

## AI Summary

### Chris Doolin's 2026 FL Legislative Session Update: Threats to Rural Counties

Chris Doolin, renowned lobbyist for the Florida Small Counties Coalition, addressed the North Central Florida Planning Council in Lake City on December 11, 2025, delivering a stark warning: rural Florida faces an "existential threat" from 2026 legislative proposals slashing local revenues and eroding home rule. Amid Tallahassee's tense political climate—marked by poor communication among the Governor, House Speaker, and Senate President—Doolin outlined key battles.

#### Top Priority: Property Tax Cuts

Constitutional amendments dominate the agenda, including eliminating homestead taxes for non-school purposes, exempting seniors over 65 (no residency requirement), and offering breaks for insured homeowners. Doolin warned these would "decimate" small counties' budgets, dismissing Governor DeSantis's \$300 million backstop as temporary. He predicted a shift to widespread fees: "It's gonna be the fee state of Florida," mocking non-resident exemptions that could flood Florida from states like New York.

#### Additional Local Government Attacks

**Term Limits:** Retroactive 12-year caps on county commissioners, stripping voter choice.

**Sovereign Immunity:** HB 145 (Rep. Fiona McFarland, R-Sarasota) phases in higher liability caps (e.g., \$600K per individual by 2031), spiking insurance costs amid revenue losses.

**School Vouchers:** Universal program rife with "waste, fraud, and abuse"; issues like dual-enrolled homeschoolers lagging academically fuel legislative backlash.

#### Bright Spot: Solar Farms

Senator Bradley's bill mandates decommissioning plans, restoring land to agriculture with strict deadlines.

Doolin urged councils to quantify financial hits, rally public campaigns, and educate voters to defeat amendments in November 2026. His urgent call: "Your money's going away."