

## Leon County – City of Tallahassee Consolidation Straw Poll

November 2026 Ballot — Voter Information Guide

Officials in Leon County are placing a nonbinding “straw poll” on the November 2026 ballot asking voters whether local leaders should pursue consolidation of the City of Tallahassee and Leon County governments into a single unified structure.

This poll will simply give voters the opportunity to offer their opinion, allowing county and city commissioners to gauge voter sentiment for future consolidation decisions.

If supported by voters, any actual merger would require:

- A special act of the Florida Legislature laying out a detailed path for consolidation, and
- A subsequent binding referendum on the next ballot for voters to make a formal decision on whether to proceed

### YES

For the consolidation of the City of Tallahassee and Leon County governments into a single unified structure.

### NO

Against the consolidation of the City of Tallahassee and Leon County governments into a single unified structure.

**Note:** In a 6-1 vote, Leon County Commissioners voted in favor of adding the consolidation referendum to the November ballot, allowing Leon County voters to be able to weigh in on this debate during the midterm elections. The straw poll would ask residents whether or not they support the county and city consolidating to one government.

As county officials have emphasized, the straw poll is strictly advisory and nonbinding. Even if voters support consolidation, additional legislative action and future binding referendum would still be required before any merger could occur.

The ballot language approved by commissioners will ask voters if they want Leon County’s government to become the only local government, superseding the City of Tallahassee. The General Election is set for November 3, 2026.

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### KEY FACTS

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| <b>Who can vote</b>                  | All registered Leon County voters                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Background and Context</b>        | <p>The consolidation concept has been discussed in Leon County several times over the past 50 years, with four official proposals reaching the ballot in 1971, 1973, 1976 and 1992. While consolidation has historically generated significant public discussion and support in principle, each proposal ultimately failed at the ballot box. Many of the disputes centered on how a unified government would be organized, how representation would be structured between urban and rural residents and how power would be distributed among elected officials and constitutional officers.</p> <p>Past consolidation discussions often stemmed from intergovernmental challenges involving growth management, transportation, taxation, drainage and crime. In 1990, voters approved the creation of a Consolidation Commission to study and draft a proposed consolidation charter. According to the studies, the Chamber of Commerce and other civic organizations strongly supported consolidation efforts, citing government efficiency, lower administrative costs and improved regional planning as potential benefits of a unified government structure.</p> <p>Recently, the issue has resurfaced partly because of ongoing disputes regarding service delivery and funding, particularly surrounding fire services. Multiple lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of the City of Tallahassee's fire service fee have been filed, arguing the fee functions as an unlawful or inequitable tax. The dispute centers on how the fee is collected. Residents with City of Tallahassee utilities are charged through their monthly utility bills, while some county residents pay through property tax assessments. The Tallahassee Fire Department currently provides fire protection countywide because Leon County does not operate an independent fire department. Consolidation discussions intensified after county commissioners publicly discussed the possibility of assuming fire service responsibilities for county residents.</p> |
| <b>What Consolidation Could Mean</b> | A consolidated government would likely merge city and county governing bodies, combine administrative departments like law enforcement and unify budgeting, taxation and service delivery. Existing examples in Florida and other states, such as Jacksonville-Duval County, are frequently referenced during discussions about what a consolidated structure could resemble. However, no official framework currently exists for Tallahassee and Leon County, and any final structure would depend on future legislation, charter drafting and voter approval.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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### KEY FACTS CONTINUED

#### Potential Benefits

Supporters of consolidation argue that a unified government could create a more streamlined regulatory environment for businesses and developers. A single governing structure could reduce overlapping jurisdictional authority, potentially simplifying permitting, zoning approvals, land-use decisions and development review processes. Businesses operating across both city and county boundaries could also benefit from more consistent regulations, fee structures and administrative procedures.

Proponents additionally argue that consolidation could reduce duplication of services, departments, facilities and administrative positions over time. These efficiencies could create long-term operational savings and improve coordination between agencies responsible for transportation, utilities, infrastructure and growth management.

#### Potential Risks

Although consolidation may seem economically beneficial, there has been no consistent link between consolidation and economic growth outcomes. Research on city-county consolidation across the United States has produced mixed results, and some academic studies have found no consistent relationship between consolidation and improved economic performance. One study by Florida State University Professor Richard Feiock concluded that there was insufficient evidence to determine that consolidation itself produces measurable local economic benefits.

The merger also raises concern about representation, specifically how elected officials would be chosen, how urban and rural interests would be balanced and how constitutional officers would operate under a merged system. Previous consolidation efforts in Leon County faced criticism from residents who believed consolidation could weaken local representation or shift authority away from existing elected offices. Questions have also been raised about the role the Florida Legislature would play in designing any future consolidated government structure.

Merging departments may also initially slow permitting, planning and development processes, leading to short-term drawbacks for developers during the transition period.