

Governor DeSantis (00:00):

It's great to be back in Cape Coral at the police department. And thank you all for being here, and we're excited about today's announcement. We're also excited about a lot of the progress that's being made in southwest Florida. We were able to work with the school system here and announce that, that those school reopenings, which is gonna cover a lot of people in the county. And I know a lot of parents are gonna be excited to be able to get the kids back in school. And we will, I think by October 18th, every school district will have been reopened by then. And, you know, this effect that a lot of different counties also proud of the progress that they're making. Obviously we stepped up at the state level to help restore the Pine Island bridge access to be able to do that, which is important.

Governor DeSantis (00:53):

But now what you have is you've got massive numbers of trucks that are out there working. I mean, just hundreds and hundreds of trucks. And so they've been able to, they had to fix a lot of the poles, new poles, work on the subs, all this stuff because there was a lot of damage. But they've made huge progress. I know they already have over 50% restore, you know, the main kind of artery of power for the main streets that's restored. And so that's back. You know, the issue with Fort Myers Beach is just because homes were destroyed, going from that artery to, to like a neighborhood, the homes may not be able to receive power. So that's just gonna be something that's gonna be a challenge. Obviously, if the home is gone, then there's gonna be a need to figure out what you're gonna do with that property.

Governor DeSantis (01:41):

If a home was really damaged, maybe you can fix the home, but it's likely gonna require electrical attention to be able to get your power in a situation due. But for as big of a hit that did, to have the main thoroughfare, that's electrified. And so what the businesses would use and all that, you know, they got that back. And that's pretty remarkable given, not only given the extensive damage, but they weren't even allowed to restore cause it was all the search and rescue for like the first week. And so now they've gone, they've moved some debris and so they've made good progress there. So those are all very encouraging things. It's also good to know that we have a lot of folks who stepped up to help in this in this response. And of course you see the folks who wear the uniform here in your local communities that have really done yo men's work. And this isn't anything surprising for us at the state of Florida. We've honored the people that wear the uniform from the first day I became governor and we were fighting back against a lot of people throughout our country that were attacking law enforcement and saying that they should be defunded and marginalized. And we never bought into that here in the state of Florida. In fact, we passed legislation ensuring that a local government cannot defund a police in the state of Florida. And so those are the right things to do.

Governor DeSantis (03:11):

But one of the things that we saw was, okay, we understand the vital role that law enforcement plays in a situation like this. Of course, because if you look at the people that were helping rescue folks, you had police officers, sheriff's deputies, you had state agencies, Coast Guard. I mean, it really spanned National Guard. It spanned the gamut. It was really, really well done. But you also just have daily life, even apart from a spectacular disaster like we've just suffered. You want to have safe streets, you want to have safe communities that used to be something in this country that we universally expected and had in most places. Now you've seen that really erode particularly over the last few years. You have some places in this country that are operated almost like third world countries with the crime just totally out of control.

Governor DeSantis (04:06):

And what happens is, when that happens, the whole society starts to fray. Almost everything starts to go downhill. Because if people don't feel safe, if they can't go to school, go to work, operate a business. If they can't do that in safety, then a lot of times people find elsewhere to live. And so we've drawn a very hard line on that here. We're a law and order state. We're gonna make sure that we keep the streets safe. And part of the reason, part of the way you do that is by supporting the people that wear the uniform. So we saw what was going on in other parts of the country. We saw what was going on with yes, defunding. You had some of these prosecutors that won't prosecute criminals, you can steal from stores, and they don't care in San Francisco.

Governor DeSantis (04:50):

Steal \$900 worth of stuff, as long as you don't steal over a thousand. They just let you get away with it with no penalty. And so you see all this stuff that's happened. There've been a lot of media tax on law enforcement trying to create narratives that has been damaging. So bottom line is you have police departments across this country that the people that are out there risking their lives do not have the support of politicians, media community. And that's not a good situation. Morale is very low. And we've seen the morale really since the Floyd riots has been probably the lowest we've seen in a long time. And so we saw an opportunity in Florida to say, you know we want to reward people who are going into this profession. We want to value people that are going into this profession.

Governor DeSantis (05:39):

So we enact that. I propose in the legislature enacted a program for recruitment, bonuses for law enforcement personnel. So if you're coming from one of those states or one of those other cities where you're not being treated well, and you come to take a job in any of our departments, municipal, county or state, any of the agencies in law enforcement function you qualify for a \$5,000 bonus. And not just for people coming from out of state. If you have new people within Florida who have not been in law enforcement and they make the decision to go into law enforcement, they are also eligible for the bonuses that we were able to enact. And so, you know, there's some places where law enforcement's targeted. We're doing the \$5,000 bonus here, which is going at a much better direction. I think people appreciate it. So we have folks here today that are gonna be rewarded with these \$5,000 bonus checks.

Governor DeSantis (06:39):

And so they all came on board Cape Coral PD sometime this year, some of them only a couple months ago. They got a baptism by fire, having to go through hurricane. And I'll tell you that. But you see how vital it is and how important it is. And so we do have six officers with us who are gonna get the checks. Two came in from New York, one from Maryland, one from Georgia, and then two are locals who are new here, which we also appreciated. And so these are gonna be the first. So the legislature passed the law in the session. I signed it, it took effect July 1st. There's paperwork people have to qualify. So now in Dan Eagles running this program, these are the first recruitment checks that are gonna be issued from that program. But we've got 335 more in the hopper. So if you're somebody that's come from New York City or Chicago or Seattle, or just new to the profession in Florida you're gonna get it. It's gonna be in the mail very, very soon. So we're happy to be able to do this. We understand how, how important these functions are, and we are gonna move heaven and earth to make sure that this state remains a law and order state. We're not gonna let them take it away from us.

Governor DeSantis (08:02):

And further showing our commitment, we were able to do an announcement yesterday in Charlotte County where as many of you know, our first lady, my wife Casey, has really spearheaded donations into this Florida Disaster Fund, which is something being run through Volunteer Florida and Florida Disaster fund.org. People can go donate and many have donated online, it's raised, I think now over 45 million to be able to help the community.

Governor DeSantis (08:35):

And so they've already done, and basically they can do awards to charitable entities who are in some way in this fight to help the community recover from hurricane. And well, one of the things that we understood was an issue was we talk about these folks out there rescuing, cracking down on people trying to do whatever they have to do. They're out there doing it. And you see that and you see them wearing the uniform. And I know most of you appreciate that, but you don't think about after a storm what they have to do to help the community. They were not immune from the storm themselves. Their homes weren't magically spared. Some had damage, some had total destruction, and yet here they are not worrying about their own situation, but worrying about your situation and worrying about how they can help.

Governor DeSantis (09:24):

So we saw an opportunity to be able to work with some of the groups that have the charitable arms in the state of Florida through the Florida Disaster Fund. So we are doing or maybe have already done, but we'll be doing it very soon, if not 2 million dollars for, and this will be \$500,000 each. The charitable arm of the Florida Sheriff's Association, Florida Police Benevolent Association, Florida Fraternal Order of Police, and the Florida Professional Firefighters. So they're gonna get each 500,000. We'll probably do more. They're gonna also raise more. So then they can use that to help their firefighters, their police officers, their deputies get back on their feet. And maybe someone's gonna need some help with home repairs. I mean, you know, people have insurance policies. It doesn't cover the flooding. If you don't have flood, you may have to figure out a way to do, FEMA will give you some, but not usually not enough.

Governor DeSantis (10:20):

So there's all these different things where people may have discreet needs. So we're helping to meet those needs, and I think it's gonna be something that's really, really great. And we've got more in the hopper. I mean, I think the amazing thing is, is people have wanted to help people have wanted to come forward. I mean, I think they see that it's making a difference. They see the community is resilient and is really working hard to bounce back. I mean, look, there's a lot more to do, don't get me wrong. But if you say a little more than two weeks into this if this had happened in a lot of other places in our country you wouldn't have had a fraction of the progress made as we've been able to make here. That's just the reality.

Governor DeSantis (11:03):

So I think we've got momentum. We've got a lot of difficult roads ahead and there's gonna be a lot of issues that pop up. Some issues will pop up that we're not even thinking about right now. But we'll be here, we'll all work together to make sure. You know, for people to be able to look and say, you know what, and actually I just, someone was saying is like, Hey, you know, Florida's getting the power on quicker than these other states did when they had big hurricanes and all this stuff. And it's like, you

know, people put a premium on this. I mean, it's something that matters. The cutting through the red tape to get the bridges back. You know, I don't want people sitting there mired in bureaucracy.

Governor DeSantis ([11:43](#)):

And that's been our mantra, really. Just get it done, You know, do it and make it happen. And I think you've seen that and at the local level, I think you've seen some good stuff. I think the state we've been cutting through the bureaucracy at record pace. I'll tell you, I mean, even, you know, with FEMA and some of the federal agencies, I mean, they've been very responsive. And I think, people look back 10 years ago how some of this stuff was run. So I think we've seen improvements across the board. So we're mindful of the challenges, but I think we're really hopeful that we're gonna have a really strong comeback. And I'm looking forward to being here for that. So, all right. We're gonna hear from some other folks. We'll hear from Chief Sizemore. We're gonna hear from one of our officers who qualified for the bonus checks. And then Dan Eagle will come in and consecrate the checks. Okay, sir? Yep. Thank you.

Chief Anthony Sizemore ([12:36](#)):

Good morning. Thank you, Governor. Truly humbled and honored to be able to speak to everyone here to see this great community, the friendly faces, our county commissioners, our city council, and of course, to be led in by the greatest governor in the state of Florida is quite a surreal moment.

Speaker 3 ([12:56](#)):

And

Chief Anthony Sizemore ([12:56](#)):

While I have you, and while I have your attention, he alluded to it, we're just a little over two weeks out from one of the most catastrophic events in the United States, and that's 1776. If you're keeping score, that's a long time of disasters. And to be in the top five and to be where we are right now is just unprecedented. And there's been a lot of people that have worked very hard in the city and at the state level, cooperating, pre-planning and post-storm action, what you've seen. And I'd like to take the opportunity to acknowledge my uniformed officers and professional staff for not taking a day off yet, working very hard and helping. A big part of getting this city back to where we are today.

Chief Anthony Sizemore ([13:45](#)):

And there's a lot of things that go into staffing a police department and attracting, recruiting and retaining great talent. The best talent is the number one way to do that. And that's happened here in the city. I'll acknowledge our city council and our mayor working with our Fraternal Order of Police to deliver a labor contract that once again, makes us the most competitive in the area by far. It's not even close. So the, the narrative that you see nationally of the police chief waring with the mayor, or having a battle with the city council, doesn't exist here. It's first name basis. They've had our back. And that's been proven. And I thank you.

Chief Anthony Sizemore ([14:26](#)):

And to that end, there's no greater supporter of law enforcement than the governor and what he's done and what this recruitment program does for us. There's a lot of people who talk about supporting law enforcement or back the blue. And I like to say, Don't talk about it, be about it. And this governor is about it. And this program here, along with the cooperation that we have locally, is what makes us a

destination and what is gonna continue to attract and retain the top quality, the best police department, the state of Florida, one of the top in the nation. I'll put that against anybody. And I'm grateful that he's here. I'm grateful that you're here. And Cape Coral is back. Thank you.

Governor DeSantis ([15:13](#)):

Okay. One of our new officers, from Maryland now to Cape Coral, Officer Mercedes Phillips. All right.

Officer Mercedes Phillips ([15:25](#)):

Good morning. My name is Officer Mercedes Phillips. I've been an officer here with the Cape Coral Police Department since July, 2022. Before getting hired for the Cape Coral Police Department, I worked as an officer for three years in Maryland, just slightly south of DC for my firsthand experience, there's been a lot of officers that were alienated and underappreciated in this area of the country. I knew moving to Florida, I would be valued and appreciated by my department, citizens and coworkers. On top of work life balance, I desired the ability to progress in my profession as an officer. And Governor DeSantis offered the \$5,000 incentive bonus to move here. I want to thank Governor DeSantis for making Florida State, where I'm actually proud to be a police officer and serve my community. All that support from the top feeds down to small departments like ours, and gives us the motivation and support to make our community that much better. It's a huge privilege. We have a governor who served in our military and is the absolute definition of leadership, So thank you.

Governor DeSantis ([16:32](#)):

Okay. Dane Eagle, Where's he at? Right here. All right. All right.

Dane Eagle ([16:36](#)):

Well, thank you to the governor for putting law enforcement and first responders for first in this state. It is by far the most first responder and law enforcement friendly state in the nation. It's thanks to the policies that he has put forward in the legislature, has helped championing behind him. So thank you to Governor DeSantis for this focus, and thank you to all of you for what you have been doing at the Department of Economic Opportunity. We focus on people. We focus on businesses, and we focus on communities and making sure they have economic sustainability. We do that in blue sky days every day, and we do that, especially after a storm. And when it comes to law enforcement, they are, I would say, the most important workforce in the state. In history, in the world.

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

Without law and order, there is chaos. And with chaos, there is no economic sustainability. So thanks to the work that they're doing on Blue Sky Days, keeping our our streets safe, but to the work that they're doing after the storm, making sure that we can get up and running again, is helping the governor and my agency and everybody else get back on their feet and get business up and running again. So, thank you to the work that you all been putting in to the governor's policies and making sure that law enforcement is first. We are able to do, as the governor mentioned, the thousand dollars bonus payments for all first responders. And I'm told the city got those checks just before the storm hit, so that was timely. And I'm sure they are very happy to have those extra thousand dollars.

Dane Eagle ([17:53](#)):

And now we're able to honor the recruits with these \$5,000 bonuses. And I'll mention thanks to the governor's leadership, it's actually more than \$5,000. We know the Tax man cometh, and we don't want

those armed IRS agents coming after them. So the check's actually over \$6,000 to make sure you can pay your taxes. So that's we're making sure that's covered. And I'll also mention, we were here just a few months ago in this very building, the governor announced the Hometown Heroes Program, which is gonna allow first responders, nurses, teachers, you name it, our hometown heroes, the ability to have down payment assistance, on homes. There is a first time home buyer requirement for that. But for those receiving this check, we are waving that first time home buyer requirement. So these recruits, they might need a new home. I hope you're safe and you're good, but if you need one, come talk to us. We're gonna help you with that down payment assistance. So thank you for all you're doing. Thank you to Governor DeSantis. And without further ado, let's hand out these checks.

Governor DeSantis (18:44):

Okay. All right. So why don't you call him and just hand him to me, and you guys can come right in front of the podium and I'll hand it

Dane Eagle (18:56):

Out. Chief, do you wanna join the governor? Sure.

Speaker 3 (18:58):

Just

Dane Eagle (19:00):

All right. Up First, Officer Bradley Del Gotti. All right. Officer Ashley Fratto. Officer Jordan Moses, Officer Mercedes Phillips, Officer Devon Sears, and Officer Steven Speck.

Governor DeSantis (19:42):

Well, we're excited to do it. As I mentioned, there's a lot more in the hopper. Dane mentioned we did. So this is the recruitment bonus. We also did, for the second year in a row, we did thousand dollars bonuses for all sworn law enforcement, fire, and EMTs in the entire state of Florida. And we also did the tax payment for that. So, what was it, like 1300 bucks or something like that, so that they don't have to worry about getting hit with taxes. The ones here arrived. I do, I think maybe the Sanibel ones got caught in the storm. And so we're in the process of, I guess, are you gonna just recut those checks or figure out how we're gonna do so we'll do it. So if you're in Southwest Florida and you did not get your check yet, you probably would've gotten it if not for hurricane.

Governor DeSantis (20:25):

But, Dane is working on that to make sure that everybody's gonna get it, so you will get it. And I mean, obviously it's a nice thing to get anytime, but it's hitting at a good time for people here, given all that they're going through. So we're happy to be able to help with that. And finally, just wanna say there's still a lot of disappointment from yesterday's verdict and the Parkland school shooting case to deny, the imposition of the death penalty for somebody that massacred so many people in cold blood and cut short, so many young and vibrant and life's full of potential. It stings and it stings a lot of people, not only in that community down in Parkland, in Broward County, but really throughout the state. And I think even throughout our country, I know that the prosecutors are, are pursuing some things with the jury.

Governor DeSantis (21:18):

And I think that they should do that. I think this is something that, did you have jurors that we're just never gonna do this no matter what? That's not the way this system is supposed to work. What was going on? There may have been something that went on. So I think whatever legal process they have and legal tools they have available, I think they should use it because I do think it was a miscarriage of justice. I mean, you're gonna be in a situation, the state of Florida has executed people in our history who've committed really dastardly crimes, but crimes that didn't reach this level of carnage, and yet somehow he's gonna be living off taxpayer expense for what, 50 years, 60 years. His victims didn't get that luxury to be able to live out those decades. And so I just think at some point, you know, you have appropriate punishment, and if you have something like capital punishment available in a case like that, it has got to be administered.

Governor DeSantis ([22:16](#)):

That just shows kind of how the community views the severity of the offense. And I think it was a hundred percent appropriate punishment. So disappointed, stung, but also thankful that the looks like the prosecutors may be pursuing. And look, I don't know how those avenues ultimately work out, but I think that there's a lot of folks who you know, we're hoping for a different result. So it's a sad thing. And it's also a sad thing that this takes so long, you know, you should have, I mean, there's a saying, Justice delayed is delayed as justice denied. And when you have four and a half years that go into this for what everybody knew that he did it, and I'm not saying he doesn't get a lawyer process, but okay, what are you gonna contest in this? Try to say you're crazy,? Okay, do that. But that should be done in months, not years. And yet here we are, it's taken all this time. This happened before I was even governor, and now here we are more than four years later. And so that's not the way I think the justice system should be operating. I mean, I think that we need to do some reforms to be better serving victims of crimes and the families of victims of crimes, and not always bend over backwards to try to do everything we need to for the perpetrators of crimes.

Governor DeSantis ([23:38](#)):

Okay. Anybody? Anybody? Yes.

Guest ([23:44](#)):

I just wanna thank you for your leadership. Not just in this storm. My mom's wife house was wiped out by tornadoes in January. You were very instrumental in helping. I thank you for that. But a lot of people are getting turned down by fema and Mom Harris came out and said, it's gonna be based on equity. How do we at the bottom of that, what's happening?

Governor DeSantis ([24:09](#)):

So the question's about fema, people may be getting denied. Is this tied to Kamala Harris's suggestion that they're going to use things like racial equity rather than just the merits? I can tell you, I spoke with the FEMA administrator. They pledge to us to do it on the merits. We're gonna make sure it's on the merits. I think the thing that Kevin Guthrie, our division of emergency management director has pointed out is getting denied by FEMA does not mean you're ultimately not going to get it. Sometimes you may need to provide more substantiation. So just see what they're looking for. You can go to the DRCs. We've got a number of disaster recovery centers now up in Southwest Florida, actually throughout the affected counties, even beyond southwest Florida. People can, there they can help you get through this process. It is a bureaucracy. When you talk about federal bureaucracy, there is red tape.

Governor DeSantis ([24:59](#)):

But I think that you have an opportunity to, to provide the information this is gonna go through, a bureaucrat's gonna look at it and they need the boxes checked. And if not all the boxes checked, that's the notice you get. But that does not mean that you're ultimately not eligible. I think what it means is you may need to provide more information. Now, if there are eligible people who are being denied for some type of external characteristic, that's obviously unacceptable. And we will vigorously, defend the people of this area. Yes.

Guest ([25:30](#)):

Quick question about insurance in Florida early then, know it's only about two weeks afterwards. What are the Florida insurance companies doing? What kind of handles do they have on the situation? Is it too early to really know yet?

Governor DeSantis ([25:44](#)):

Well I think they're starting to know. I mean, for example, we had questions early on, even as the storm was hitting about the citizen's property insurance, which I think most of you know is, is unfortunately under capitalized. And, it's something that if you had a major storm could be in problems. The issue with citizens though is that they don't have quite as many policies in this part of the state as they do in some other parts of the state. So they feel like they're gonna be able to pay the claims that are out and that that's gonna be something that, they'll be able to do. I think part of, one of the big issues that's gonna arise with respect to some of the insurance, was your damage due to wind or was your damage due to flood and water?

Governor DeSantis ([26:27](#)):

And sometimes it's obvious like, if the winds knock your roof off, that's wind damage, that would be something that a homeowner's policy would cover. If you're by some lake and it rises and you have three feet of water in your living room, well that's a flood. How do you adjudicate if it's like surge coming in, which is being done with part of the wind? My view is, I think most of the damage has been water damage. I think if you look at Sanibel, Pine Island and Fort Myers Beach, I think you have a lot of the wind damage parts of Charlotte I've seen. But as you get into, I mean obviously Cape Coral, you look at the homes, some of the homes were damaged from the exterior, but most of it was just the flooding that happened on there.

Governor DeSantis ([27:11](#)):

And the floods go down. You look at these homes, you don't even know that they're damaged because you'd have to get in and see inside, but they are damaged. So I think that's gonna be an issue that they're gonna be doing. But all these companies are regulated. They have to go through a stress test. They the stress test this year by the regulators was a major hurricane in Tampa Bay, which is more populated than this area and probably more vulnerable in terms of the lower lying areas. And they were able to pass that. There's also redundancy in coverage, including, we just did a special session of the legislature in May to add an additional layer of basically reinsurance coverage, which not all of them needed, but some of them did. So they will end up being utilized, from there. But I think this wind versus water, you see it play out after every storm, but I think because we had so many, flood that that's gonna be something.

Governor DeSantis ([28:07](#)):

And you know, unfortunately you're gonna have some people who were told you don't live in a flood plane, you don't need flood insurance. So they bought the homeowner's policy, but maybe their damage was not because of the wind, it was because of the water. So then they're in a situation they can get money from fema, but that is not going to be commensurate with having the flood policy. So, we'll see that. I know there's some places, certainly some of the areas in Cape Coral would be required to have flood to get a mortgage. But, not everyone does that if they don't have a mortgage either, even if they're in a flood zone. So I think that wind water thing, I think is gonna be something that's gonna be pretty big going down as we go in the weeks ahead. Yes.

Guest ([28:45](#)):

So are you prepared for the insurance companies that are gonna go under, Cause I mean they can't afford to pay these claims. I'm waiting two years for claims, two years ago with the same company cause they didn't have the money Now how?

Governor DeSantis ([29:01](#)):

Well here's the thing. I mean, I think that, you know obviously we did a special session. I think a lot of these companies would've gone under it. We not done that. But there's a lot of redundancy and coverage. When you have a major catastrophic event, the companies are able to access this other coverage in ways that they wouldn't if you have just more routine damage or more routine weather. And so, there is a lot of resources. I think it's, you have these damage assessments. You know, it's a decent number of homes that have been totally destroyed. But I would also say I think a lot of the homes probably held up better than people would've thought given the severity of the storm. So all that'll be all that'll be worked out as we get going on it. But basically, from Jimmy Pet patrons is working with them as our cfo, you know, they are cutting checks and we're encouraging them to cut checks very quickly. I mean, this is not a situation where there's much doubt that there was a lot of damage done. Okay everybody, we'll see you soon. Thanks so much.