

Ramaswamy Takes on DeSantis Over Fight Against Disney and Wokeness



by Roger L. Simon

“Trouble ahead, trouble behind” the Grateful Dead used to sing, and right now those lyrics are ringing true for Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis.

The “trouble ahead” is obviously Donald J. Trump, who, at this point, is leaving the governor in the electoral dust in the Republican presidential derby.

The “trouble behind” is outsider candidate Vivek Ramaswamy,

who is beginning to catch up to DeSantis. In any case, he's closer in the latest polls to the Florida governor than DeSantis is to Trump with the biotech entrepreneur's bullet trending upwards.

Ramaswamy—who, unlike many politicians, writes for himself—has an op-ed in the May 5 edition of USA Today entitled “[Ron DeSantis says he's fighting 'woke' companies like Disney. But it's just a PR move.](#)”

The article raises an interesting question. To what extent in this presidential election, indeed in all elections, do we hold candidates responsible for their past sins? Shouldn't we just judge them by their improvements, by the good things?

Secondarily, are those sins really in the past or are those improvements simply eyewash?

And finally, do we need a Statute of Limitations on past sins? After all, Reagan and Churchill were once liberals, as was this columnist in the last century, as he is often reminded in the comments.

For Ramaswamy, there is clearly hypocrisy involved with DeSantis. He isn't alone in the accusation. Trump has leveled the same charge at the Florida governor but the tech entrepreneur and author of “Woke, Inc.” has done it more precisely.

He [writes](#):

“But here's the problem for DeSantis: as governor, he was also a purveyor of indefensible corporate welfare to Disney itself. In 2021, DeSantis signed a [political anti-discrimination statute](#) that penalized companies for engaging in viewpoint-based censorship on the internet. This was a signature piece of legislation in his anti-woke crusade, but the law specifically [exempts companies in Florida](#) that own a theme park larger than 25 acres. Disney's internet properties

and streaming services were exempted from a statute that was designed to stem corporate 'wokeness' in Florida."

How could that have happened? Ramaswamy explains:

"DeSantis' own director of legislative affairs lobbied for the Disney loophole. DeSantis' chief budget officer, policy chief and his then-general counsel also worked behind the curtain to change the terms of the bill to create the special carveout for Disney. Several lawmakers who voted in favor of that law had received campaign contributions from Disney.

"In his February 2022 announcement that he was purging Disney's perks, DeSantis declared: 'The corporate kingdom finally comes to an end, there's a new sheriff in town, and accountability will be the order of the day.' That declaration falls flat when the same sheriff granted the corporate kingdom one of the crony capitalist privileges he ceremoniously cancelled."

Ouch.

Ramaswamy goes on to say current Florida tech legislation has new loopholes for Disney. He also highlights DeSantis' supposed reining in of BlackRock's ESG (environmental, social and governance) investment in Florida as similar eyewash.

In defense of DeSantis, as I write in my forthcoming book (self-promotion alert) "American Refugees," getting off a plane in Florida in the midst of the COVID-19 "pandemic" was indeed a liberating experience. It felt as if you were arriving in a free, relatively maskless, country, even coming from red Tennessee, as I did.

People had flocked to Florida more than any other state and the governor deserved credit for it. I was enthralled at the time and returned from that Orlando CPAC proudly sporting a black "DeSantisland" baseball cap.

I had particularly loved that DeSantis had stuck it to the new woke Disney where, it seemed, Mickey and Minnie were about to switch roles and even Jiminy Cricket would be transgendered.

But I didn't know much of what Ramaswamy referenced at the time, how this was all something of a charade. As I started to learn this, not just from the outsider candidate, but elsewhere too, I began to revise my opinion of the Florida governor, which is reflected in my book.

What we need now more than ever is real, not faux, transparency.

For a while, Trump has been telling us everything good that was done by DeSantis was copied from him. I used to think that was unfair. Now, I wonder.

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