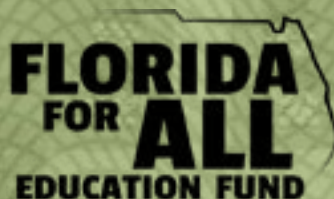


**THE BEST
STATE POLITICIANS
MONEY CAN BUY**

We have the receipts. We demand a refund.



INTRODUCTION

No matter what we look like or where we come from, Floridians believe in caring for our families and leaving things better for those to come. But for too long, a handful of politicians have let greedy corporations rig the rules to favor their campaign contributions over our contributions to each other. Then they have tried to divide us, fueling fears based on our skin color, accent, and faith—hoping we blame each other for our challenges, and not realize that poverty is a policy choice made by policymakers.

Case in point; Gov. Ron DeSantis and leaders in the Florida Legislature have enabled corporate monopolies and extremist billionaires, handed out billions of our public dollars in tax breaks to the wealthy, and delivered no-bid contracts and multimillion-dollar infrastructure projects to their personal donors, all while gutting public programs designed to protect workers and consumers alike.

The goal of this report is to unmask the corporate drivers of this political strategy and shed light on the anti-democratic tactics being employed, so that everyday people can see them clearly and respond with positive action. This report exposes the corporations and billionaires who drive this strategy forward, and showcases how the often coined “culture wars” are intrinsically linked to the collective fight for our freedoms— for fair access to education, healthcare, wealth, and indeed, the very foundations of our democracy.

The fact is that for decades, major corporations and their elected allies in the Florida Legislature have moved forward a strategy to eliminate oversight and checks on corporate power, widening racial and economic disparities in our state. The appalling injustice of the economic systems profiled in this report disproportionately denies people of color, women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ Floridians, and all working families a fair shot to success in this state.

We have the receipts

Corporate donors like Big Sugar producers Florida Crystals and U.S. Sugar; monopoly electric utility Florida Power & Light; for-profit hospital chain HCA Healthcare; theme-park owners Universal Studios and Walt Disney World; health insurer Florida Blue, private-prison operator Geo Group, big-box retailers and low-wage employers like Walmart, and big real-estate interests like corporate members of the Florida Realtors and the Florida Apartment Association all benefit, while Florida consumers lose.

A NOTE ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN FINANCE TOTALS USED IN THIS REPORT

To determine how much money corporations have contributed to legislative leaders in Tallahassee, we compiled all campaign contributions of \$5,000 or more in between last session, May 6th, 2023, to the start of this session, January 9th, 2024, to political committees controlled by Gov. Ron DeSantis (Friends of Ron DeSantis) and six key legislative leaders: Senate President Kathleen Passidomo (Working Together for Florida), Senate Budget Chairman Doug Broxson (Floridians for Limited Government), Senate President-designate Ben Albritton (Friends of Ben Albritton, Advancing Florida Agriculture), House Speaker Paul Renner (Conservatives for Principled Leadership, Florida Foundation for Liberty), House Budget Chairman Tom Leek (Living Life with Purpose) and House Speaker-designate Daniel Perez (Conservatives for Better Government, Miami United). We also looked at PACs associated with political parties such as the Florida House Republican Campaign Committee, Florida Republican Senatorial Campaign, Republican Party of Florida, Florida Democratic Party, Senate Victory, and the Florida Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee. All figures cited in this report come from that [dataset](#).

DEMOCRACY

A multiracial people-centered democracy is critical to our economic security. Our state government should reflect the people who live in this state and it is the inherent right of all Floridians to elect who represents us, pass local laws and constitutional amendments, decide how our tax dollars are spent, and know whose money, and how much of it, is in our politics.

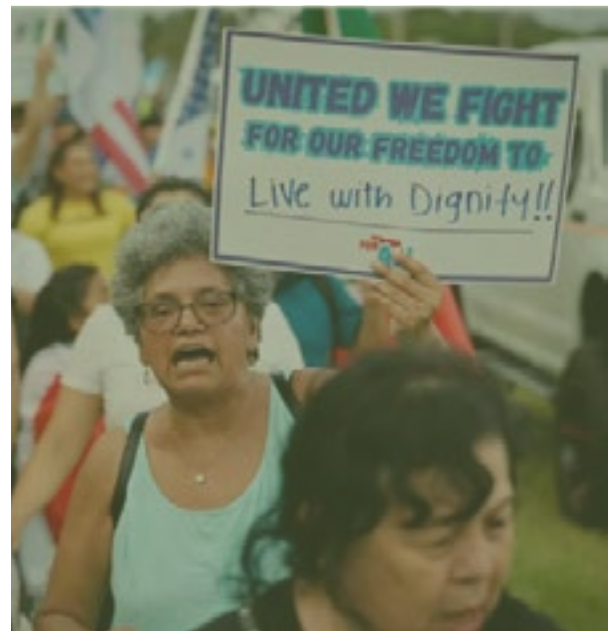
But major corporations and their elected allies in the Florida Legislature have moved forward a strategy to eliminate public oversight and democratic checks on corporate power. It is often corporate associations (groups of corporations coming together to hide under a single name like “Florida Chamber of Commerce” or “Florida Apartment Association”) who do the dirty work, leading the efforts to lobby policymakers on behalf of a small group of large corporations. Multinational corporations are powerful players in these associations, despite claims that the associations represent small businesses. National corporations like Walmart, Publix, State Farm, Camden Property Trust, Blackstone, and NextEra Energy are just a few key actors in Florida and across all states. They write the rules that govern them, while the voices of Floridians are silenced in the State Capitol.

We witnessed this in countless committee hearings where hundreds of Floridians took off work and drove hours to Tallahassee to testify in opposition to these corporate-backed proposals, only to be shut down less than thirty seconds into their remarks. And we witnessed this in the legislation that passed, backed by shadowy national groups and associations that was designed to make it harder for Floridians to vote, nearly impossible to pass local laws, and easier for corporations and billionaires to influence our elections.

“I have dedicated my life's work to being a champion for issues of civil rights and voting access in the State of Florida. Voting is the bedrock of our democracy, yet we continue to put up barriers that make it harder for eligible citizens to cast their ballots. If we think back to Jim Crow-era legislation and analyze the strategies that the government was using to disenfranchise the Black vote. We can see those same strategies used today.”

Dr. LaVon Bracy

Director of Democracy
Faith in Florida



Legislation

Local Freedoms

[HB 433](#) - Preempts any local requirements for outdoor workers to receive shade and water breaks, bans local living wage contracts, and bans predictive scheduling ordinances

[HB 705](#) - Preempts local prevailing wage contracts

[SB 1126](#) - Defeated, preempts regulation of single use plastic containers

[HB 1365](#) - Bans local governments from allowing unhoused people to camp on public property without permits

[SB 1628](#) - Expands last year's death star preemption

[SB 1084](#) - Bans the sale of lab grown meat and preempts regulation of electric vehicle charging stations

[HB 609](#) - Defeated, preempts local governments from collecting local business taxes

[HB 601](#) - Preempts all civilian review boards from holding police officers accountable

[HB 1451](#) - Preempts the recognition of community IDs

Direct Democracy

[HJR 335](#) - Defeated, but expect it again—backed by corporate special interests, this aims make it even more expensive for Floridians to pass amendments via the ballot

Corporate Money

💰 Republican State Leadership Committee
\$75,000

💰 Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
\$57,168

💰 Koch Industries
\$25,000

💰 Associated Industries of Florida
\$1,662,500

💰 Chamber of Commerce
\$1,562,500



TAX BREAKS & PORK BARREL SPENDING

Taxing and spending are a government's most powerful tools. They are how our state leaders choose who to take money from and who to invest it in. They have clear choices: They can pass policies like "combined reporting," which would close tax loopholes exploited by the world's largest global corporations and invest our tax dollars in community needs like housing, healthcare, education, public safety, and environmental protection. Or they can let corporations and billionaires skip out on paying what they owe in taxes, carve even more special-interest giveaways into the tax code, and underinvest in the policies and programs that would ensure economic stability and prosperity for all Floridians. Unfortunately, our state leaders continue to choose the latter option. This session alone, Florida lawmakers considered corporate tax giveaways costing Floridians approximately \$1.6 billion in resources for investment over the next five years, while refusing to close corporate tax loopholes.

Legislation

[HB 609](#) - Preempts local governments from collecting local business taxes, effectively stealing hundreds of millions of dollars from out local governments

[HB 7073](#) - Cuts sales tax holidays for consumers in half

[HB 7073](#) - Makes funding for horse racing permanent

[HB 7073](#) - Gives another tax break to major utility companies in the state

Corporate Money

- ☛ Sunshine Gasoline Distributors
\$97,500
- ☛ Florida Public Utilities Co.
\$12,500
- ☛ NextEra Energy
\$912,150
- ☛ FL Horseman's Benevolent and Protective Association
\$65,000

Our elected officials decide how to spend our tax dollars. Billions of dollars that can fund community needs like housing, healthcare, education, and childcare. Our elected officials can also decide to spend our taxes towards things that only benefit the elite few. Things like new corporate tax breaks and favors for campaign donors. But this is the people's money. Find out the cost of corporate giveaways with our [People's Budget Calculator](#).

HOUSING

We believe every Floridian should be able to find and keep safe and affordable housing. Consumer protections like rent stabilization, right to working air-conditioning, fair warning of rent increases and evictions, and the right to legal representation in eviction proceedings allows landlords to earn fair profits without forcing working Floridians out of their homes. Basic protections for tenants means tenants have stability, and can save towards buying a home of their own, too. All homeowners should have safe, secure, and stable housing without having to worry about skyrocketing property insurance rates and energy rate hikes. Every Floridian should have choice in housing and energy, not corporate monopolies for the politically connected. But this session, a small yet deep pocketed group of corporations and multinational investors put forward an aggressive profiteering agenda. Corporate landlords were confident Florida lawmakers would be their “[lapdogs rather than watchdogs](#).” That assessment appears to be correct.

Legislation

[HB 1365](#) - Bans local governments from allowing unhoused people to camp on public property without permits

[HB 471](#) - Defeated, props up timeshare corporations at the detriment of consumers

[HB 621](#) - Original bill would have gotten rid of due process for all renters in the state

“By passing a state law (HB 1417) that removes local rent controls and other tenant protections is yet another example of the legislature and governor siding with big business, insiders and donors over working families. So many of my fellow healthcare workers, who provide the most vital and essential care to Florida hospital patients and nursing home residents already are struggling to pay their monthly bills.”

“Caregivers are critically underpaid and understaffed by companies making billions of dollars in profits, so high turnover has been a big problem for years. If we now can’t even afford our rent because of this bill, where are we going to go, and who will take care of our state’s sick and elderly?”

Joan Phillips

CNA

1199 SEIU Florida

Corporate Money

- Florida REALTORS
\$610,000
- Vestcor*
\$15,000
- Apartment Association
\$25,000
- Dream Finders Homes
\$15,000
- Collier
\$22,500

*Includes a Vestcor-led political committee (Keeping Florida Affordable)

*Greedy corporations, multinational investors, and the ultra-wealthy are raking in record profits while Floridians are being priced out of the state. Developers, property insurers, and big real estate interests donate millions of dollars to electoral campaigns. Florida For All's [**Priced Out of Paradise Report**](#) released last year digs deeper into unchecked corporate greed, political ambition, and Florida's housing affordability crisis.*



ENERGY, CONSERVATION, AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Floridians all have a right to clean air and clean water, regardless of our race, class, or if we live in an urban community or rural community. Floridians also need the power to hold corporations polluting our communities accountable. We want to treat climate change like the existential threat to our planet that it is, and do far more to promote renewable energy and support a just energy transition for all Floridians, not just the wealthy few. We want every Floridian to have energy freedom; the choice of where their energy comes rather than being trapped by monopolies, and the opportunity to switch to solar and be independent from utility companies. We want all public buildings in Florida to be equipped with solar panels too. We want to respect the will of Floridians who want to clean up our waterways, protect our springs, and save our coral reefs. We want local communities to be able to address the climate crisis with innovative local solutions, and we want the state to correct the systematic racism that leads to communities of color disproportionately being impacted by corporate polluters and high energy costs. Unfortunately, these goals were not met this session. Instead, a barrage of bills harming our environment to the benefit of corporate polluters were passed.

Legislation

[SB 1628](#) - Expands the scope of last year's "Death Star Preemption" bill

[SB 1126](#) - Defeated, prevents regulation of plastic containers

[SB 1084](#) - Bans lab grown meat and preempts regulation of EV charging stations

[HB 683](#) - Defeated, incentivizes more

development of natural gas infrastructure

[HB 1645](#) - Removes references to climate change in state law and incentivizes more fossil fuel usage

Corporate Money

- 💰 Duke Energy
\$1,610,000
- 💰 Florida Power & Light/NextEra Energy
\$912,150
- 💰 TECO
\$10,000
- 💰 Florida Natural Gas Association
\$15,000
- 💰 U.S. Sugar Corp.
\$485,000
- 💰 Mosaic*
\$177,500
- 💰 Florida Crystals
\$93,644
- 💰 Sunshine Gasoline Distributors
\$25,000

*Includes donations from a Mosaic-led political committee (Florida Phosphate PC)



EDUCATION

All Floridians deserve a strong and healthy system of public schools that gives every child in our state, regardless of where they are from, what they look like, or how much money their family has, the opportunity to receive a world-class education that sets them up for future success. We want to increase salaries for all public school teachers, college professors, and education support staff, in order to recruit and retain our best educators. And we want the freedom to teach accurately and truthfully, without interference from politicians. We want quality pre-kindergarten for all, wrap-around services in public schools to support all children and to restore the full value of Bright Futures college scholarships so that more Floridians can afford college. This was not the agenda of the Florida Legislature. This session we witnessed a hostile takeover of every level of our public education system by extremists and profit-driven interests. Their goal is to ensure that the most dynamic and diverse generation of Floridians is denied a high-quality education and a chance to succeed in this state, while profiteering from our education system by undercutting workers rights, privatizing our public schools, and giving millionaires and billionaires our tax dollars for vouchers to send their kids to private schools.

Legislation

[HB 49](#) - Rolls back child labor protections

[HB 109](#) - Defeated, Makes it easier to convert public schools to privately owned charter schools

[HB 917](#) - Rolls back protections for children to work in construction

[HB 465](#) - Defeated, Targets students who protest for the liberation of the Palestinian people

Corporate Money

- Associated Industries of Florida
\$2,140,000
- Charter School USA
\$5,000
- Florida Homebuilders Association
\$152,500
- Chamber of Commerce
\$1,562,500
- Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
\$57,168



WORKER POWER

All workers should be paid a living wage, have affordable and quality healthcare, and have the right to collectively bargain for better pay and benefits. We want a stronger safety net that doesn't force laid-off workers to try and survive on some of the worst unemployment benefits in the country. We want a state that investigates and punishes employers who steal their workers' wages. We want guaranteed sick time and paid family medical leave for all workers so they can afford to take a day off from work if they are sick or must care for a loved one who is sick. We want basic protections of water, rest, and shade for our farmworkers, roofers, and outdoor workers who labor outside in the brutal Florida heat. The Legislature did not act on these things. They instead undercut the health, safety, and prosperity of working Floridians. No one is safe from the corporate agenda; not public workers, farmworkers, baseball players, or even astronauts.

Legislation

[HB 433](#) - Preempts any local requirements for outdoor workers to receive shade and water breaks, bans local living wage contracts, and bans predictive scheduling ordinances

[HB 49](#) - Rollback child labor protections

[HB 705](#) - Preempts local prevailing wage contracts

[HB 1289](#) - Defeated, continues to erode and destroy Florida's unemployment system

[SB 1746](#) - Expands last years major anti-union bill

[HB 917](#) - Rolls back protections for children to work in construction

“Florida workers are the backbone of our state's economy. SB 256 is a direct attack on people like me that serve kids and families in our public schools. Our communities are struggling with housing and healthcare costs; I wish our legislators would focus on this instead of attacking my union.”

Zaundra Goner

Bus Driver

Pinellas County School District

Corporate Money

💰 Florida Chamber of Commerce
\$1,562,500

💰 Associated Industries of Florida
\$2,140,000

💰 Florida Restaurant & Lodging Association
\$57,168

💰 Florida Homebuilders Association
\$152,500

WE CAN WIN TOGETHER

Ron DeSantis and top lawmakers are Protectors of the Corporate Class, using their government powers to undercut workers and consumers, further enriching the deep-pocketed donors who bankroll their campaigns— with our tax dollars.

These same state politicians have worked to deny healthcare to millions, to privatize and profiteer off of our public education system, and to allow corporate influence to run rampant in our elections. They have attacked the local freedom of cities and counties that try to hold corporations accountable, and left everyday Floridians at the mercy of insurance companies, monopoly power companies, and corporate landlords. They have seized control of formerly independent institutions, from local prosecutors' offices to public colleges and universities, using the power of the state to not only punish opponents – but to appoint the Governor's political allies into high-paying, taxpayer funded jobs.

Politically-connected appointees, corporate consolidation, privatization, deregulation, tax giveaways, and abusive preemption are just a few of the policy tools leveraged by the deep-pocketed corporate lobby and allied state politicians to leverage an outsized influence in our state politics.

Part of the diabolical success of this strategy lies with its phantom nature. It both harms Floridians and robs us of political power while remaining opaque and difficult to understand. The results are profoundly anti-democratic. Leveraging lax campaign finance laws, corporations set the laws that govern them, while the voices of everyday Floridians are silenced.

Our goal with this report was to unmask the corporate drivers of this political strategy and bring their tactics into the light so that everyday people can see them clearly and respond. We know that when we expose corporate greed and center everyday Floridians in policy, we can win.

Join Us!

Sign up to join us at bit.ly/stopcorporategreedFL





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