

June 10, 2026

(Edited) transcript from the speech of Lt. Governor Jarrid (Jay) Collins

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Lieutenant Governor Collins Remarks (Cleaned Transcript)

Thank you. It's great to be here.

When people ask me where my perspective comes from, I usually tell them that my life has been anything but ordinary.

I spent years traveling around the world. I met my wife while serving in counterintelligence and special operations. Along the way, I was wounded multiple times. I was shot, hit by mortar fire, broke my back, and suffered injuries that ultimately led to the amputation of my lower leg. That's okay - God has a sense of humor.

I love Florida. I love Tampa. I love the people of this state.

After my military career, I had the opportunity to continue serving in leadership roles because there was work that needed to be done. We adapted, changed policy, and continued to serve. During that time, I worked extensively with the special operations community, helping build medical capabilities, weapons of mass destruction response capabilities, casualty evacuation systems, and intelligence and operational programs.

After retiring from the military, I entered the nonprofit sector, where we built multiple disaster response programs and helped feed more than 14 million people following disasters.

Four years ago, I entered politics. About ten months ago, Governor DeSantis asked me to serve as Lieutenant Governor of Florida, and here we are today.

Why do I share all of that?

Because there are very few people in America with my background serving in positions like this. I am the first Green Beret and the first member of a Special Mission Unit to serve as Lieutenant Governor. If elected to higher office in the future, I would continue breaking new ground in that regard.

What matters is the perspective.

When I look at the threats facing Florida, I see cyber threats, physical security threats, foreign influence operations, narcotics trafficking, drones, combined and hybrid threats, weapons of mass destruction concerns, EMP threats, and other emerging risks. The world is evolving rapidly, and the threat environment is becoming more complex every year.

That concerns me.

Not because we have failed, but because I see how quickly the environment is changing.

The Need for Fusion

How many of you remember when the concept of fusion centers was first introduced twenty or twenty-five years ago?

One of the things I loved about fusion was that it brought together federal, state, and local partners to collaborate, share information, and develop a common operating picture.

As I travel around Florida, one thing becomes very clear: there are very few people with operational experience dealing with many of today's emerging threats.

That should concern all of us.

Florida has nearly 23.5 million residents. We have 20 major military installations. We have 67 counties. We have ports, airports, spaceports, power infrastructure, communications systems, and rapidly growing critical infrastructure.

What keeps me awake at night is not simply the threat itself.

What keeps me awake is wondering whether our law enforcement officers, military personnel, National Guard members, State Guard members, and emergency responders have the time, tools, training, and resources necessary to meet those threats and return home safely.

We have to change our mindset.

Too many people still think:

"It can't happen here."

Yet we have already seen drones operating over sensitive areas. We have seen suspicious activity near military installations. We know foreign intelligence services are active within the United States.

These are real issues.

That is why conferences like this matter. That is why these conversations are critical.

Florida's Growth and Its Risks

Florida's economy is approximately \$1.8 trillion today. By 2030, we are likely to approach a \$3 trillion economy.

We are adding between 800 and 1,200 new residents every single day.

We host globally significant events. We are becoming increasingly important economically, strategically, and technologically.

That growth is exciting.

But growth also creates risk.

The question is whether we are preparing fast enough.

Information Sharing Must Improve

How many of you think we do a great job sharing information across organizations?

Be honest.

We still have silos.

That's one of the reasons I believe so strongly in fusion.

Fusion is operational. It is training. It is communications. It is cybersecurity. It is intelligence sharing. It is building a common operating picture.

Florida has excellent tools and platforms available, but many organizations either do not use them or do not fully understand how to use them.

Think about that.

In a multi-jurisdictional incident, we still have agencies using different systems, different software, and different communications approaches.

That has to change.

We need a comprehensive review of how we approach fusion in Florida.

Some of that involves training.

Some of that involves technology.

Some of that involves infrastructure.

Some of that involves learning from best practices across the country.

But let me be clear:

Good enough will never be good enough.

Excellence must be the standard.

Excellence is a habit.

It is something you demand every day until it becomes part of the culture.

When people's lives are on the line, we cannot afford complacency.

Water, Growth, and Sustainability

One of the questions I am frequently asked concerns water and growth.

We need a serious review of Florida's long-term water strategy.

We must understand our hydrological systems, aquifers, recharge rates, future demand, and long-term sustainability.

We need real data.

My concern is that we may have significant upstream and downstream issues that we have not fully analyzed.

Before making major policy decisions, we need a complete understanding of the system.

Florida's water, beaches, environment, and agricultural resources are part of what makes this state special.

Growth cannot come at the expense of quality of life.

Growth must occur on Florida's terms.

Public safety, security, and quality of life must remain our priorities.

Intelligence Is Worthless Without Dissemination

There is an enormous amount of valuable information available—even in unclassified environments.

But intelligence that is not shared is worthless.

That's the intelligence cycle.

You collect information.

You analyze it.

You understand it.

Then you disseminate it.

Without dissemination, the process fails.

I would ultimately like to see a world-class fusion capability in Florida that allows information to flow efficiently and effectively throughout the state.

We need clear processes, accountability, and simplicity.

Too often, people overcomplicate simple problems.

This is not rocket science.

Build a process.

Make it simple.

Track it.

Ensure accountability.

Move information where it needs to go.

Communicating with Citizens

Another important question concerns communicating with the public during major emergencies.

We already have plans.

But plans alone are not enough.

I believe we need to communicate more directly with Floridians.

Many of you remember when national leaders regularly addressed the public through television and radio.

There is value in that.

People are less fearful when they understand what is happening.

We need to communicate risks, preparedness measures, and expectations in language people understand.

We also need written and digital resources people can keep and reference.

Preparedness information should not only exist inside government.

It needs to reach citizens.

And those plans must remain living documents.

Threats change.

Infrastructure changes.

Technology changes.

Our plans must evolve accordingly.

Public-Private Partnerships

I strongly support public-private partnerships.

Government alone is rarely the solution.

When you study major national successes - including World War II - you see what happens when government, industry, and citizens work together.

We need more of that.

We need gap analysis.

We need honest conversations about weaknesses.

We need practical solutions.

Then we need to execute.

Education and Workforce Development

I also believe we need to rethink education.

Not everyone needs a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or a PhD to be successful.

People need competency, capability, and opportunity.

I want stronger alignment between Florida's educational system and Florida's economic future.

High schools, technical programs, state colleges, universities, businesses, and industry should be working together to prepare students for the jobs that will exist one, three, five, ten, and fifteen years from now.

That includes cybersecurity.

That includes emergency management.

That includes critical infrastructure protection.

That includes skilled trades.

We need citizens who can solve problems, think critically, and contribute to their communities.

The Florida National Guard

I am a strong supporter of the Florida National Guard.

They are carrying enormous responsibilities at both the federal and state levels.

They work tirelessly.

They perform exceptionally well.

But we can do more.

We need additional resources.

We need stronger integration with state capabilities.

We need stronger cyber capabilities.

And we need to ensure they have the support necessary to meet the demands being placed upon them.

Florida Must Lead

Florida is one of the most important states in America.

We should not be satisfied with being average.

We should lead.

We should set the standard for critical infrastructure protection, cybersecurity, emergency management, intelligence sharing, and public-private collaboration.

When Florida leads, other states follow.

And when other states improve, America becomes safer.

Closing Remarks

Let me close with this.

The best days of Florida are not behind us.

The best days of this nation are not behind us.

They are still ahead of us.

But they will not happen automatically.

We have to build them.

We have to lead.

We have to innovate.

We have to communicate.

And we have to pursue excellence every single day.

Thank you for your dedication to protecting our communities.

Thank you for being here.

Thank you for focusing on issues that truly matter.

God bless you, God bless Florida, and God bless the United States of America.