

Florida Man Blows Up First Amendment

Letter to the Editor, [Brunswick Beacon](#), 05.05.22

You know him. The World's Worst Superhero typically stars in bizarre news stories, often involving stupid, self-destructive stunts with guns, drugs, or alligators. Sometimes, all three. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis wants to be president. So, to boost his name-recognition, he's giving Florida Man a run for his money.

DeSantis' latest stunt is trying to make Mickey Mouse Public Enemy #1. Disney World is twice the size of Manhattan, covering 43 square miles of what was mostly swamp. Florida's Reedy Creek Improvement Act (1967) allowed Disney to drain the swamp, build infrastructure, and effectively tax itself.

Disney World opened in 1971. It became the world's most successful theme park, attracting 58 million visitors and generating \$5 billion in state and local tax revenue annually. It's America's largest single-site employer, with 80,000 employees.

After Florida's legislature passed its "Don't Say Gay" bill, Disney's CEO Bob Chapek called DeSantis. Chapek expressed concern that the legislation could "be used to unfairly target gay, lesbian, non-binary and transgender kids and families."

DeSantis signed it anyway. Then he retaliated against Disney by dissolving the Reedy Creek district. Analysts say that will cost neighboring counties \$1 billion and hike property taxes by 25%, because Disney taxes itself more than Florida law allows outside the special district. So, it's stupid and self-destructive, in true Florida Man tradition.

But wait, there's more! As the Supreme Court ruled in 1998, DeSantis' retaliation violated the First Amendment because he punished Disney for exercising its protected right of free speech. We know that's why he did it because he said so. "They even tried to attack me to advance their woke agenda," DeSantis whined.

DeSantis wants to take his act on the road. Thanks, but no thanks! We don't need your stupid, self-destructive stunts. Go back to Florida, man.

Kristine Garrity
2nd Vice Chair
Brunswick County Democratic Party
Calabash