

The Delray Democrat

Biden Bucks Are Powering Florida Forward¹

State Sen. Lori Berman

We often hear Governor DeSantis bragging about Florida's robust budget. For years, he's toured the state announcing funding for new infrastructure and water projects, first responder bonuses, raises in teacher salaries, and other necessary investments.

"There'll be a lot of good stuff [in the budget] that we'll be highlighting based off what we've been able to do working with the Legislature," DeSantis quipped last month.

But how many of these investments are attributable to President Biden and the federal government, rather than the Florida Legislature? It turns out to be quite a substantial sum – something you'll never hear DeSantis admit.

For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, Florida's budget includes a whopping \$41 billion in federal trust fund dollars. That makes up 35% of the state's \$117 billion budget. And over the next five years, Florida is expected to receive \$32.5 billion thanks to President Biden's Infrastructure Law – \$8.6 billion of which has already been announced for more than 213 investment projects across the state. Here's the breakdown of those funds:

- Roads and Bridges: \$5.2 billion
- Public Transit: \$529.4 million
- Airports: \$301.2 million
- Clean and Safe Water: \$764.7 million
- Ports and Waterways: \$143.6 million
- Internet and High-speed Broadband: \$5 million
- Clean Buses and EV Charging Stations: \$125.2 million
- Clean Energy and Power: \$151.6 million

By every measure, President Biden and Congressional Democrats are investing in the people of Florida and our future. Meanwhile, Ron DeSantis has invested his time and resources into culture war politics, dividing Floridians, attacking the LGBTQ community, and lavishing the insurance industry with favors at the expense of cash-strapped Floridians. He's done little to nothing to address the cost-of-living crisis that is throttling the state, and everything he can to breathe life into his fledgling presidential campaign. It's sad, if not pathetic, so let's instead take a closer look at what Democrats have delivered for Florida.

They've unleashed private investment in the state. For example, Cenntro Automotive recently announced \$25 million to build its first American electric vehicle manufacturing facility in

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), June 2023, page 1.

Jacksonville. They're rebuilding Florida's ecological infrastructure, investing over \$1.1 billion in Everglades restoration activities that will reconnect the Northern Everglades with the southern and central habitats.

President Biden and Congressional Democrats put Florida back to work and supported vital small businesses through a once-in-a-century pandemic by providing nearly \$488 million in small business loans and relief. Florida's unemployment rate dropped to 2.6% with 1,000,000 jobs created since President Biden took office. They've combatted the climate crisis and ignited a clean-energy revolution by expanding electric vehicle opportunities and discounts, protecting the state against extreme weather events through resiliency grants, and supporting rural communities by investing in climate-smart agriculture practices.

But perhaps most important, this Administration promised to lower rising costs for Florida's families – and delivered. Thanks to the President's Inflation Reduction Act, health care costs, energy costs, and prescription drug prices for working families are going down.

Over 4,388,000 Florida residents with Medicare will now benefit from the \$2,000 yearly cap on out-of-pocket prescription drug costs, a \$35 monthly cap per insulin prescription, and free vaccines. More than 3,225,000 individuals signed up for health insurance through the ACA Marketplaces during the Open Enrollment Period for 2023 and will benefit from up to thousands of dollars per year in savings from lower health care premiums. The average homeowner will save 11.7% on their utility bills if state and local government use new grant opportunities to adopt the latest building energy codes. Florida residents will also be eligible for a 30% discount on solar panels, battery storage devices, heating and cooling upgrades, and weatherization, helping them cut energy costs and pocket more of their hard-earned cash.

What President Biden was able to accomplish in his first two years with a slim Democratic majority is nothing short of a miracle. Even today with a GOP House, he continues to impress after coming out on top of debt limit negotiations. He's a consensus builder, something Ron DeSantis has no experience or interest in doing.

The fundamental difference between their leadership styles lays with priorities and vision. President Biden's priority is to the American people, and his vision for America is a middle-class revival. Ron DeSantis' priority is to whoever can help him gain power, and his vision for America is, well, pretty un-American. Book banning, a national crusade against queer Americans, a federal ban on DEI topics, and a total abortion ban are all at the top of his agenda – and none of that actually improves lives. DeSantis remains a dark figure on the political landscape. Because of this, he'll never be able to deliver for the American people on the level President Biden has.

Thanks for the Biden Bucks, Mr. President!