

SONG OF SUPPRESSION



Disney Backed 96% of Florida Republicans Who Sabotaged Voting Rights Ballot Initiative, Contributed Over \$800,000 Between 2016 and 2020

Over \$200,000 Was Given in 2020 – After Gov. DeSantis and Lawmakers Sabotaged Restoration of Voting Rights to Florida Felons

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Six days after pro-Trump rioters violently forced their way into the U.S. Capitol, the Walt Disney Company [announced](#) it would suspend all political contributions to lawmakers who voted against certifying President Joe Biden's election.

Despite this recent action, campaign finance data shows the entertainment conglomerate has no qualms about supporting lawmakers who embrace racist vote suppression tactics and undermine democracy.

Public Citizen's analysis of campaign finance data from the National Institute on Money in Politics found:

- Disney backed 96% of the Republican lawmakers in Florida who, in a pair of party-line votes, passed legislation to sabotage a popular voting rights ballot initiative that restored former felons' voting rights. In other words, only four of the 90 lawmakers who voted for the bill to weaken Amendment 4 did not receive contributions from Disney between 2016 and 2020.
- The corporation contributed over \$800,000 to the 86 lawmakers and Gov. Ron DeSantis between 2016 and 2020, almost exclusively in the form of direct corporate expenditures. Less than 1% of the Florida contributions came from Disney's

¹ Ryan Cieslikowski, Public Citizen's Corporate Crime & Wrongdoing Research Intern, contributed to this report.

employee PAC, which contributed \$2,500 toward DeSantis's 2016 campaign for the U.S. House of Representatives.² (See the table below for the full recipient list.)

- This disgraceful vote did not discourage Disney's spending. Over \$200,000 of the \$800,000 was given to 59 of the Florida legislators in 2020 – after they sabotaged the voting rights ballot initiative.

This analysis demonstrates that Disney's aggressive political spending at the state level results in harmful policy outcomes that directly contrast with its publicly-stated values.

To be clear, Disney's spending is not limited to these Republicans. In fact, Disney contributed to candidates in every single race in all 40 Florida Senate districts and all 120 Florida House districts, including 50 Democratic Florida legislators who opposed the bill and received \$439,000 from Disney between 2016 and 2020. Nevertheless, the spending means Disney bears some responsibility for the actions the candidates they help elect take once they assume their respective offices.

What should Disney do to avoid responsibility for the heinous actions of politicians they help elect? The answer is simple: Disney should cease political spending entirely, as Public Citizen has urged [all of Corporate America](#) in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

Additionally, the spending highlighted here solely consists of what Disney discloses to the public and shareholders. The true amount Disney contributes to groups that do not disclose contributors remains unknown. On March 9, Disney faces a [resolution from shareholders](#) asking for transparency around payments the company makes to 501(c)4s organizations that can engage in politics and lobbying. Short of ceasing spending entirely, Disney should take the incremental step of supporting this request for more transparency from its shareholders.

Background on Amendment 4

During the 2018 midterm elections, Floridians voted by 64% in favor of [Amendment 4](#), a ballot initiative that was expected to restore voting rights to [1.4 million](#) former felons, an historic expansion of civil rights and a racial justice victory. Black Floridians, who make up 13% of Florida's population, [made up 44%](#) of the formerly incarcerated individuals

² While direct corporate contributions are banned from federal elections, 29 states, including Florida, allow corporations to contribute directly to candidates. For a list of states, see [Denise Roth Barber, "Corporations Can – and Do – Contribute to State Candidates," FollowTheMoney.org \(Dec. 18, 2017\)](#)

who took advantage of their new re-enfranchisement rights in the months following the amendment's passage.

In 2019, Florida's Republican lawmakers passed, and Gov. Ron DeSantis [signed into law](#), a [bill to undermine](#) the initiative by requiring former felons to pay all fines and court fees before their right to vote can be restored. The law constituted a double attack on democracy, both thwarting the will of Florida voters who overwhelmingly supported the initiative and blocking former felons from re-enfranchisement. Just as the amendment disproportionately benefited Black Floridians, so too did the bill disproportionately harm them.

As a result of the Florida Republicans' act of legislative sabotage, by October 2020, only [about 31,400](#) new voters had joined the rolls – a minuscule fraction of the number of new voters advocates predicted would have their voting rights restored.

Table: Florida lawmakers who voted to weaken Amendment 4 and received a total of \$801,777 from the Walt Disney Company between 2016 and 2020

Title	Name	Contributions from Disney
Representative	SPROWLS, CHRISTOPHER J (CHRIS)	\$ 25,000
Representative	CLEMONS SR, CHARLES WESLEY (CHUCK)	\$ 21,265
Senator	SIMPSON, WILTON	\$ 21,000
Representative	TOLEDO, JACKELINE VALLEJO	\$ 21,000
Senate	PERRY, WARREN KEITH	\$ 18,000
Senator	GRUTERS, JOE	\$ 17,000
Representative	PLASENCIA, RENE (COACH P)	\$ 17,000
Representative	RENNER, PAUL	\$ 16,600
Representative	BURTON, COLLEEN	\$ 16,000
Senator	STARGEL, KELLI	\$ 16,000
Representative	RASCHEIN, HOLLY MERRILL	\$ 16,000
Senator	BRANDES, JEFFREY R (JEFF)	\$ 15,000
Senator	HUTSON, TRAVIS	\$ 15,000
Senator	MAYFIELD, DEBORAH J (DEBBIE)	\$ 15,000
Senator	RODRIGUES, RAY	\$ 15,000
Representative	TOMKOW, JOSIE	\$ 15,000
Senator	PASSIDOMO, KATHLEEN C	\$ 15,000
Representative	KILLEBREW, SAM H	\$ 14,450
Representative	TRUMBULL JR, JAY N	\$ 14,000
Senator	DIAZ JR, MANNY	\$ 14,000
Representative	PEREZ, DANIEL ANTHONY	\$ 14,000
Representative	ROMMEL, BOB	\$ 13,300
Representative	ALOUPIS, VANCE	\$ 13,000

Title	Name	Contributions from Disney
Representative	INGOGLIA, BLAISE	\$ 13,000
Representative	PAYNE, BOBBY	\$ 12,600
Representative	PLAKON, D SCOTT	\$ 12,181
Representative	SULLIVAN, JENNIFER	\$ 12,181
Representative	LA ROSA, MIKE	\$ 12,000
Representative	ROACH, SPENCER	\$ 12,000
Representative	LATVALA, CHRISTOPHER JOHN	\$ 12,000
Representative	WILLIAMSON, JAYER	\$ 11,700
Senator	RODRIGUEZ, ANA MARIA	\$ 11,000
Representative	SANTIAGO, DAVID	\$ 11,000
Representative	FINE, RANDY	\$ 10,700
Representative	FISCHER, JASON	\$ 10,300
Representative	AVILA, BRYAN	\$ 10,000
Representative	GRANT, JAMES (J W)	\$ 10,000
Senator	LEE, THOMAS A (TOM)	\$ 10,000
Representative	DRAKE, BRAD	\$ 10,000
Representative	EAGLE, DANE	\$ 9,000
Representative	RODRIGUEZ, ANTHONY	\$ 9,000
Representative	MCCLAIN, STAN	\$ 8,300
Representative	YARBOROUGH, CLAY	\$ 8,300
Representative	FITZENHAGEN, HEATHER DAWES	\$ 8,000
Senator	ALBRITTON, BEN	\$ 8,000
Representative	LEEK, THOMAS J (TOM)	\$ 7,000
Representative	DUGGAN, WYMAN	\$ 7,000
Representative	MCCLURE, LAWRENCE	\$ 7,000
Senator	BAXLEY, DENNIS K	\$ 7,000
Senator	HOOPER, ED	\$ 7,000
Representative	STEVENSON, CYNDI	\$ 6,600
Representative	MARIANO, AMBER LYNN	\$ 6,600
Representative	LAMARCA, CHIP	\$ 6,000
Representative	DICEGLIE, NICOLA G (NICK)	\$ 6,000
Representative	FERNANDEZ-BARQUIN, JUAN ALFONSO	\$ 6,000
Senator	BROXSON, DOUGLAS	\$ 6,000
Representative	CUMMINGS, WILLIAM TRAVIS	\$ 6,000
Representative	STONE, CHARLIE	\$ 6,000
Representative	CARUSO, MICHAEL A	\$ 6,000
Senator	BEAN, AARON PAUL	\$ 5,000
Representative	DONALDS, BYRON	\$ 5,000
Representative	SMITH, DAVID A	\$ 5,000
Representative	ROBINSON, WILLIAM (WILL)	\$ 5,000

Title	Name	Contributions from Disney
Representative	ANDRADE, ROBERT ALEXANDER (ALEX)	\$ 5,000
Senator	SIMMONS, DAVID	\$ 5,000
Senator	GAINER, GEORGE B	\$ 5,000
Representative	OLIVA, JOSE	\$ 5,000
Representative	MASSULLO JR, RALPH E	\$ 4,300
Representative	ZIKA, ARDIAN	\$ 4,000
Representative	BUCHANAN, JAMES VERNON	\$ 4,000
Representative	GRANT, MICHAEL	\$ 4,000
Representative	HILL, WALTER BRYAN (MIKE)	\$ 4,000
Senator	BRADLEY, JENNIFER E	\$ 4,000
Representative	BELL, MELONY M	\$ 4,000
Representative	SIROIS, TYLER	\$ 4,000
Senator	BENACQUISTO, LIZBETH	\$ 4,000
Senator	HARRELL, GAYLE	\$ 4,000
Representative	GRALL, ERIN K	\$ 3,600
Representative	BYRD, CORD	\$ 3,300
Senator	GALVANO, BILL	\$ 3,000
Governor	DESANTIS, RONALD D (RON)	\$ 2,500
Representative	OVERDORF, TOBIN ROGERS (TOBY)	\$ 2,000
Representative	BELTRAN, MIKE	\$ 2,000
Representative	ALTMAN, THAD	\$ 2,000
Representative	BRANNAN III, ROBERT C CHUCK	\$ 2,000
Representative	FETTERHOFF, ELIZABETH	\$ 2,000
TOTAL		\$ 801,777

Data Source: FollowTheMoney.org