profit groups that are here helping out this, this Operation Rubicon. They'll go, they'll fix your home for you. They help a lot of elderly doing that to clear a debris and to do other stuff. So, so that's good. And there's a lot of manpower here for that. But obviously that creates competition for some of those spots when you're talking about hotels and some of the other rentals.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([35:04](#)):

Governor, you mentioned seeing the debris already getting clean off of Fort Myers Beach. Tommy Kolar and his family own a restaurant in a hotel. No, Micki has a restaurant there. Tommy, you were telling me you're thinking about opening sooner than I would've thought. What are you experiencing, Tommy?

Tommy ([35:24](#)):

Thank you so much. And Governor, I just want to first start off by saying thank you for your leadership. It's been incredible. Yeah, so our beach got hit really hard. Our main focus right now has been clean up and trying to get our people back to work. So, we've offered them all jobs, help clean up and help get the businesses back up and operating. The biggest challenge for us right now, at the two restaurants on the beach is going to be getting equipment. All of our equipment's totally ruined. Mr. Harty, Doc Fords mentioned that earlier. The other major thing is going to be temporary funding to help with the construction costs and the build out costs of the part of the hotel. So, I think the bridge program that you implemented is a great first start. But for businesses that are going to require a little bit more capital, it'd be great to see a state run program that we can get our hands on some capital initially while we fight the insurance companies on our Is very, is

Tommy ([36:42](#)):

So, you know, I feel very blessed that everything is still there. But it did get hit quite a bit, all of Times Square, basically flushed right into our hotel and the courtyard of our restaurant. So, we got beat up pretty bad, but our staff is on the ground right now, helping to clean up and mitigate all of that. And so, we'll be in a good place if we can get our hands on the proper equipment, we could be up back and running, you know, a month, month and a half, two months, get our people back to work.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([37:16](#)):

That's impressive. I've heard a lot, Tommy, you and then, Greg talked about putting your staff to work and cleaning up that's commendable. And what the governor's done. We have Dua disaster and employment assistance. For those that don't have the ability to employ people, we encourage them to use it. We know people out of work the no fault of their own. What the governor's also done is we're waiting on a request 30 million for dislocated worker grant. So, people who don't want to sit and collect unemployment can go to work and help with cleanup. y tuned for that. But thanks to the governor's leadership, we are cutting red tape in those areas and making it happen. Captain efforts. So stay tuned for that. But thanks to the governor's leadership, we are cutting red tape in those areas and making it

happen. Captain Kathy represents the captain community. We have quite a lot in the area. You've been on the water quite a bit. What, what do you see?

Captain Kathy ([37:58](#)):

Well, governor, thank you so much. My family's been on Mache Island for 45 years,

Captain Kathy ([38:04](#)):

And I've been on the water for two weeks tomorrow. And what I have seen is the building of a road from the first stretch that was built by the National Guard with a ladder horizontal that they got to by kayaks that had floated up in the mangroves to what it is today. And it is such a viable road, bringing supplies and power to our islands. Thank you so much. One of the things I know as a captain, our tourism business on the water is a little different. What you see on the roads is that we see the debris in the water. So, whatever was washed out, boats floating and trees and refrigerators and whatever came out of those homes is now, are now obstructions in the water. So, on behalf of the other charter captains that's something that we're concerned about. And I'm running echo in nature tours, so our paradigm is changing a little bit. Our story is changing a little bit and I'm just so grateful to you for what you're doing in the community. And we know we're going to be back all of us because we're Pine Island, Southwest Florida Strong. Thank you.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([39:27](#)):

Hey, Jason, you represent the healthcare industry and the private sector side. You've got patients to service and employees to service. How are you holding up?

Jason ([39:41](#)):

Thank you. Thank you, governor, for being here. I come from a different angle than everybody else at the table. So, we employ people that help people that are anxious and depressed. And you can imagine there's a lot of anxiety and depression going on in the community. So, our first concern is helping the people. In order to help someone, you have to be healthy yourself. They're going through all the things that we're going through, so we need to help them first. But from a state, from a legislative perspective telehealth has been very helpful to us. So any restrictions or anything that could be lessened or have a have a 60 day, 90 day process where mental health patients could be seen, you know, through telehealth with no restrictions would be helpful. A lot of people don't have internet or phone or a lot of our physical plants are, are, are not ruined, but, but not open yet. So anything like that would be helpful to the mental health industry, but we don't have to physically examine patients, uh, to help them. So anything like that would be very, very, very helpful. Uh, what you're doing already has been amazing, so we appreciate it. Um, but the, the community is sick, uh, mentally part of, you know, part of our community is, and so we need to be there to help them.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([41:01](#)):

Jared, you've got the mic. Do you want to chat about what you're seeing on the engineering side? I believe you helped with the bridges.

Steve Rye (CEO of Mercola) ([41:07](#)):

First, before we talk about infrastructure, just echo something I've seen this week. Folks are really stretched thin right now. I mean, mentally, some physically exhaustion the traffic, its volumes are out of sight. So just one my message for everybody that I kind of realized this week. Everybody wants to push

and get restored, but we need to give it a little time too. Folks need a little space just to kind of, you know, get back to a good spot. And we had to, we had to realize that a little bit this week. We were pushing our folks a little too hard. So our business is the transportation infrastructure business primarily. We've been in business for 40 years and we've seen a lot of hurricane work over the years. Katrina, Ivan, Michael. And, uh, so we've got a good experience, Irma, to compare this storm to the damage, how widespread the damage of the storm is amazing.

Steve Rye (CEO of Mercola) ([42:17](#)):

It goes from Bradenton to the Everglades. So the process of cleaning up is just massive. But, I can tell you we've been out on sand about, we're out there today, we've been out there, Matt la she we've dealt with Florida Department of Transportation, all of our career. So, we've got a goodSo, So we've got a good we've dealt with Florida Department of Transportation, the all of our career. So we've got a good point of reference for that. A lot of different administrations, both Republican and Democrat and governor, I can tell you, you have empowered the Florida Department of Transportation leadership. Like we have never seen, we have never seen d o t be this empowered. There are seven districts around the state and every one of them have people, d o t people here working on the restoration. That's never happened before. People were asking me about the bridges and I thought it would be months. And we're in this business and what you've done to get these bridges opened has never been done before in the state. And, the difference is one thing, your leadership, I'm here to tell you, we've been doing this for 40 years and your leadership has never been seen in the state of Florida like this. So thank you.

Dane Eagle FDEO ([43:45](#)):

Well, and I know we're stressed for time, but I want to take what you said and just the experience that we've had. You see, the governors, some of his agency heads here being at the EOC days before the storm was even, we knew it was a real storm to being on the ground, boots on the ground. The governor has empowered each and every one of us and led and encouraged us to do everything that we can and stretch the boundaries of what we thought would be possible. Cutting red tape, making sure we're doing everything within the power that you, the people have granted him, and then to us to get work done. And it has been an amazing experience, not only just for me to be an agency head, but to be able to serve my community through that empowerment. So governor, I know it's going to be a long road ahead. There are a lot of great things. We've seen miraculous things done, power, water, bridges built in a short period of time that I think all of us having lived here a long time would've said would not have been possible. And yet it was possible and it's happened and it's thanks to you. Thank you for all you're doing for us, governor.

Governor DeSantis ([44:48](#)):

Sure. No, I appreciate that.

Governor DeSantis ([44:55](#)):

And so we, I think definitely some of the things that we're hearing, you know, I did mention on the taxes we're working on relief, there we are. There's this housing issue with the transitional allowance, but then also whatever FEMA would do is all that is all being done. Some of the stuff, I mean the costs and the supply chain, those have been perennial problems in this country as you know. We've done our part in Florida to try to mitigate that with our ports and everything. But the reality is, you know, we're in a challenging economic environment in terms of supply chain. That's just the reality. I mean, if there's things, we can do more to push levers in the state, we will do so. But I do think that if this had happened

three years ago, you're looking at probably a little bit different in terms of how some of this stuff would work.

Governor DeSantis ([45:52](#)):

That's just the reality. It's also stuff that people making repairs. I don't know how much more it costs to repair a roof than it did three years ago, but it's a lot more. And people see that. So, that's where we're at with there. We are working on some other things. So, we have opportunities to do additional funds for, for workforce training. So if there's new people that you need to train to work, we've got money for that that we can put in the field. I also have a job growth grant fund that we can do to help with some of the key infrastructure. Of course, we've put a lot of emphasis on the bridges and the power and everything. There may be some other things that we can do in a short term that could be a difference maker.

Governor DeSantis ([46:50](#)):

So, so let us know if there is, I will say we people focus on the two bridges. Obviously, those were really catastrophic images. A lot of the other infrastructure, you know, a lot of it did well, which is good. I mean, it just shows you that some of this stuff was durably built. I thought there would be more damage to bridges in roads than actually happen. It didn't surprise me to see Pine Island after it because of how powerful the storm was. Visit Florida, they are going to be doing economic recovery ads. So, that will be coming. And of course, and this is just an issue we deal with in Florida at all. I mean, you know, if there's like anything that happens anywhere in Florida, peoples like, oh, and then they try to act like it's all of the state of Florida.

Governor DeSantis ([47:37](#)):

So, you have places even in southwest Florida that are fine. You have others obviously where there's challenges, but we're going to make that message clear. But also, I mean, I want to be advertising about the affected areas as soon as possible. I mean, like, we don't want to do it right now because we're still getting stuff, but as soon as that is, and I think honestly there's going to be opportunities because I think people are, when they see these bridges, people are scratching their heads. They're like, wait a minute, you know, in their states it would've taken them six months just to come up with a plan, much less actually do anything. So, I think the fact that we're doing this as progress keeps going and you see some of these places start to bounce back, I think people are going to, are going to want to come.

Governor DeSantis ([48:22](#)):

I think, we have an opportunity for that. Not, not today, but I think it could happen. And not too distant future. So, we are going to do Visit Florida. There's, \$5 million in deductible assistance. So, this is not a FEMA coverage that they will do for homeowners. And so, this is something that Florida's Housing Finance Corporation sets aside for disaster. Our Department of Emergency management is working on a larger housing plan to try to ensure that we maximize non-state resources. Some of that'll be flexibility from fema. Some of it also is the first ladies done over 42 million for this fund. We're going to be rolling out some stuff today with some, some pretty big charities where, you know, if they're a law enforcement focus, they'll go in and make repairs for law enforcement or firefighters that have been displaced and be able to get in there and do it.

Governor DeSantis ([49:23](#)):

So, this is going to be something that I think we can do an awful lot of. I did mention the dislocated worker grants that we're looking at. Then we also have some additional stuff for CTE equipment that we could do in technical colleges and some of these areas. So, we're thinking creatively about the different tools that we have to be able to bring to bear on the problems here. But if there's certain things that you're interested in beyond what was stated today, just get in contact with Dane. Uh, ask him, you know, we want to be creative. We'll probably we've got a lot of tools at our disposal, but we may end up working with the legislature, not too distant future if we need to craft some legislative solutions for some of the issues.

Governor DeSantis (50:14):

And, you know, it is just a reality that, you know, supply chain inflation, all that, I mean, yeah, you've got a lot of negative economic indicators for a major recession potentially for this country. Now Florida, now Florida, we're doing better than than most other states. You see that, I mean, our unemployment rate prior to this was a full percentage point lower than the nation as a whole. You see people investment coming in. So, you know, from, in terms of our policies, you know, they've been successful. But you see a lot of the problems with the raising the interest rates, slowing down economy. And, I wish to say that somehow, we're just going to be so good as a country, but I do think that we, we have planned for some turmoil there. And so that will add another wrinkle to all that we're doing.

Governor DeSantis (50:59):

But the end of the day, there's a lot of obstacles. We're going to surmount those obstacles. There's going to be additional things that come up as this process goes forward. And the one thing that I can say, because we did it with Hurricane Michael, is as governor, I am very conscious that these are long term, these are long-term measures. This is not something that just happens in two weeks. You get the lights back on, all the stuff all, I mean, there's things that are going to going to need to be done. And so, we'll be back here. I mean, he, Dane has come with me to Panama City. I don't know how many times in the last three and a half years I got, Patronus will come. We've got other people coming when we're going to do things for the community.

Governor DeSantis (51:45):

Even though no one was talking about Michael outside of that particular area, nobody is going to be talking about Ian in two months outside of people that were actually affect. That's just the way it works. But from the state's perspective, we understand that it doesn't need to be front burner on the news to be important and we're going to continue to do it regardless of, uh, of, of how visible it is in terms of the, the larger, larger issues that are happening. So that's, that's just our commitment and we're going to continue to work hard to be able to get it done. So thank you all for coming. Thank you for hanging in there. Thanks for your resilience and it's a great community. God bless.