

The Delray Democrat

DeSantis Places Politics Over People¹

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With coronavirus cases surpassing 56,000, an unemployment rate of nearly 13 percent, and a recent report indicating that state tax collections plummeted nearly \$900 million in April, one would hope that our governor would be laser-focused on ameliorating the situation and safeguarding taxpayer dollars. Unfortunately, it appears that Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis continues to place politics over people; two recent legal maneuvers at the expense of taxpayers are clearly designed to suppress votes and deliver Florida to President Donald Trump in November.

The first concerns Amendment 4. After being passed by nearly two-thirds of the electorate in November 2018, the state legislature voted along party lines for a bill that required returning citizens to pay all fines and fees before they could register to vote. It is unlikely that the majority of people who supported Amendment 4 sought this outcome. Nevertheless, the governor signed the measure, thereby preventing hundreds of thousands of indigent people, arguably more likely to vote Democratic, from registering to vote. After U.S. District Court Judge Robert Hinkle found the aforementioned bill to be unconstitutional, the governor fought back repeatedly. In a recent letter addressed to DeSantis, State Sens. Lori Berman and Janet Cruz stated, “The State has now argued this case three times in court, each time spending thousands in taxpayer dollars on court costs — this, at a time when our state’s budget is in freefall from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The second legal gambit is a pushback against federal lawsuits to expand vote-by-mail for the August primary and the November election. As a local campaign manager who was out working during the March 17 primary in Delray Beach, I saw firsthand the deleterious effect the coronavirus had on people’s ability to vote. And the problem was not limited to Palm Beach County. In a letter to the governor early last month, Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones, then-president of the Florida Supervisors of Elections, reported that officials “encountered significant challenges” including “substantial numbers of poll workers deciding not to work.”

Although I suspect that very few, if any, believe the pandemic will soon be a thing of the past, our governor claims the legal challenges are “speculative” as to what might happen a few months from now. DeSantis also disputes the argument that paying for postage is akin to a “poll tax”. According to the plaintiffs, “For voters who are elderly, disabled, live far from the post office, or have limited access to transportation, the postage requirement imposes significant transaction costs on casting a mail ballot and may deter voting.”

It has often been said that Florida is a make-or-break state for President Trump’s re-election. Regrettably, it is quite clear that DeSantis is all too aware of this supposition¹ and appears ready to do whatever it takes to promote a victory at the expense of the people he is supposed to serve and

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, June 2020, p. 1. Originally published June 3, 2020, Palm Beach Post, p. A11.

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