

Ron DeSantis

Ronald Dion DeSantis (/dəˈsæntɪs/; born September 14, 1978) is an American attorney and politician who has served as the 46th governor of Florida since 2019. Before assuming the governorship, DeSantis represented Florida's 6th district in the U.S. House of Representatives from 2013 to 2018.

Born in Jacksonville, DeSantis spent most of his childhood in Dunedin, Florida. He graduated from Yale University and Harvard Law School. DeSantis joined the United States Navy in 2004, where he was promoted to lieutenant before serving as an advisor to SEAL Team One and being deployed to Iraq in 2007. When he returned to the U.S. a year later, the U.S. Department of Justice appointed DeSantis to serve as a Special Assistant U.S. attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Middle District of Florida, a position he held until his honorable discharge in 2010.

DeSantis was first elected to Congress in 2012, defeating his Democratic opponent Heather Beaven. During his tenure, he became a founding member of the Freedom Caucus and was an ally of President Donald Trump. DeSantis frequently criticized Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. He briefly ran for U.S. Senate in 2016, but withdrew when incumbent senator Marco Rubio sought reelection.

During his 2018 gubernatorial campaign, DeSantis emphasized his support of Trump. He won the Republican nomination in August, and chose state representative Jeanette Nuñez as his running mate. The close results of the general election between DeSantis and the Democratic nominee, Tallahassee mayor Andrew Gillum, triggered a machine recount. DeSantis was certified the winner with a 0.4% margin of victory.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in Florida, DeSantis resisted imposing restrictions such as face mask mandates, stay-at-home orders, and vaccination requirements. In May 2021, he signed into law a bill that prohibited businesses, schools, cruise ships, and government entities from requiring proof of vaccination. In March 2022, DeSantis signed into law Florida House Bill 1557, which prohibits instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in public school classrooms from kindergarten to grade 3.

Ron DeSantis	
 <div>DeSantis in 2020</div>	
46th Governor of Florida	
Incumbent	
Assumed office	January 8, 2019
Lieutenant	Jeanette Nuñez
Preceded by	Rick Scott
Member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida's 6th district	
In office	January 3, 2013 – September 10, 2018
Preceded by	Cliff Stearns
Succeeded by	Michael Waltz
Personal details	
Born	<div>Ronald Dion DeSantis</div> September 14, 1978 <div>Jacksonville, Florida, U.S.</div>
Political party	Republican
Spouse(s)	Casey Black (m., 2010)

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Residence(s)	<u>Governor's Mansion</u>
Education	<u>Yale University (BA)</u> <u>Harvard University (JD)</u>
Website	<u>Official website (http://rondesantis.com)</u>
Military service	
Allegiance	 United States
Branch/service	 United States Navy
Years of service	2004–present
Rank	 Lieutenant Commander
Unit	<u>Judge Advocate General's Corps</u> <u>United States Navy Reserve</u>
Battles/wars	<u>Iraq War</u>
Awards	 <u>FMF Warfare Officer Insignia</u> <u>Bronze Star</u> <u>Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal</u> <u>GWOT Service Medal</u> <u>Iraq Campaign Medal</u>

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Early life and education

DeSantis was born on September 14, 1978, in Jacksonville, Florida, the son of Karen (née Rogers) and Ronald Daniel DeSantis.^[1] DeSantis's great-great-grandfather Salvatore Storti immigrated to the United States from Italy in 1904, eventually settling in Pennsylvania. His great-great-grandmother Luigia Colucci joined her husband in the United States in 1917.^[2] DeSantis's mother was a nurse and his father installed Nielsen TV rating boxes.^[3] His family moved to Orlando, Florida, before relocating to Dunedin, Florida, when he was six years old.^[4] His sister Christina Marie DeSantis was born on May 5, 1985, in Orlando and died in 2015.^[5] He was a member of the Little League team from Dunedin National that made it to the 1991 Little League World Series in Williamsport, Pennsylvania.^{[6][7]} DeSantis attended Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School and Dunedin High School,^[3] graduating in 1997.

After high school, DeSantis studied history at Yale University. He was captain of Yale's varsity baseball team and joined the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity.^{[7][8]} He was an outfielder on the Yale baseball team; as a senior in 2001, he had the team's best batting average at .336.^{[9][10][11][12]} While attending Yale he worked a variety of jobs, including an electrician's assistant and a baseball camp coach.^[3] DeSantis graduated from Yale in 2001 with a B.A. *magna cum laude*.^[13] After spending a year as a history teacher at the Darlington School,^[14] he attended Harvard Law School, graduating in 2005 with a Juris Doctor *cum laude*.^{[15][16]}

Military service

In 2004, during his second year at Harvard Law, DeSantis was commissioned an officer in the U.S. Navy and assigned to the Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG). He completed Naval Justice School in 2005. Later that year, he received orders to the JAG Trial Service Office Command South East at Naval Station Mayport, Florida, as a prosecutor. He was promoted from lieutenant, junior grade to lieutenant in 2006. He worked for the commander of Joint Task Force-Guantanamo (JTF-GTMO), working directly with detainees at the Guantanamo Bay Joint Detention Facility.^{[17][18][19]}

In 2007, DeSantis reported to the Naval Special Warfare Command Group in Coronado, California, where he was assigned to SEAL Team One and deployed to Iraq^[20] with the troop surge as the Legal Advisor to the SEAL Commander, Special Operations Task Force-West in Fallujah.^{[17][18][19]}

DeSantis returned to the U.S. in April 2008, at which time he was reassigned to the Naval Region Southeast Legal Service. The U.S. Department of Justice appointed him to serve as a Special Assistant U.S. attorney^[20] at the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Middle District of Florida. DeSantis was assigned as a trial defense counsel until his honorable discharge from active duty in February 2010. He concurrently accepted a reserve commission as a lieutenant in the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the US Navy Reserve.^[21]

During his military career, DeSantis was awarded the Bronze Star Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Iraq Campaign Medal.^{[17][18][19]} As of 2022, he was still serving in the U.S. Navy Reserve.^[22]

U.S. House of Representatives

2012 election

In 2012, DeSantis announced he would run in the Republican primary for Florida's 6th congressional district. The district had previously been the 7th, represented by 10-term Republican John Mica, but Mica's share of Orlando had been drawn into the new 7th District, and Mica opted to run there even though the new 6th included the bulk of his former territory.

DeSantis won the six-candidate Republican primary with 39% of the vote, while the runner-up, state representative Fred Costello, received 23%.^[23] In the November general election, DeSantis defeated Democratic nominee Heather Beaven 57–43%, with majorities in all four counties.^[24] He was reelected in 2014 and 2016.

Committee assignments

Before the 114th United States Congress, DeSantis was named the chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security.^[25]



Official portrait of DeSantis in the U.S. House of Representatives (c. 2013)

- Committee on Foreign Affairs
 - Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia
 - Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
- Committee on the Judiciary
 - Subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice
 - Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet
- Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
 - Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, U.S. Postal Service and the Census
 - Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Job Creation and Regulatory Affairs
- Republican Study Committee^[26]

Legislation

DeSantis introduced the Faithful Execution of the Law Act of 2014 (H.R. 3973; 113th Congress) in the House on January 29 of that year. The bill would have directed the United States Department of Justice to report to Congress whenever any federal agency refrained from enforcing laws or regulations for any reason.^{[27][28]} In its report, the government would have been required to explain why it had decided not to enforce that law.^[29] DeSantis spoke in favor of the bill, arguing that "President Obama has not only failed to uphold several of our nation's laws, he has vowed to continue to do so in order to enact his unpopular agenda. ...The American people deserve to know exactly which laws the Obama administration is refusing to enforce and why."^[29] The bill passed in the House but did not become law.^[30]

DeSantis signed a 2013 pledge sponsored by Americans for Prosperity vowing to vote against any global warming legislation that would raise taxes.^[31] In 2015, DeSantis was a founding member of the Freedom Caucus, a group of congressional conservatives and libertarians.^{[19][32][33]}

In August 2017, DeSantis added a rider to the proposed fiscal 2018 spending bill package that would end funding for the Mueller investigation "or for the investigation under that order of matters occurring before June 2015" (the month Trump announced he was running for president).^[34] The amendment was intended to counter a bipartisan bill written by two Democratic and two Republican U.S. senators which would have limited the president's power to fire the special counsel. The DeSantis amendment sought to cut off the investigation's funding by November 2017.^[34] It was also a response to Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein's statement that the DOJ "doesn't conduct fishing expeditions". DeSantis stated that the DOJ order dated May 17, 2017, "didn't identify a crime to be investigated and practically invites a fishing expedition".^[35]

2016 U.S. Senate candidacy

In May 2015, DeSantis announced his candidacy for the United States Senate seat held by Marco Rubio, who initially did not file to run for reelection due to his bid for the U.S. presidency.^[36] He was endorsed by the fiscally conservative Club for Growth.^[37] When Rubio ended his presidential bid and ran for reelection to the Senate, DeSantis withdrew from the Senate race and ran for reelection to the House.

Governor of Florida

Election

In January 2018, DeSantis announced his candidacy for governor of Florida to succeed term-limited Republican incumbent Rick Scott. President Trump had said in December 2017 that he would support DeSantis should he run for governor.^[38] During the Republican primary, DeSantis emphasized his support for Trump by running an ad in which DeSantis taught his children how to "build the wall" and say "Make America Great Again" and dressed one of his children in a red "Make America Great Again" jumper.^[39] Asked if he could name an issue where he disagreed with Trump, DeSantis did not identify one.^[40] On July 30, 2018, Jonathan Martin of *The New York Times* wrote that the support DeSantis's primary campaign had received demonstrated both Trump's king-making capacity in a Republican-trending state and a "broader nationalization of conservative politics" whereby "a willingness to hurl rhetorical lightning bolts at the left, the media and special counsel Robert S. Mueller can override local credentials, local endorsements and preparedness for a state-based job".^[40]

In August 2018, DeSantis came under scrutiny after saying, "The last thing we need to do is to monkey this up by trying to embrace a socialist agenda with huge tax increases and bankrupting the state."^[41] He was accused of using the verb "monkey" as a racist dog whistle, as his opponent was African-American. The incident received widespread media coverage; DeSantis denied that his comment was meant to be racially charged.^[42]

On August 28, 2018, DeSantis won the Republican primary by defeating his main opponent, Adam Putnam. His next opponent was Democratic nominee Andrew Gillum in the general election.^[43] The race was "widely seen as a toss-up".^[44]



DeSantis and his wife, Casey, with President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump in February 2019

In September 2018, DeSantis announced state representative Jeanette Núñez as his running mate.^[45] He resigned his House seat on September 10, 2018, to focus on his gubernatorial campaign.^[46] The same month, DeSantis was criticized by television talk show host Joe Scarborough for not having a fully formed policy platform, and canceled a planned interview with the *Tampa Bay Times* to have additional time to put together a platform before an in-depth policy interview.^[47]

DeSantis was endorsed by the Florida Police Chiefs Association.^[48] In the campaign, some sheriffs endorsed DeSantis, while other sheriffs backed Gillum.^[49]

Platform

DeSantis's gubernatorial platform included support for legislation that would allow people with concealed weapons permits to carry firearms openly.^[50] He also supported a law mandating the use of E-Verify by businesses and a state-level ban on sanctuary city protections for undocumented immigrants.^[50] DeSantis promised to stop the spread of polluted water from Lake Okeechobee.^[50] He expressed support for a state constitutional amendment to require a supermajority vote for any tax increases.^[51] DeSantis opposed allowing able-bodied, childless adults to receive Medicaid.^[51] He said he would implement a medical cannabis program, while opposing the legalization of recreational cannabis.^{[51][52][53]}

Results

Initial election-night results had DeSantis winning by nearly 100,000 votes, and Gillum conceded.^[54] Gillum took back his concession after late-counted ballots brought the race within less than 34,000 votes, a margin of 0.4%. The close margin required an automatic machine recount of the ballots.^[55]

A machine recount in three statewide contests (governor, U.S. senator, and agriculture commissioner) began with a November 15 deadline. Although three counties missed the deadline, it was not extended.^{[56][57]} DeSantis was confirmed as the winner and Gillum conceded on November 17.^[58]

Tenure

DeSantis prefiled the oath of office with the Florida secretary of state and became governor on January 8, 2019.^[59] The official swearing-in ceremony was held at noon that day. On January 11, DeSantis posthumously pardoned the Groveland Four, four black men falsely convicted of rape in 1949.^[60]

In January 2019, DeSantis officially suspended Broward County sheriff Scott Israel for his response to the mass shootings at the Fort Lauderdale airport and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, appointing Gregory Tony to replace Israel. In May 2020, Tony said that, during the vetting process, he had failed to disclose his involvement in a fatal shooting when he was 14, for which he was found not at fault on account of self-defense. Later that month, DeSantis distanced himself from Tony, but said that the



DeSantis with Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody, Chief Finance Officer Jimmy Patronis, and Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried in 2019

shooting had not come up in the background check because it was self-defense and would not have made a difference; DeSantis added that he would leave the matter for Broward voters to decide.^[61] Tony won the next election.^[62]

In his first two weeks in office, DeSantis appointed Barbara Lagoa, Robert J. Luck and Carlos G. Muñiz to fill the three vacancies on the Florida Supreme Court, shifting the court's majority from liberal to conservative. He replaced the entire South Florida Water Management District board. He signed a \$2.5 billion executive order for water quality and Everglades restoration work.^[63] In January 2019, DeSantis signed an executive order calling for the end of Common Core in Florida.^[64]

In June 2019, DeSantis signed a measure that would make it harder to launch successful ballot initiatives. Petition-gathering for ballot initiatives to legalize medical cannabis, increases to the minimum wage, and expansion of Medicaid were also under way.^{[65][66][67]}

After the 2020 Republican National Convention was pulled from its originally scheduled host city, Charlotte, following conflict between Trump and North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper over plans for a large-scale gathering without public-health protocols in place to prevent spread of COVID-19, DeSantis campaigned to have Florida be the new host state.^[68] He competed with similar entreaties from Tennessee and Georgia. DeSantis won, with the main festivities of the RNC, including Trump's keynote speech, relocated to Jacksonville.^{[69][70]} Ultimately, the entire event was scrapped in favor of rallies online and on television.^[71]

In December 2020, at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice and the Italian government, DeSantis conditionally approved the transfer of Miami murderer Enrico Forti to his native Italy. The transfer is conditioned upon an assurance from the Italian government that Forti will complete the prison sentence given to him in Florida, and also conditioned upon consent of the victim's next of kin.^[72]

On February 2, 2021, DeSantis announced his support of legislation to crack down on Big Tech and prevent alleged political censorship.^{[73][74][75]} He also announced his support of a number of election law restrictions.^{[76][77][78][79]}

In March 2021, DeSantis proposed legislation to impose restrictions and stricter requirements for Florida universities to collaborate with Chinese academics and universities; he said this would crack down on economic espionage by China.^{[80][81][82][83]} DeSantis signed two such bills in June.^[84] In May 2021, he signed a deal with The Seminole Tribe of Florida.^[85] In June 2021, DeSantis signed a bill incentivizing wildlife corridors.^[86]

In April 2021, DeSantis signed into law the Combating Public Disorder Act he had been advocating. Aside from being an anti-riot statute, it forbade intimidation by mobs; penalized damage to historic properties or memorials, such as downtown Miami's Christopher Columbus statue, which was damaged in 2020; and forbade publishing personal identifying information online with intent to harm.^[87] DeSantis had argued for this legislation by citing the George Floyd protests of 2020 as well as the 2021 United States Capitol attack, but only the former was mentioned at the signing ceremony.^[88] Several months after the signing, a federal judge blocked the portion of the law that introduced a new definition of "riot", calling it too vague.^[89]

On May 5, 2021, Desantis announced that all Florida police officers, firefighters, and paramedics would receive a \$1,000 bonus.^[90]

In its 2021 session, the Florida legislature passed DeSantis's top priorities.^{[91][92]} During his tenure, DeSantis had a generally smooth relationship with the Legislature, which enacted many of his proposals.^[93]

During 2021, there was speculation that DeSantis would run for president in the 2024 election. On September 7, DeSantis said he thought such speculation was "purely manufactured".^[94] During a September 30 appearance on Fox News, he said he would run for reelection as governor in 2022 but was not thinking beyond that.^[95] He filed to run for reelection as governor on November 5 and announced that he had on November 8.^[96] When a straw poll was done at the Conservative Political Action Conference in 2022 for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination he would come in 2nd place getting 28% behind Donald Trump who was in 1st place who got 59% of the vote.^[97]

On December 2, 2021, DeSantis announced that as part of a \$100 million funding proposal for the Florida National Guard, \$3.5 million would be allocated to the reactivation of the Florida State Guard, a volunteer state defense force that has been inactive since 1947.^{[98][99]}

COVID-19 pandemic

In March 2020, DeSantis decided against declaring a state of emergency in Florida during the COVID-19 pandemic.^{[100][101]} Scientists and media outlets have given mixed reviews of DeSantis's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.^{[102][103][104]} DeSantis's handling of COVID-19 in Florida was initially unpopular among the state's voters: by May 2020, he was the only U.S. governor whose approval had declined after COVID-19 became widespread in the U.S.^[105] But after a few months, DeSantis's reluctance to impose restrictions in response to the pandemic led to an increase in approval, especially among Republican voters.^[106] By February 2021, he had generally positive approval ratings, ranging from 51% to 64%.^{[107][108][109]}

In March 2021, *Politico* called DeSantis the most "politically ascendant" governor in the country, as his controversial policies had been at that point "short of or even the opposite of ruinous", while Florida had "fared no worse, and in some ways better, than many other states".^[110] But by August 2021, amid a record in new cases within the state, Florida had become the state with the highest per capita hospitalizations for COVID-19.^[111] In May 2022, a Bloomberg News op-ed claimed that, when adjusting state death tolls based on what they would be if age distribution were equal between the states, Florida's COVID-19 death toll would be less than the national average and only slightly more than California's.^[112]

According to the *Sun-Sentinel*, "DeSantis, who owes his job to early support from President Donald Trump, imposed an approach in line with the views of the president and his powerful base of supporters. The administration suppressed unfavorable facts, dispensed dangerous misinformation, dismissed public health professionals, and promoted the views of scientific dissenters who supported the governor's approach to the disease."^[103] By April 2021, Florida was 27th out of 50 in both cases and deaths per capita.^[113] A study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* found substantial underreporting of deaths from COVID-19 in Florida from March to September 2020. Experts noted similar underreporting has occurred throughout the nation.^{[114][115]}



DeSantis sits with Vice President Mike Pence at a local restaurant in May 2020

DeSantis rejected the implementation of a statewide face mask mandate, belatedly implemented stay-at-home orders, and let his stay-at-home order implemented in April expire.^[102] In July 2020, when Florida was a global epicenter of the coronavirus with nearly 5,800 deaths, DeSantis largely sidelined health experts and scientists, with *The Washington Post* reporting that he relied primarily on his wife, a former television reporter, and his chief of staff, a former hospital executive.^[102]

Early in the pandemic, DeSantis boasted about the low number of COVID-19 cases in Florida, and harshly criticized those who had argued that the state's lax response to the virus was insufficient.^{[102][116]} Experts argued that delays in lockdown would greatly increase Florida's COVID numbers and leave it susceptible to becoming a new hot spot.^[117]

On March 8, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention privately briefed DeSantis that Florida was already experiencing community spread of COVID-19. The next day, he publicly denied that Florida was experiencing community spread of COVID-19.^[118] On March 10, federal official Anthony Fauci publicly confirmed that Florida had community spread. DeSantis confirmed Florida's community spread only on March 14.^[118]

By the end of March 2020, Florida had 6,741 confirmed cases of COVID-19. DeSantis declared that he would not issue a statewide stay-at-home order because the Trump administration had not recommended it.^[119] On April 1, he ordered that all Floridians stay home for 30 days with exceptions for essential services and activities.^[120] He received criticism for falsely stating on April 9 that COVID-19 had caused no fatalities under 25 in the United States. DeSantis acknowledged this error after critics pointed it out, and clarified that there have been no deaths from the virus in people under 25 in Florida.^{[121][122]} In early June, he partially lifted his stay-at-home order, lifting restrictions on bars and cinemas; the same day he lifted the restrictions, Florida recorded the largest case surge in six weeks.^[102]



President Donald Trump and Governor DeSantis discuss COVID-19 prevention efforts in Florida in an April 2020 meeting in the Oval Office of the White House.

DeSantis sought to have the 2020 Republican National Convention in Jacksonville. In conversations with Trump in May, he said he would not require the use of face masks.^[102] By July, as Florida became a global epicenter of the virus, Trump called off the event.^[102] During Trump's reelection campaign, DeSantis worked to help him win Florida. He attended Trump's rallies and high-fived attendees while not wearing a mask, contrary to public health guidance at the time.^{[123][124]}

In June 2020, DeSantis said the bulk of new cases were present in "younger demographics" and argued that increased testing, particularly of asymptomatic individuals, and more efficient identification of outbreaks in areas such as prisons and in Florida's agriculture sector were responsible for most of the increase. He emphasized that the strain on the hospital system and medical supplies such as ventilators had decreased since the previous peak in case numbers, and that Florida was ready to handle any additional influx in hospital patients, adding that the state had "twice as many" open hospital beds than on March 1. DeSantis announced that he would reinstate some restrictions on business activity in late June to halt the virus's spread, but said Florida is "not going back" on reopening the economy, arguing that "people going to a business is not what's driving" the surge in cases. Anthony Fauci said that states reopening faster than federal guidelines were contributing to a rise in cases.^[125]

On June 28, 2020, DeSantis said Florida was in "good shape" in its fight against COVID-19.^[126] In September 2020, he lifted all restrictions on capacity in bars and restaurants, despite persistent cases.^{[127][128]} He banned cities and counties from collecting fines from face mask mandates^[128] and urged public health officials in Florida cities to focus less on universal COVID-19 testing.^[129]

The DeSantis administration largely ignored the scientists in Florida's Emerging Pathogens Institute, the *Sun-Sentinel* reported.^[118] Instead, in August and September 2020, DeSantis invited to Florida other scientists who endorsed less restrictive COVID-19 policies that he agreed with, so that they could conduct press conferences with him.^[118] They included radiologist Scott Atlas, a Trump administration advisor known for spreading misinformation about COVID-19.^{[8][118]}

DeSantis favored reopening schools for in-person learning for the 2020–21 school year.^[130] By October 2020, he announced all 67 public school districts were open for in-person learning.^[130]

In February 2021, DeSantis threatened to withhold COVID-19 vaccines from counties that criticized the manner in which vaccines were distributed.^{[131][132]} The same month, the Biden administration mulled imposing travel restrictions on Florida and other domestic locations to prevent further spread of COVID-19.^{[133][134]} DeSantis expressed his discontent with what he characterized as "trying to shut FL's border" and announced his intention to fervently oppose it if executed.^{[135][136]}

On May 3, 2021, DeSantis signed an executive order officially rescinding the state of emergency and all COVID-19-related public health orders. This order superseded all local public health orders and prohibited municipalities from enacting any further public health order related to COVID-19.^{[137][138][139]} The same day, he signed a bill into law that prohibited businesses, cruise ships, schools, and government entities from requiring proof of vaccination for use of services.^{[140][141]}

In July 2021, Florida experienced a record surge in COVID-19 cases, setting a new daily case record on July 30 and accounting for around 1 in 5 new infections in the country.^[142] Amid the resurgence, DeSantis banned public schools from implementing mask mandates, claiming without evidence that masks were harmful to children,^[143] and in August 2021 he threatened to fine, withhold funding, or withhold salary from any school district or school official who did so.^[144] Previously, data released by the Florida Department of Health had tied over 100,000 COVID-19 cases to Florida private and public K-12 schools from September 2020 to April 2021.^[145] In late August, the DeSantis administration ordered Alachua and Broward school districts to reverse their mask mandates or face a reduction in state funding, leading the districts' leaders to declare that they would take legal action in response.^[146]

In August 2021, President Biden singled out Florida and Texas as "states with low vaccination rates" that "account for one third of all new COVID-19 cases in the entire country". Biden added, "if some governors aren't willing to do the right thing to beat this pandemic, then they should allow businesses and universities who want to do the right thing to be able to do it."^[147] DeSantis responded, "We will not allow Joe Biden and his bureaucratic flunkies to come in and commandeer the rights and freedoms of Floridians."^[148] DeSantis also said, "No elected official is doing more to enable the transmission of COVID in America than Joe Biden with his open borders policies."^[149] *The Washington Post* reported that this claim was based on "guesswork and assumptions, not evidence", while PolitiFact reported that COVID-19 hot spots tend to be clustered far from the border, in places with low rates of public vaccination, not along the southern border, as would be expected if migrants were driving the surge in cases.^{[147][149]} Moreover, the U.S. does not have an open borders policy, as most migrants at the southern border are prevented from entering the country by Title 42.^{[147][149]}

On August 27, 2021, Judge John Cooper ruled that DeSantis could not ban mask mandates in schools.^[150] The state appealed, causing Cooper's ruling to be automatically suspended while the appeal was considered, but Cooper overruled that suspension on September 8, lifting DeSantis's ban, citing the need to protect unvaccinated children.^[151]

DeSantis has heavily promoted monoclonal antibody treatment for COVID-19, which can treat people after they get sick and reduce hospitalization.^[152] One such medication is made by Regeneron, which is a major investment of DeSantis's largest political donor.^[153] At a September press conference, DeSantis said that local governments will face a \$5,000 fine for imposing vaccine mandates.^[154] He said government agency vaccine mandates violate the state's law banning private businesses from requiring vaccine passports for customers.^[154] At the event, a number of speakers spoke out against the vaccine and vaccine mandates, including one person who falsely claimed the vaccine "changes your RNA".^[154]

On September 21, 2021, DeSantis appointed Joseph Ladapo, a vocal supporter of his COVID-19 policies, as Florida's surgeon general.^{[155][156][157]} Ladapo has a history of promoting unproven treatments against COVID-19, opposes COVID-19 vaccine requirements, has questioned the safety of COVID-19 vaccines, and has associated with America's Frontline Doctors, a pro-Trump healthcare group known for promoting falsehoods about the pandemic.^{[156][158]}

In October 2021, DeSantis offered to pay police officers \$5,000 to relocate to and work in Florida, making a specific appeal to officers who refused to comply with vaccine requirements.^[159]

On November 18, 2021, DeSantis signed a legislative package into law, officially making Florida the first state^[160] to impose fines on businesses and hospitals that require inoculation against COVID-19 without exemptions or alternatives.^{[161][162][163]} The legislation was signed a day after Florida Republican lawmakers passed his anti-mandate agenda.^{[164][165]} DeSantis called it "the strongest piece of legislation that's been enacted anywhere in the country" in opposition to COVID-19 vaccination mandates.^[166]

On March 2, 2022, DeSantis scolded students for wearing face masks at a press conference he called, saying: "You do not have to wear those masks. I mean, please take them off" and "Honestly, it's not doing anything, and we gotta stop with this Covid theater. So if you want to wear it, fine. But this is ridiculous." Several students removed their masks in response, but others kept theirs on. DeSantis's office tweeted a version of the video without the scolding.^[167]

In June 2022, DeSantis decided against ordering COVID-19 vaccines for children under 5-years-old, making Florida the only state to not pre-order vaccines for this demographic.^[168]

Political positions

DeSantis is considered a Trumpist and Tea Party conservative.^{[169][170][171][172]}

Cannabis

DeSantis supports the implementation of a medical marijuana program in Florida, but opposes legalizing recreational marijuana.^{[51][52][53][173]} In a June 2019 interview, he said that recreational marijuana legalization will not become law "while I'm governor."^[174] He voted against the Veterans

Equal Access Amendment, which would give veterans access to medical cannabis if recommended by their Veterans Health Administration doctor and if it is legal for medicinal purposes in their state.^[175]

DeSantis and Representative Matt Gaetz held a press conference with John Morgan, a prominent medical cannabis advocate and former Democrat, in early 2019 to persuade the Florida legislature to lift a ban on smokable medical cannabis. According to sources involved, it was orchestrated by Gaetz, whom DeSantis trusted.^[176]



DeSantis speaking at the Hudson Institute in June 2015

Contraceptives and abortion

DeSantis opposes abortion^[177] and has denounced Planned Parenthood.^[178]

DeSantis agreed with the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, saying "This case does not concern the availability or legality of contraceptives, and individuals can obtain and use these as they see fit. The question is simply whether the government can force the owners of Hobby Lobby to pay for abortifacients in violation of their faith."^[179]

On April 14, 2022, DeSantis signed into law a bill that bans abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy without exemptions for rape, human trafficking or incest. The bill does allow exemptions for cases in which a pregnancy poses a "serious risk" to the mother or a fatal fetal abnormality is detected and diagnosed by two physicians in writing. The bill will go into effect on July 1.^[180]

Economy

DeSantis has said that the debate over how to reduce the federal deficit should shift emphasis from tax increases to curtailing spending and triggering economic growth.^[181] He supports a "no budget no pay" policy for Congress to encourage the passage of a budget.^[182] He believes the Federal Reserve System should be audited.^[183]

In the wake of the alleged IRS targeting controversy, DeSantis called for IRS commissioner John Koskinen's resignation for having "failed the American people by frustrating Congress's attempts to ascertain the truth".^{[184][185]} He co-sponsored a bill to impeach Koskinen for violating the public's trust.^[186] Citizens Against Government Waste, a conservative think tank, named DeSantis a "Taxpayer Superhero" in 2015.^[187]

DeSantis supported the Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act, which would require that regulations that have a significant economic impact be subject to a vote of Congress prior to taking effect.^[188]

DeSantis introduced the Let Seniors Work Act, which would repeal the Retirement Earnings Test and exempt senior citizens from the 12.4% Social Security payroll tax, and co-sponsored a measure to eliminate taxes on Social Security benefits.^[189]

DeSantis sponsored the Transportation Empowerment Act, which would transfer much of the responsibility for transportation projects to the states and sharply reduce the federal gas tax.^{[190][191]}

DeSantis has opposed legislation to require online retailers to collect and pay state sales tax.^[192]

DeSantis voted for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017.^[193] He said the bill would bring a "dramatically lower tax rate", "full expensing of capital investments", and more jobs to America.^[194]

As a result of a significant increase in gas prices, DeSantis would announce on November 22, 2021, that he would be temporarily waiving the state's gas tax in the next legislative session in 2022.^[195]

Education

DeSantis opposes federal education programs such as No Child Left Behind Act and Race to the Top, saying that education policy should be made at the local level.^[183]

DeSantis introduced the Higher Education Reform and Opportunity Act, which would allow states to create their own accreditation systems, in 2016. In an op-ed for *National Review*, DeSantis said that his legislation would give students "access to federal loan money to put towards non-traditional educational opportunities, such as online learning courses, vocational schools, and apprenticeships in skilled trades".^[196]

In June 2021, DeSantis led an effort to ban the teaching of critical race theory in Florida public schools (though it had not been a part of Florida public school curriculum). DeSantis described critical race theory as "teaching kids to hate their country", mirroring a similar push by conservatives nationally.^[197] The Florida Board of Education approved the ban on June 10. The Florida Education Association criticized the ban, accusing the Board of Education of trying to hide facts from students. Other critics claimed the ban was an effort to "politicize classroom education and whitewash American history".^[198] On December 15, 2021, DeSantis announced a new bill, the Stop Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (WOKE) Act, which would allow parents to sue school districts that teach their children critical race theory. DeSantis said of the bill: "No taxpayer dollars should be used to teach our kids to hate our country or hate each other."^{[199][200]}

DeSantis signed three education bills into law on June 22, 2021^[201] and suggested that state colleges and universities could lose funding if they were found to promote "stale ideology" and "indoctrination". He offered no specific examples of students being indoctrinated by Florida higher education institutions.^[202] House Bill 233 requires institutions to annually "assess the intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity at that institution using a survey adopted by the State Board of Education", while House Bill 5 and Senate Bill 1108 introduce new requirements for civics education, including lessons on the "evil of communist and totalitarian regimes".^[203] Critics of the laws, including the Florida Education Association, claim they will have a "chilling effect on intellectual and academic freedom" and that the bills were designed to intimidate educators and suppress the free exchange of ideas.^{[204][205]}

DeSantis announced that Florida would replace the Florida Standards Assessment (FSA) test with a system of smaller tests scattered throughout the year on September 14, 2021. He said the replacement would be three tests for the fall, winter and spring, each smaller than the FSA. Florida Commissioner of Education Richard Corcoran agreed with the decision, calling it a "huge victory for the school system". The new system is to be implemented by the 2022–23 school year.^[206]

On March 22, 2022, DeSantis signed into law bill SB 1054, which requires students entering high school starting in the 2023–24 school year to take a financial literacy course. Florida is the largest U.S. state to mandate a financial literacy course.^[207]

On May 9, 2022, DeSantis signed House Bill 395, mandating that schools observe the traditional Soviet October Revolution Day on November 7 as Victims of Communism Day by devoting 45 minutes to teaching about communism, the role of Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, and other Communist leaders in history, and "how people suffered under those regimes".^[208]

Environment

DeSantis has called himself a "Teddy Roosevelt conservationist". During his 2018 gubernatorial run, he said that he did not deny climate change's existence, but did not want to be labeled a "climate change believer",^[209] adding, "I think we contribute to changes in the environment, but I'm not in the pews of the global warming left."^[210]

In 2019, DeSantis signed an executive order that included a variety of components relating to the environment. These included a promise to spend \$2.5 billion over four years on restoring the Everglades and "other water protection", and the creation of a Blue-Green Algae Task Force, an Office of Environmental Accountability and Transparency, and a Chief Science Officer.^[2]

DeSantis supports banning hydraulic fracturing.^[209] On July 10, 2020, he announced that Florida would spend \$8.6 million out of \$166 million received by the state from a legal settlement between Volkswagen and the United States Department of Justice relating to emission violations to add 34 charging stations for electric cars. The stations would be along Interstates 4, 75, 95, 275 and 295.^[211] On June 16, 2021, DeSantis signed into law House Bill 839, which bans local governments in Florida from requiring gas stations to add electric car charging stations.^[212]

On June 21, 2021, DeSantis signed into law House Bill 919, which prohibits local governments from placing bans or restrictions on any source of electricity. Several sizable cities in Florida at that time (Orlando, St. Petersburg, Tallahassee, Dunedin, Largo, Satellite Beach, Gainesville, Sarasota, Safety Harbor and Miami Beach) were setting goals to get all their energy from renewable sources. The bill was described as similar to those in other states (Texas, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arizona and Oklahoma) that passed laws preventing cities from banning natural gas hookups.^{[213][214]}

Foreign relations

Afghanistan

DeSantis condemned the U.S. military pullout from Afghanistan in 2021, saying it was poorly planned. He placed much of the blame on President Biden and accused him of making the country vulnerable to exploitation by China, Russia, North Korea and other geopolitical rivals of the United States. "After 9/11, we needed to go in and rout the Taliban and al-Qaida. But I think in hindsight, we should have come home after that. I think trying to do the democracy and all that, I think has been very problematic", DeSantis said.^[215] He also condemned the 2021 Kabul airport attack that killed 13 American soldiers.^[216] The governor's office sent an email to U.S. secretary of defense Lloyd Austin, Secretary



DeSantis watches as President Donald Trump delivers remarks to the Venezuelan American community in February 2019

of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas on August 30, 2021, asking which Afghan refugees would be coming to Florida and the fates of those Floridians who were still in Afghanistan.^[217]

Bahamas

After Hurricane Dorian struck The Bahamas, DeSantis told reporters that the U.S. federal government, not Florida, should bear responsibility for hurricane assistance. He encouraged donations to those affected by the hurricane through the Volunteer Florida website and urged Floridians not to cancel vacations to the country's less-affected islands. DeSantis took an aerial tour of The Bahamas with the state's two U.S. senators, Marco Rubio and Rick Scott, on September 6, 2019. After the tour, he said the Coast Guard was "doing a great job". When asked on September 9, 2019, if he would lobby President Trump to support Rubio's and Scott's request to either waive or suspend visa requirements to allow Bahamians to temporarily live with families in the U.S., he said he did not support that idea.^[218]

Cuba

DeSantis introduced the Guantanamo Bay Recidivism Prevention Act, which would end foreign aid to countries that receive detainees if they reappear on the terrorism recidivism list, in 2015.^[219]

DeSantis opposed President Obama's plan to shut down the Guantanamo Bay detention camp, saying, "Bringing hardened terrorists to the U.S. homeland harms our national security."^[220]

Regarding the formal restart of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, DeSantis said, "Raising the Cuban flag in the United States is a slap in the face to those who have experienced the brutality of the Castro regime."^[221]

Iran

DeSantis opposed the Iran nuclear deal framework, calling it "a bad deal that will significantly degrade our national security".^[222] He added, "the Iran deal gives Ayatollah Khamenei exactly what he wants: billions of dollars in sanctions relief, validation of the Iranian nuclear program, and the ability to stymie inspections."^[223]

During a line of questioning, DeSantis told Secretary of State John Kerry that the executive branch had a legal obligation to provide Congress with the details behind any side deals made between world leaders and Iran.^[224] He accused Obama of treating Cuba's Raul Castro and Iran's ayatollah Ali Khamenei better than Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu.^[225]

Israel

DeSantis introduced the Palestinian Accountability Act, which would halt U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority until it formally recognizes Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and severs all ties with the militant group Hamas, in 2013.^[226]

DeSantis co-introduced the Non-Discrimination of Israel in Labeling Act, which would defend the right of Israeli producers to label products manufactured in the West Bank as "Israeli", "Made in Israel," or "Product of Israel", in 2016.^[227] He supported the relocation of the U.S. Embassy from Tel

Aviv to Jerusalem.^[228]

As governor, DeSantis pledged to be "the most pro-Israel governor in America".^[229] In light of Airbnb's decision to no longer allow rentals of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, on January 15, 2019, DeSantis directed the Department of Management Services to no longer reimburse state employees and state contractors for travel expenses incurred with Airbnb;^[230] later that month he accepted the State Board of Administration's recommendation to place Airbnb on Florida's "Scrutinized Companies List".^[231] DeSantis visited Israel – accompanied by Sheldon Adelson, a megadonor to his 2018 gubernatorial campaign – in May to attend a ceremony held by Florida Atlantic University and Ariel University, celebrating the agreement of a plan to exchange and research opportunities between the universities' respective students.^{[229][232]}



DeSantis with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in May 2019

Russia

DeSantis denounced the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine and praised the Ukrainian resistance.^[233] On March 1, he said that President Biden was going too easy on Russia,^[234] and that Biden should apply sanctions to the Russian oil industry.^[235]

Government

DeSantis opted not to receive his congressional pension, and filed a measure that would eliminate pensions for members of Congress.^[183] After introducing the End Pensions in Congress Act, DeSantis said, "The Founding Fathers envisioned elected officials as part of a servant class, yet Washington has evolved into a ruling class culture."^[236]

DeSantis supports a constitutional amendment to impose term limits on members of Congress, so that U.S. representatives would be limited to three terms and senators to two.^[237] As of 2022, he has served three terms as a U.S. representative.^[238]

Gun law

DeSantis opposes gun control. He received an A+ rating from the National Rifle Association.^[239] He generally opposes firearm regulation, saying, "Very rarely do firearms restrictions affect criminals. They really only affect law-abiding citizens."^[240]

After the 2018 Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, DeSantis expressed his support for hiring retired law enforcement officers and military veterans as armed guards for schools.^[241] He disagrees with legislation Governor Rick Scott signed that banned bump stocks, added a mandatory three-day waiting period for gun purchases, and raised the legal age for purchases from 18 to 21.^[18] He has expressed support for measures to improve federal background checks for purchasing firearms and has said that there is a need to intervene with those who are exhibiting warning signs of committing violence instead of waiting until a crime has been committed.^[241]

In November 2020, DeSantis proposed an "anti-mob" extension to the preexisting stand-your-ground law in Florida that would allow gun-owning residents to use deadly force on individuals they believe are looting. It would also make blocking traffic during a protest a third-degree felony and impose criminal penalties for partaking in "violent or disorderly assemblies".^[242]

Health care

DeSantis opposes the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.^{[243][244]} He has called for its "full and complete repeal".^[243]

DeSantis said he was not ready to support the American Health Care Act, the House Republican effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, in March 2017.^[245] He did vote for the May 2017 Republican effort to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act.^{[246][247]}

Immigration

DeSantis was a critic of Obama's immigration policies; he opposed Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and Deferred Action for Parents of Americans (DAPA) and accused him of failing to enforce immigration laws.^{[248][249]} DeSantis has sought to ban "sanctuary cities".^[250] He is a co-sponsor of the Establishing Mandatory Minimums for Illegal Reentry Act of 2015, also known as Kate's Law, which would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to increase penalties applicable to aliens who unlawfully reenter the United States after being removed.^[251] DeSantis spoke at ACT! for America, an anti-Muslim advocacy group designated as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Center for American Progress, in 2017.^[252]

After the November 2015 Paris attacks, DeSantis "called for urgent recognition that Islamic extremism is to blame for the Paris attacks and should be seen as an enemy for America". He has said, "The enemy is an ideology rooted in militant Islam" and that ISIS must be stopped and its members kept away from America.^[253] Of U.S. policy toward refugees, DeSantis said, "the prudent policy is to err on the side of protecting the American people".^[254]

DeSantis encouraged Florida sheriffs to cooperate with the federal government on immigration-related issues.^[255] In June 2019, he signed an anti-"sanctuary city" bill in law; the legislation required law enforcement "to honor U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainers for undocumented immigrants who are arrested or convicted" of crimes. There were no sanctuary cities in Florida before the law's enactment, and immigration advocates called the bill politically motivated.^{[256][257][258][259]} Florida became the 12th state to adopt legislation requiring local governments to aid federal immigration-enforcement efforts.^[260] In June 2020, DeSantis signed a bill requiring government employers and private companies that contract with the government to use E-Verify.^{[261][262][263]} He had originally called for all employers to be required to use it.^[264]

LGBT rights

DeSantis has a "o" rating from the Human Rights Campaign for his voting record on LGBT-related issues and legislation.^{[265][266]} In 2018, he told the Sun-Sentinel that he "doesn't want any discrimination in Florida, I want people to be able to live their life, whether you're gay or whether you're religious."^[267]

In January 2019, less than a week after taking office, DeSantis issued a nondiscrimination order for state employees reiterating former governor Scott's order; the order included race, age, sex, color, religion, national origin, marital status, and disability, but had no protections for sexual orientation or gender identity. Equality Florida strongly criticized DeSantis, with the organization's senior political director saying that it was "deeply disappointed to see that LGBTQ employees and contractors have been left out of the governor's executive order".^[268] Scott had pledged to sign an LGBT-inclusive order as governor, but did not follow through on the grounds that proper federal protections existed.^[269]

In June 2019, DeSantis's office issued a proclamation honoring the victims of the Orlando nightclub shooting at the Pulse nightclub, a gay bar where 49 people were killed and 50 others were injured on June 12, 2016. The proclamation did not include any reference to the LGBT community, sparking criticism and accusations that DeSantis may have intentionally omitted it from the message. DeSantis later reissued the proclamation with revisions including mentions of the LGBT community, and a spokesperson said the earlier omission was an error by DeSantis's staff.^[270]

On June 1, 2021, DeSantis signed the Fairness in Women's Sports Act (SB 1028). It bans transgender girls and women from participating and competing in middle-school and high-school girls' and college women's sports competitions in Florida. The law took effect on July 1.^{[271][272][273][274][275][276]}

In February 2022, DeSantis voiced his support for the Florida state HB 1557 "Parental Rights in Education" bill, often called the "Don't Say Gay" bill by its opponents, which would prohibit instruction on sexual orientation or gender identity in school classrooms from kindergarten to grade 3. He said it was "entirely inappropriate" for teachers and school administrators to talk to students about their gender identity.^{[277][278]} DeSantis signed the bill into law on March 28, 2022.^[279]

On April 19, 2022, DeSantis suggested that the Florida legislature revoke Disney World's special self-governing privileges over its 25,000-acre (10,000-hectare) property—privileges that were granted to the company in 1967. The move was generally interpreted as retaliation against Disney for opposing Florida's House Bill 1557, which prohibited classroom instruction about sexual orientation and gender identity.^{[280][281]} On April 22, 2022, DeSantis signed a bill to dissolve the Reedy Creek Improvement Act, which has allowed Disney to self-govern its own district, by June 2023.^[282]

In March 2022, DeSantis signed a proclamation stating that runner-up Emma Weyant was the "rightful winner" of the women's 500-yard freestyle NCAA Division I championship,^[283] after the race had been won by Lia Thomas, a trans woman.^[284] DeSantis criticized the NCAA for allowing trans women to compete in women's events.^{[285][286][283]} The proclamation was a symbolic one, as governors do not have the power to alter the results of college sporting events.^[287]

In April 2022, DeSantis's Department of Health released new official guidance advising that neither social transition (reported by NBC as "pronouns, hair and dress in accordance with their gender identities") nor medical transition or puberty blockers be allowed for transgender teenagers.^{[288][289]}

In June 2022, DeSantis's Department of Health ordered gender-affirming healthcare banned for Medicaid recipients of all ages and issued a request to the state medical board that it be banned for transgender youth regardless of Medicaid status.^[289]

Russia investigation

According to the *Tampa Bay Times*, DeSantis "made a name for himself [in 2017] attacking special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian meddling in the 2016 election".^[290]

DeSantis proposed an amendment that would halt funding for Mueller's 2017 Special Counsel investigation probe six months after the amendment's passage.^[291] In addition, the provision would prohibit Mueller from investigating matters that occurred before June 2015, when Trump launched his presidential campaign.^[292] In December 2017, DeSantis asserted that if there was any evidence of collusion between members of the Trump campaign and Russian officials, it would already have been leaked.^[293]

In January 2018, while on the House Intelligence Committee, DeSantis voted on party lines to release a classified memo authored by Republicans on the committee which purported to show that the FBI abused its surveillance powers in the Russia investigation.^[294] He voted not to release a memo authored by Democrats on the committee that accused Republicans on the committee of playing politics with national security.^[294] Democrats described the Republican-authored memo as grossly distorted and intended to discredit Mueller's investigation, and said that the Republicans on the committee had begun an investigation into the FBI and DOJ.^[294]

In April 2018, DeSantis called on FBI director Christopher Wray to criminally investigate a number of officials involved in investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election, including former FBI director James Comey, former acting director of the FBI Andrew McCabe, FBI agent Peter Strzok and FBI counsel Lisa Page.^[295] He also called for investigations of a number of former Obama officials, including Loretta Lynch and Hillary Clinton.^[296]

On October 10, 2019, a spokesman for DeSantis announced that he would be "returning a political contribution he received from two Soviet-born businessmen, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman, through their company Global Energy Producers. Parnas and Fruman are accused of funneling foreign cash into U.S. elections to increase their influence and promote their business interests; they are central figures in the Trump-Ukraine scandal and impeachment inquiry. "They made the donation a day before Trump tweeted his 'full endorsement' of DeSantis."^[297]

Technology companies

In response to social media networks removing Trump from their platforms, DeSantis and other Florida Republicans pushed legislation in the Florida legislature to prohibit technology companies from de-platforming political candidates.^[298] A federal judge blocked the law by preliminary injunction the day before it was to take effect, on the grounds that it violated the First Amendment and federal law.^[299] When Twitter suspended DeSantis administration critic Rebekah Jones's account for violating rules against spam and platform manipulation, DeSantis's office applauded the decision, calling it "long overdue".^{[300][301]}

Veterans

DeSantis has sharply criticized the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for the Veterans Health Administration scandal of 2014, in which veteran deaths were linked to wait times. He co-sponsored the VA Accountability Act, which aims to increase accountability by providing for the removal or demotion of employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs based on performance or misconduct.^{[302][303]} He is a member of the Post-9/11 Veterans Caucus.^[304] DeSantis worked with a Marine Corps veteran of Afghanistan, Cole Lyle, and a nonprofit in his district, K9s for Warriors, to

advance the Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) Act of 2016.^[305] The bill sought to expand veteran access to service dogs as a form of treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at the VA. The bill did not pass in the 115th Congress, but a modified version passed the House of Representatives in 2019.^{[306][307]}

Voting rights

DeSantis expressed support for the Voting Rights Restoration for Felons Initiative after it passed in November 2018, saying that he was "obligated to faithfully implement [it] as it is defined" when he became governor. After he refused to restore the voting rights for felons with unpaid fines, which voting rights groups said was inconsistent with the results of the referendum, he was challenged in court. The Florida Supreme Court sided with DeSantis on the issue,^[308] and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit also sided with DeSantis in a 6–4 ruling.^[309]

DeSantis instructed Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody to investigate allegations of voter fraud perpetrated by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg after he announced a \$16 million investment to pay off the financial obligations for felons so they may vote ahead of the 2020 presidential election in Florida. The allegations asserted Bloomberg had broken the law by offering incentives to vote.^[310]

After Donald Trump lost the 2020 election and refused to concede while making false claims of widespread voter fraud, DeSantis and other Republicans proposed changes to restrict voting rights in Florida. DeSantis called for eliminating ballot drop boxes, as well as limiting voting by mail by requiring that voters re-register every year to vote by mail and requiring that signatures on mail-in ballots "must match the most recent signature on file" (rather than any of the voter's signatures in the Florida system).^{[311][312]} The changes to mail-in voting were notable given that Republicans had traditionally voted by mail more than Democrats, but Democrats outvoted Republicans by mail in 2020.^[311] According to a *Tampa Bay Times* analysis, DeSantis's signature match proposal could have led to rejections of his own mail-in ballots due to changes in his signature history over time; voting rights experts argued that the signature matching proposal could be used to disenfranchise voters whose signatures varied over time.^[312]

Law enforcement

DeSantis called for Broward County sheriff Scott Israel to resign after the shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Many people accused Israel of running his department poorly and not properly handling or responding to the shooting. DeSantis said that had he been governor when the shooting occurred he would have removed Israel from his position.^{[313][314]} On January 11, shortly after taking office as governor, DeSantis suspended Israel from his duties. Israel declared that he intended to contest his suspension. On October 23, the Florida Senate voted 25–15 to permanently remove him.^[315]

DeSantis opposes efforts to defund the police, and as governor has introduced initiatives to "fund the police".^[316] In September 2021, DeSantis introduced a \$5,000 signing bonus for Florida police officers in a bid to attract additional out-of-state police recruits.^[317]

Personal life

DeSantis is a Roman Catholic.^[318] He married Casey Black, a former television host for the Golf Channel and WJXT, in 2010. The couple lived in Ponte Vedra Beach, near St. Augustine, until it was drawn into the neighboring 4th district. They then moved to Palm Coast, north of Daytona Beach.^{[319][320]} They have three children.^[321] DeSantis is a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion.^[322]



Ron and Casey DeSantis in January 2019

Ron DeSantis played on the field the day of the Congressional baseball shooting, and while not present at the time it occurred, he and fellow Representative Jeff Duncan reportedly met the perpetrator beforehand and were asked by him whether Republicans or Democrats were playing that day.^[323]

Awards

Ribbon bar:



- Bronze Star Medal
- Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal
- Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal
- National Defense Service Medal
- Iraq Campaign Medal
- Global War on Terrorism Service Medal
- Marksmanship Medal
- Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon
- Navy Rifle Sharpshooter Ribbon

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Electoral history

2012 Florida's 6th congressional district election^[324]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
<u>Republican</u>	Ron DeSantis	195,962	57.3
<u>Democratic</u>	Heather Beaven	146,489	42.8
Total votes		342,451	100.0
<u>Republican hold</u>			

2014 Florida's 6th congressional district election^[325]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
<u>Republican</u>	Ron DeSantis (incumbent)	166,254	62.5
<u>Democratic</u>	David Cox	99,563	37.5
Total votes		265,817	100.0
<u>Republican hold</u>			

2016 Florida's 6th congressional district election^[326]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
<u>Republican</u>	Ron DeSantis (incumbent)	213,519	58.6
<u>Democratic</u>	Bill McCullough	151,051	41.4
Total votes		364,570	100.0
<u>Republican hold</u>			

2018 Florida gubernatorial election^[327]

Party		Candidate	Votes	%
<u>Republican</u>		Ron DeSantis Jeanette Nuñez	4,076,186	49.6
<u>Democratic</u>		Andrew Gillum Chris King	4,043,723	49.2
<u>Reform</u>		Darcy Richardson Nancy Argenziano	47,140	0.6
<u>Independent</u>		Kyle "KC" Gibson Ellen Wilds	24,310	0.3
<u>Independent</u>		Ryan Christopher Foley John Tutton Jr.	14,630	0.2
<u>Independent</u>		Bruce Stanley Ryan McJury	14,505	0.2
<u>Write-in</u>			67	0.0
Total votes			8,220,561	100.0
<u>Republican hold</u>				

Primary elections

2012 Florida's Republican 6th congressional district primary^[328]

Party		Candidate	Votes	%
<u>Republican</u>		Ron DeSantis	24,132	38.8
<u>Republican</u>		Fred Costello	14,189	22.8
<u>Republican</u>		Beverly Slough	8,229	13.2
<u>Republican</u>		Craig Miller	8,113	13.1
<u>Republican</u>		Richard Clark	6,090	9.8
<u>Republican</u>		Alec Pueschel	739	1.2
<u>Republican</u>		William Billy Kogut	628	1.0
Total votes			62,120	100.0

2016 Florida's Republican 6th congressional district primary^[329]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Republican	Ron DeSantis (incumbent)	41,311	61.0
Republican	Fred Costello	16,690	24.7
Republican	G.G. Galloway	9,683	14.3
Total votes		67,684	100.0

2018 Florida Republican gubernatorial primary^[330]

Party	Candidate	Votes	%
Republican	Ron DeSantis	913,679	56.5
Republican	Adam Putnam	591,449	36.6
Republican	Bob White	32,580	2.0
Republican	Timothy M. Devine	21,320	1.3
Republican	Bob Langford	19,771	1.2
Republican	Bruce Nathan	14,487	0.9
Republican	Don Baldauf	13,125	0.8
Republican	John Joseph Mercadante	11,602	0.7
Total votes		1,618,013	100.0

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External links

- [Official Florida Governor website \(https://www.flgov.com/\)](https://www.flgov.com/)
- [Campaign website \(https://rondesantis.com/\)](https://rondesantis.com/)
- [Ron DeSantis \(https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/Florida/Government/Federal/US_House/Ron_DeSantis_%5BR-06%5D\)](https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/Florida/Government/Federal/US_House/Ron_DeSantis_%5BR-06%5D) at [Curlie](#)
- [Appearances \(https://www.c-span.org/person/?79744\)](https://www.c-span.org/person/?79744) on [C-SPAN](#)
- [Biography \(http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000621\)](http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=D000621) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
- [Profile \(https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/137630\)](https://www.votesmart.org/candidate/137630) at [Vote Smart](#)
- [Financial information \(federal office\) \(https://www.fec.gov/data/candidate/H2FL00292\)](https://www.fec.gov/data/candidate/H2FL00292) at the [Federal Election Commission](#)
- [Legislation sponsored \(https://www.congress.gov/member/ron-desantis/D000621\)](https://www.congress.gov/member/ron-desantis/D000621) at the [Library of Congress](#)
- [Filkins, Dexter \(June 18, 2022\). "Can Ron DeSantis Displace Donald Trump as the G.O.P.'s Combatant-in-Chief?" \(https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/06/27/can-ron-desantis-displace-donald-trump-as-the-gops-combatant-in-chief\). *The New Yorker*. Retrieved June 21, 2022.](https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/06/27/can-ron-desantis-displace-donald-trump-as-the-gops-combatant-in-chief)

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