



Florida Commission on Ethics
 P. O. Drawer 15709, Tallahassee, Florida 32317-5709
 "A Public Office is a Public Trust"

COMPLAINT

1. PERSON BRINGING COMPLAINT:

Name: Nikki Fried Telephone Number: (850) 222-3411
 Address: 201 South Monroe Street, Suite 300
 City: Tallahassee County: Leon State: FL Zip Code: 32301

2. PERSON AGAINST WHOM COMPLAINT IS BROUGHT:

Use a separate complaint form for each person you wish to complain against:
 Name: Ron DeSantis Telephone Number: (850) 717-9337
 Address: 400 South Monroe Street. PL 05
 City: Tallahassee County: Leon Zip Code: 32399-0001
 Title of office or position held or sought: Governor

3. STATEMENT OF FACTS:

Please provide a full explanation of your complaint, describing the facts and the actions of the person named above and why you believe he or she violated the law. Include relevant dates and the names and addresses of persons whom you believe may be witnesses. Please do not submit more than 15 pages, including this form. Please do not submit video or audio tapes, CDs, DVDs, flash drives or other electronic media; such material will not be considered part of the complaint and will be returned.

4. OATH

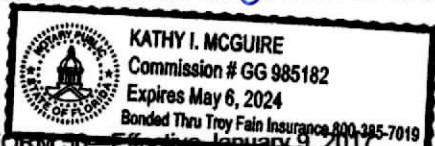
STATE OF Florida
 COUNTY OF Leon

I, the person bringing this complaint, do swear or affirm that the facts set forth in the foregoing complaint and attachments thereto are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me by means of physical presence or online notarization, this 22nd day of March, 2023, by Nikki Fried (name of person making statement)

Nikki Fried
 SIGNATURE OF COMPLAINANT

Kathy I. McGuire
 (Signature of Notary Public)



(Print, Type, or Stamp Commissioned Name of Notary Public)

Personally Known OR Produced Identification
 Type of Identification Produced: _____



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Name: Nikki Fried Telephone Number: (850) 222-3411
 Address: 201 South Monroe Street, Suite 300
 City: Tallahassee County: Leon State: FL Zip Code: 32301

2. PERSON AGAINST WHOM COMPLAINT IS BROUGHT:

Use a separate complaint form for each person you wish to complain against:
 Name: Friends of Ron DeSantis Telephone Number: (813) 254-3369
 Address: 610 South Boulevard
 City: Tampa County: Hillsborough Zip Code: 33609
 Title of office or position held or sought: N/A

3. STATEMENT OF FACTS:

Please provide a full explanation of your complaint, describing the facts and the actions of the person named above and why you believe he or she violated the law. Include relevant dates and the names and addresses of persons whom you believe may be witnesses. Please do not submit more than 15 pages, including this form. Please do not submit video or audio tapes, CDs, DVDs, flash drives or other electronic media; such material will not be considered part of the complaint and will be returned.

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STATE OF Florida
 COUNTY OF Leon

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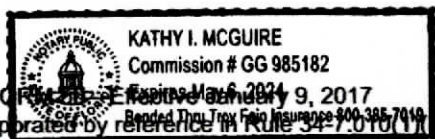
Sworn to (or affirmed) and subscribed before me by means of physical presence or online notarization, this 22nd day of March, 2023, by Nikki Fried (name of person making statement)

Nikki Fried
 SIGNATURE OF COMPLAINANT

Kathy I. McGuire
 (Signature of Notary Public)

(Print, Type, or Stamp Commissioned Name of Notary Public)

Personally Known OR Produced Identification
 Type of Identification Produced: _____



Section 112.31485 prohibits gifts from political committees. For purposes of Section 112.31485, the term “gift” means any purchase, payment, distribution, loan, advance, transfer of funds, or disbursement of money or anything of value that is not primarily related to contributions, expenditures, or other political activities authorized pursuant to chapter 106.

Friends of Ron DeSantis is a political committee registered with the State of Florida Division of Elections pursuant to Chapter 106. As stated in its Statement of Organization of Political Committee filed January 5, 2018, the political committee was formed to support the candidacy for Ron DeSantis for Governor. Ron DeSantis was re-elected as Governor at the November 2022 general election and cannot seek re-election to that office.¹

Florida law prohibits Ron DeSantis or a member of his immediate family from soliciting or knowingly accepting, directly or indirectly, any gift from a political committee. In addition, a political committee is prohibited from giving, directly or indirectly, any gift to Ron DeSantis or a member of his immediate family.

On February 21, 2023, Friends of Ron DeSantis paid \$235,244.52 to the Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach. See **Exhibit A** listing of expenditures of Friends of Ron DeSantis for January and February of 2023. Media reports indicated that Ron DeSantis’ top donors and supporters gathered at the Four Seasons Resort Palm Beach for a three-day retreat as part of an effort to increase his national profile in advance of an anticipated run for the Republican nomination as President of the United States in 2024. See **Exhibit B** Politico article “Longtime Trump backers flock to DeSantis event,” dated February 25, 2023.²

Included on the listing of expenditures of Friends of Ron DeSantis for January and February of 2023 are several other expenditures which appear to be not primarily related to contributions, expenditures, or other political activities authorized pursuant to chapter 106. These expenditures include, but are not limited, to:

- An expenditure of \$142,388.65 to the Four Seasons Hotel Miami on January 27, 2023 for a meeting expense.

¹ An updated Statement of Organization of Political Committee was filed November 4, 2022 indicating that the political committee was also supporting Jennifer Collins for St. Johns County School Board, Laurie Cox for Leon County School Board, Will Furry for Flagler County School Board, and Jessie Thompson for Volusia County School Board. Each of these individuals were elected at the November 8, 2022 general election.

² <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/02/25/trump-desantis-event-00084447>

- An expenditure of \$11,895.90 to Dirty French Steakhouse on February 13, 2023 for food and beverages.
- Several expenditures totaling \$86,107.86 to Ace Specialties LLC of Lafayette, LA for “store inventory.”³
- Expenditures for Tumblers (\$2,503.80 on February 13, 2023 to Tervis Tumbler Company) and “Event Supplies” (\$2,415.44 on February 28, 2023 to Classic T-Shirts)

In addition to the penalties provided in Section 112.317, a person who violates Section 112.31485 is subject to a civil penalty equal to three times the amount of the gifts, which shall be paid to the General Revenue Fund of the state.

³ Ace Specialties LLC’s webpage describes its mission as “Promoting brands across the United States, raising and customer loyalty, highlighting the importance of American-made products.” See <https://acespecial.com>



Campaign Expenditures

Friends of Ron DeSantis

This information is being provided as a convenience to the public, has been processed by the Division of Elections and should be cross referenced with the original report on file with the Division of Elections in case of questions. About the Campaign Finance Data Base

Rpt Yr	Rpt Type	Date	Amount	Expense Paid To	Address	City State Zip	Purpose	Typ Reimb
2023	M2	02/01/2023	1,653.87	ANEDOT	1340 POYDRAS STREET #1770	NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112	CREDIT CARD FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/01/2023	3,384.94	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	SOFTWARE	MON
2023	M2	02/01/2023	11,145.63	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	FUNDRAISING EXPENSE	MON
2023	M2	02/01/2023	7,209.00	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	TRANSPORTATION	MON
2023	M2	02/01/2023	32,523.89	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	DIGITAL/POLITICAL CONSULTING	MON
2023	M2	02/07/2023	17.80	ANEDOT	1340 POYDRAS STREET #1770	NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112	CREDIT CARD FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/07/2023	556.87	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/08/2023	-3,000,000.00	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	CONTRIBUTION REFUND	REF
2023	M2	02/13/2023	11,805.90	DIRTY FRENCH STEAKHOUSE	1200 BRICKELL AVENUE	MIAMI, FL 33131	FOOD AND BEVERAGE	MON
2023	M2	02/13/2023	2,593.80	TERVIS TUMBLER COMPANY	P. O. BOX 25636	MIAMI, FL 33102	TUMBLERS	MON
2023	M2	02/14/2023	788.28	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/16/2023	11,324.28	DICKINSON WRIGHT PLLC	1825 EYE STREET, SUITE 900	WASHINGTON, DC 20006	LEGAL FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/16/2023	5,250.00	EPYON TECHNOLOGIES	315 BEARD STREET	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303	IT AND WEB SUPPORT	MON
2023	M2	02/16/2023	177.78	KUNDINGER KELLY	1815 ATLANTIS PLACE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M2	02/16/2023	18,635.00	SHUTTS & BOWEN, LLP	P.O. BOX 919770	ORLANDO, FL 32891	LEGAL FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/16/2023	169.52	STEPHENSON CHRISTINE	900 RIGGINS ROAD APT. 437	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M2	02/16/2023	63.00	WASHINGTON JACKLYN	2223 ORANGE AVE. EAST APT. 223	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32311	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M2	02/21/2023	5,928.11	ACE SPECIALTIES, LLC	P.O. BOX 80427	LAFAYETTE, LA 70598	STORE INVENTORY	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	175,000.00	FLEXPOINT MEDIA, INC.	P. O. BOX 1051	NEW ALBANY, OH 43054	MEDIA PLACEMENT	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	5,200.00	FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE	5050 W. TENNESSEE STREET	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32399	INCOME TAXES	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	5,145.00	FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE	5050 W. TENNESSEE STREET	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32399	INCOME TAXES	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	235,244.52	FOUR SEASONS RESORT PALM BEACH	2800 S. OCEAN BLVD.	PALM BEACH, FL 33480	EVENT EXPENSE	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	5,000.00	HMB STRATEGIES, LLC	3167 ANDALUSIA AVENUE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32311	FUNDRAISING CONSULTING	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	213.51	MEYER ROBERT	1234 N. BRONOUGH STREET, #3	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M2	02/21/2023	2,831.14	RIGHT COUNTRY LISTS	117 N. ST. ASAPH STREET	ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314	FUNDRAISING EXPENSE	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	29,042.00	UNITED STATES TREASURY	P. O. BOX 409101	OGDEN, UT 84409	INCOME TAXES	MON
2023	M2	02/21/2023	702.74	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/22/2023	1.13	ANEDOT	1340 POYDRAS STREET #1770	NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112	CREDIT CARD FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/27/2023	9,050.00	PROGRESSIVE CASUALTY INSURANCE	6300 WILSON MILLS ROAD, #33	MAYFIELD VILLAGE, OH 44143	INSURANCE	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	12,140.97	ACE SPECIALTIES, LLC	P.O. BOX 80427	LAFAYETTE, LA 70598	STORE INVENTORY	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	2,415.44	CLASSIC SHIRTS INC.	110 PORRO STREET	QUINCY, FL 32351	EVENT SUPPLIES	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	10,000.00	GP3 STRATEGIES, LLC	1823 ATLANTIS PLACE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303	POLITICAL CONSULTING	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	1,826.35	HMB STRATEGIES, LLC	3167 ANDALUSIA AVENUE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32311	FUNDRAISING EXPENSE/TRAVEL	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	198.95	LEYTE-VIDAL DANIEL	212 W. 1ST AVENUE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M2	02/28/2023	8,998.47	ROBERT MATKINS & COMPANY, P.A.	610 S. BOULEVARD	TAMPA, FL 33606	ACCOUNTING SERVICES	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	292,445.82	SALESFORCE.COM, INC.	415 MISSIION STREET 3RD FLOOR	SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105	DATABASE SERVICES	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	13,440.00	SHUTTS & BOWEN, LLP	P.O. BOX 919770	ORLANDO, FL 32891	LEGAL FEES	MON
2023	M2	02/28/2023	162.64	STEPHENSON CHRISTINE	900 RIGGINS ROAD APT. 437	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M2	02/28/2023	2,042.59	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON

-2,075,761.06

39 Expenditure(s) Selected

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Florida Department of State
Division of Elections

Campaign Expenditures

Friends of Ron DeSantis

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[About the Campaign Finance Data Base](#)

Rpt Yr	Rpt Type	Date	Amount	Expense Paid To	Address	City State Zip	Purpose	Typ Reimb
2023	M1	01/03/2023	419.50	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/04/2023	2.32	ANEDOT	1340 POYDRAS STREET #1770	NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112	CREDIT CARD FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/06/2023	28,128.18	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	FUNDRAISING EXPENSE	MON
2023	M1	01/06/2023	30,156.84	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	DIGITAL/POLITICAL CONSULTING	MON
2023	M1	01/06/2023	8,507.00	REPUBLICAN PARTY OF FLORIDA	PO BOX 311	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32302	TRANSPORTATION	MON
2023	M1	01/10/2023	297.64	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	26,078.63	ACE SPECIALTIES, LLC	P.O. BOX 80427	LAFAYETTE, LA 70598	STORE INVENTORY	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	36,652.22	ACE SPECIALTIES, LLC	P.O. BOX 80427	LAFAYETTE, LA 70598	STORE INVENTORY	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	400.00	AJ STRATEGIES LLC	1561 SYLVESTER CIRCLE, S.E.	ATLANTA, GA 30316	FUNDRAISING CONSULTING	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	11,000.00	DCE PRODUCTIONS	5415 W. SLIGH AVENUE SUITE 102	TAMPA, FL 33634	EVENT PRODUCTION	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	5,822.50	DICKINSON WRIGHT PLLC	1825 EYE STREET, SUITE 900	WASHINGTON, DC 20006	LEGAL FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	15,000.00	ELLO CREATIVE, LLC	2003 ELLICOTT DRIVE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308	DIGITAL CONSULTING	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	7,500.00	EPYON TECHNOLOGIES	315 BEARD STREET	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303	IT AND WEB SUPPORT	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	5,000.00	HMB STRATEGIES, LLC	3167 ANDALUSIA AVENUE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32311	FUNDRAISING CONSULTING	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	7,902.76	ROBERT WATKINS & COMPANY, P.A.	610 S. BOULEVARD	TAMPA, FL 33606	ACCOUNTING SERVICES	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	1,554.27	SAP CONCUR	601 108TH AVENUE, N.E., #1000	BELLEVUE, WA 98004	SOFTWARE	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	12,427.50	SHUTTS & BOWEN, LLP	P.O. BOX 919770	ORLANDO, FL 32891	LEGAL FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	1,437.79	TARGET PRINT & MAIL	2843 INDUSTRIAL PLAZA DRIVE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301	PRINTING	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	3,570.00	TM STRATEGIC CONSULTING LLC	1375 JACKSON STREET SUITE 202	FORT MYERS, FL 33901	MEDIA PLACEMENT	MON
2023	M1	01/17/2023	89.86	VALDES ALEXANDRA	675 W. PENSACOLA STREET, #16	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32304	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/17/2023	683.88	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/18/2023	0.65	ANEDOT	1340 POYDRAS STREET #1770	NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112	CREDIT CARD FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/19/2023	4,513.00	ACE SPECIALTIES, LLC	P.O. BOX 80427	LAFAYETTE, LA 70598	STORE INVENTORY	MON
2023	M1	01/19/2023	16,635.27	CONSERVATIVE CONNECTOR LLC	190 MONROE AVENUE, #300	GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503	FUNDRAISING EXPENSE	MON
2023	M1	01/19/2023	181.13	CURNETTE LINDSEY	850 S. GADSDEN STREET APT. 626	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/19/2023	15,100.00	DCE PRODUCTIONS	5415 W. SLIGH AVENUE SUITE 102	TAMPA, FL 33634	EVENT PRODUCTION	MON
2023	M1	01/19/2023	203.62	KUNDINGER KELLY	1815 ATLANTIS PLACE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32303	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/19/2023	443.56	MICHAEL HOPKINS PHOTOGRAPHY	738 S.W. 119TH WAY	DAVIE, FL 33325	PHOTOGRAPHY	MON
2023	M1	01/19/2023	26.25	PUGLIA NICK	1609 HASOSAW NENE	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/19/2023	615.91	SANCHEZ TAYLOR	909 W. ORIENT ROAD	TAMPA, FL 33603	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/19/2023	529.93	SOCARRAS LAUREN	3501 S. BLAIR STONE ROAD APT. 1024	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/19/2023	275.13	STEPHENSON CHRISTINE	900 RIGGINS ROAD APT. 437	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/19/2023	1,135.08	TXTWAVE, LLC	225 BROADWAY SUITE 420	SAN DIEGO, CA 92101	MESSAGING SERVICES	MON
2023	M1	01/24/2023	150.85	ANEDOT	1340 POYDRAS STREET #1770	NEW ORLEANS, LA 70112	CREDIT CARD FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/24/2023	2,550.00	ARISTOTLE INTERNATIONAL, INC.	205 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE SE	WASHINGTON, DC 20003	SOFTWARE	MON
2023	M1	01/24/2023	594.33	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON
2023	M1	01/25/2023	19,808.11	CS STRATEGIES, LLC	1401 H STREET, N.W. SUITE 550	WASHINGTON, DC 20005	TRAVEL/EVENT/OFFICE EXPENSE	MON
2023	M1	01/27/2023	794.93	ACE SPECIALTIES, LLC	P.O. BOX 80427	LAFAYETTE, LA 70598	STORE INVENTORY	MON
2023	M1	01/27/2023	430.00	BUTLER NICOLE	901 RIGGINS ROAD, #938	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/27/2023	142,388.65	FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MIAMI	1435 BRICKELL AVENUE	MIAMI, FL 33131	MEETING EXPENSE	MON
2023	M1	01/27/2023	3,750.00	LUCIDLINK, INC.	59 WEST PORTAL AVE #256	SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94127	SOFTWARE	MON
2023	M1	01/27/2023	40.99	STEPHENSON CHRISTINE	900 RIGGINS ROAD APT. 437	TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308	REIMBURSEMENT	RMB
2023	M1	01/27/2023	2,526.03	VIKING EXECUTIVE PROTECTION, I	1622 WISCONSIN AVENUE, N.W.	WASHINGTON, DC 20007	SECURITY SERVICES	MON
2023	M1	01/31/2023	543.94	WINRED TECHNICAL SERVICES, LLC	1776 WILSON BLVD., #530	ARLINGTON, VA 22209	PROCESSING FEES	MON

415,867.45

44 Expenditure(s) Selected

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ELECTIONS

Longtime Trump backers flock to DeSantis event

The Florida governor is hosting a retreat for donors and other supporters in Palm Beach, Fla.



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis looks on after announcing a proposal for Digital Bill of Rights, Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, at Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Fla. | Wilfredo Lee/AP Photo

By **ALEX ISENSTADT**

02/25/2023 10:50 AM EST

Updated: 02/25/2023 08:05 PM EST

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The group of Ron DeSantis' top donors and supporters gathering in Palm Beach, Fla., this weekend includes some longtime backers of former President Donald Trump.

evening with a cocktail reception and dinner for the approximately 150 attendees. The event, billed as a celebration of the “Florida blueprint,” precedes a likely DeSantis presidential bid that would pit him against Trump. And the roster of people there shows that the governor is appealing to major GOP figures who’ve previously aligned themselves with the former president.

People spotted at the opening night of the conference included Wisconsin Sen. Ron Johnson, who on Friday evening participated in a panel discussion DeSantis moderated on the “medical establishment.” Johnson has long been a staunch Trump ally: On Jan. 6, 2021, Johnson tried to arrange for a list of fake electors backing Trump to be handed to then-Vice President Mike Pence.

A Johnson spokesperson, however, said Johnson did not intend to endorse in the primary.

“Sen. Johnson historically does not endorse in primaries and plans to continue this trend and remain impartial in 2024,” said Corinne Day, a Johnson spokesperson.

Also seen was Arizona Republican Jim Lamon, a solar energy executive and Trump donor who aggressively aligned himself with the former president during his unsuccessful 2022 Senate bid. Lamon was also involved in efforts to overturn the 2020 election results showing President Joe Biden defeated Trump. Lamon was one of 11 GOP electors who signed a document claiming to be Arizona’s legitimate electors, which was mailed to the Senate and the National Archives.

Another attendee is Arkansas Sen. Tom Cotton, who was once seen as a potential Trump pick to be CIA director. Cotton, who passed on a 2024 presidential bid after laying the groundwork for a prospective campaign, on Saturday evening appeared on a DeSantis-moderated panel with conservative commentator Ann Coulter and Texas Rep. Chip Roy. Cotton, who like DeSantis



WHICH HE VOTED TO CELEBRATE THE 2020 ELECTION.

Mick Mulvaney, who was Trump's acting White House chief of staff, was also seen at the DeSantis retreat. Mulvaney left the administration following the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, and he has harshly criticized the former president over his decision to wage a 2024 comeback, saying Trump is "the only Republican who could lose" the election.

And among the major figures in the Republican donor world who attended DeSantis' event: Roy Bailey, a longtime Texas fundraiser who helped lead Trump's campaign finance committee. The event also included several of DeSantis' fellow governors, including Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, who benefited from a Trump-hosted fundraiser during his reelection bid last year, and Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, who was also backed by Trump in his 2022 reelection campaign.

"Gov. Stitt believes Ron DeSantis has done an excellent job leading as Florida's governor, especially through COVID, supporting law enforcement, reforming education and supporting parental rights," said Carly Atchison, a spokesperson for Stitt, who met with Trump at Mar-a-Lago last year.

The retreat comes as DeSantis is increasing his national profile. The governor is set to publish a new book on Tuesday, and this past week, he appeared before law enforcement officers in Philadelphia, New York City and Chicago. DeSantis is also benefiting from a newly launched nonprofit group that could promote his policies. Those present at the conference said DeSantis made no mention of whether he planned to run for president, though many of those in attendance said they were eager to see him do so.


On Saturday, DeSantis is to hold another panel discussion with Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds, whose home state hosts the GOP's first presidential nominating contest. A person close to Reynolds, however, said the governor did not plan to endorse in the primary. Reynolds, who chairs the Republican Governors



SOUTH CAROLINA SEN. TIM SCOTT IN IOWA.

Other attendees spotted in the crowd included Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie, Utah Sen. Mike Lee and 2022 Nevada Senate candidate Adam Laxalt, a longtime DeSantis friend. Conservative commentators Coulter and Dana Loesch were also present.

The retreat caps off a major week in the Republican donor world. On Thursday evening, Trump hosted a fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago, and on Friday, several prospective presidential candidates gathered in Austin, Texas, for a donor conference organized by longtime GOP strategist Karl Rove.

FILED UNDER: RON JOHNSON, FLORIDA, DONALD TRUMP, DONALD TRUMP 2020, RON DESANTIS, 

Huddle


A play-by-play preview of the day's congressional news



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