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Fees for fire districts are nothing new in Florida

Laura Layden
Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Fire fees might seem like a new idea to some Collier County residents, but they have become increasingly popular in Florida.

Two referendums on the Aug. 28 ballot would allow the North Collier and Immokalee fire districts to collect fire fees to supplement their budgets.

Many districts, cities and counties have charged the assessments for years.

They have been levied by Broward County and some of its cities, including Coconut Creek, Cooper City, Dania Beach, Deerfield Beach, North Lauderdale, Parkland, Sunrise and Westland.

Other counties with the fees in

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More on the story: Controversial fire fee draws 11 candidates to North Collier Fire District race. **Page 16A**

Ex-staffers got new state jobs after admitting misconduct

Ana Ceballos
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A top lieutenant of Florida Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam quietly resigned his post in late 2016

— with \$50,000 for sick and vacation pay — days before a sexual misconduct investigation concluded he had an “inappropriate relationship with a subordinate employee.”

A month later, former Deputy Commissioner Jay Levenstein took a \$30,000 pay cut and landed in another taxpayer-funded management position with the

See **EX-STAFFERS**, Page 8A

Food deserts and free lunch

SW Florida residents seek better access to healthy food



TOP: Victoria Salas, left, hands a grocery bag full of healthy produce to Albeiro Juarez and his mother, Gregonia Franco, during the Brighter Bites program hosted at the Boys & Girls Club of Collier in Immokalee on July 25.

ABOVE: A whiteboard lists the healthy produce in the grocery bags distributed by Brighter Bites.

PHOTOS BY MORIAH RATNER/NAPLES DAILY NEWS

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Oneida Sanchez walked into the Boys & Girls Club in Immokalee with her 7-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter to get a grocery bag stuffed with healthy produce and a large watermelon.

Sanchez works full time doing maintenance at the Seminole Casino in Immokalee, but she struggles to make ends meet for herself and her two children.

They were all born in Naples and live in Immokalee, where the kids attend Lake Trafford Elementary School. Since Sanchez starting working a second job in the cafeteria at the Boys & Girls Club, she averages 60 hours a week and doesn't qualify for food stamp benefits anymore.

“They said I make too much, even though I'm by myself,” Sanchez said.

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