



Florida Lawmaker Says Disney ‘Stepped in Quicksand and Made a Drastic Unforced Error’

Description

USA: ‘The only way they can get to Détente on this is Bob Chapek is going to have to go.’

As the battle between Florida and Disney escalates following Gov. Ron DeSantis signing the “[Parental Rights in Education](#)” bill into law, one Sunshine State lawmaker says Disney “stepped in quicksand and made a drastic unforced error.”

As [The Epoch Times](#) reported April 1, DeSantis floated the possibility at a March 31 press conference in Ponte Vedra Beach that lawmakers in the Sunshine State might repeal the [1967 Reedy Creek Improvement Act](#) in response to Disney’s ongoing opposition to the recently signed “Parental Rights in Education” law, dubbed by liberal opponents as the “Don’t Say Gay” bill. State Rep. Spencer Roach, a Republican, [revealed through social media](#) that lawmakers had already met twice to discuss the idea, saying “if Disney wants to embrace woke ideology, it seems fitting that they should be regulated by Orange County.”

The announcement came as part of the ongoing feud between Disney and the state of Florida since the governor signed the bill into law. Previously silent about the bill until he faced backlash [from a minority](#) of Disney’s LGBT employees, Disney CEO Bob Chapek issued a statement on March 11, apologizing to them for not being a “stronger ally.” In a show of action, [Chapek also announced](#) Disney would put an immediate stop to all political donations in Florida. In a subsequent demonstration of solidarity, Disney Corporation issued [a statement](#) vowing that its new goal was to have “this law to be repealed by the legislature or struck down in the courts” and to support organizations working to make that happen. DeSantis quickly reminded Disney that Florida “is governed by the interests of the people of the state of Florida—it is not based on the demands of California corporate executives.”

Recent polling shows the [overwhelming majority](#) of Florida’s primary voters, including a [significant majority of Democrats](#), strongly support this legislation. [Breitbart reported](#) that “a flood of families are canceling Disney memberships” to their amusement parks and the Disney+ streaming service. The hashtag, “BoycottDisney” [trended on social media](#) and one of the largest mothers’ advocacy organizations in the United States, Moms for Liberty, has [warned Disney of the pushback](#) it will face if it

does not stop interfering with Florida's laws.

"CEO Bob Chapek needs to be removed," Roach [asserted on social media](#) April 3. "A man obsessed with sexualizing 4-year-olds should not run a company that built its brand on preserving the innocence & magic of childhood."

"I think Disney leadership is well aware they have stepped in quicksand and made a drastic unforced error," Roach told The Epoch Times. "I think they are aware of how badly they've messed up here and the only way they can get to détente on this is Bob Chapek is going to have to go. I think his days are numbered and he's going to be out as CEO in very short order. Whoever comes in is going to have to publicly acknowledge to some extent that Disney is not going to be held hostage by a small number of employees who think they can dictate Disney's political stance and if some employees don't like that they are going to have to leave."

Roach said he has been to a dozen campaign events over the past few weeks and it's very clear that "people are outraged." At this point, Roach believes the only way for Disney to save face is to acknowledge they didn't read or understand the bill and they are going to stop meddling in Florida's legislative affairs. He also suggests Disney make a clear statement affirming or reaffirming their support of parental rights in Florida.

While he would not provide names, Roach also said he has had numerous discussions with Disney lobbyists who have been very vocal in advising corporate leadership that they are very badly mistaken about the political climate in Florida and they strongly advised them to stay out of it. But the executives in California "did not heed that warning."

'It's Also Disney Making Money'

In the "strategic gamble" against Florida's Parental Rights legislation, James Bailey—professor of leadership at George Washington University's School of Business—told the [Washington Examiner](#) that Disney knows what it's doing.

"For Disney to step up and say, 'Hey, we're a progressive company, and you can't tell us what to do,' is actually helping their reputation," Baily told The Washington Examiner. "And so, this is Disney being Disney and adhering to their values, but it's also Disney making money." Baily further argued that "Disney has accountants, marketing people, and focus groups that have been able to suss out that their business model will be better off by pushing back on the legislation." While there is a risk of losing some conservative customers, Baily believes the move could gain some new liberal customers.

Conversely, Roach contends the business model of gaining some new liberal customers while sacrificing conservatives in a state where registered Republican voters recently overtook Democrats [by 100,000](#) is not a winning strategy.

"Perhaps in California," Roach said. "A lot of the executives of Disney live in a California bubble." Roach also believes Chapek's apologies and promises to have the law overturned is a political gamble based on ignorance, scripted talking points, and a lot of bad advice.

"The information that Bob Chapek has been receiving is flat out wrong," Roach argued. "Despite the fact that we have a strong Disney presence in Florida, this is a California company with California

values. Chapek is a man who was raised in Chicago and lives in California. I don't have any idea how often he actually comes to Florida, but I have to believe he is getting his advice from corporate executives in California. I would be absolutely shocked if Chapek actually took the time to read the seven-page bill. I'm sure he didn't. He got his talking points from someone in California."

It's a sentiment shared by [DisneyBizJournal.com](https://www.disneybizjournal.com) editor and Disney shareholder Ray Keating.

"Here's a suggestion for Disney CEO Bob Chapek: Get back to business, that is, excellence in storytelling, and stop wasting shareholders' money on political crusades that have nothing to do with Disney's business," Keating [told Fox News Digital](#). "We all have the right to have our voices heard on issues, but not on the shareholders' dime."

Roach predicts this is the "very beginning of the shareholder revolt."

"I think the executives at Disney are well aware that they have made a very critical error and I think their shareholders are starting to respond," Roach asserted. "The problem with woke corporations is they fail to realize that they exist to serve their shareholders, not their employees. What happened at Disney has happened at many other corporations, a very small minority of woke radical progressive employees putting pressure on management to speak out on political issues and many times, management is hijacked by these folks thinking it represents a broad consensus of public opinion when it actually doesn't. Ultimately, the shareholders will make a decision on whether Bob Chapek gets to keep his job, not the employees. So, I think you have a real disconcerted corporate model here where a lot of people in the public and employees seem to forget that the shareholders who drive these decisions at companies, not the employees."

Repeal of Reedy Creek More 'Opportunistic than Retaliatory'

While some have accused DeSantis of trying to [punish Disney](#) with a show of "[post-Trump authoritarianism](#)," Roach insists the move to repeal Reedy Creek is more "opportunistic than retaliatory."

"In the past, it was politically impossible to try to dismantle Reedy Creek because of the overwhelming political power Disney has had in the state of Florida," Roach told The Epoch Times. "But now they are politically vulnerable." According to Roach, Disney's political clout is at a "55-year low." Republican candidates are even [returning Disney's campaign contributions](#). "This egregious error Disney has made has provided a politically opportunistic time to capitalize on this moment for us to correct this free-market apparition," Roach said.

According to Roach, Reedy Creek has been [hotly debated](#) and [seriously questioned](#) for years. DeSantis said the repeal would not be entirely retaliatory, but rather made as part of a larger effort to strip Disney of what he called "special privileges." Repeal, Roach said, is "an opportunity to correct something that should have [been] fixed a long time ago."

There are numerous other amusement parks in Florida. As Roach explained, the "special privileges" Disney takes for granted are numerous and unique to Disney alone. Of the near 40 square miles of land Disney controls, Reedy Creek exempts all of that land from "all county and nearly all state regulations." This means Disney is exempt from impact fees, building codes, surface water control, drainage, and all waste treatment regulations. In fact, Roach said Disney even gets to pick the

residents—of which there are only 36—who live in the “state-cities” they’ve created in Bay Lake and Lake Buena Vista.

“The problem with this now is they are straying away from what [Disney’s] original vision was,” Roach said.

As Roach explained, it’s not just the theme parks anymore. Disney has had long-laid plans to [build a \\$300 million movie studio](#) on the property. There’s a fourth, [out-of-this-world expensive](#) Disney-owned hotel where the most modest package starts at \$4,809 on weeknights. Disney also has plans for a [new apartment complex](#) and [expansive residential communities](#). Disney is also working on plans to [develop a business park](#) and transfer jobs to the Sunshine State from its California operation.

“When you look at the developers and businesses that want to invest there, Disney has an absolute advantage because they don’t have to comply with all of the state and county regulations,” Roach clarified. “Reedy Creek is an absolute perversion of the free market system. It is the largest privately controlled taxing district in the state of Florida, maybe in the United States. The problem with Reedy Creek is we never should have done this in the first place. It’s absolutely anti-free market. There are multiple theme parks near Orlando Osceola County/Orange County area, seven to 11 others. None of them have this special carveout. Only Disney. So it’s absolutely anti-free market and an enormous tax windfall for Disney. The largest tax evasion scam in the history of the state of Florida and possibly in the United States.

“I suspect that Bob Chapek’s days as CEO are numbered,” Roach reiterated. “He will be a casualty of this, and I hope Disney will come out with some kind of statement reconfirming their commitment to parental rights in Florida and acknowledging they are not going to be held hostage by a group of radical, progressive employees who do not speak for the majority of Florida voters or even a majority of Disney employees.”

The Epoch Times reached out to Disney CEO Bob Chapek for comment but received no response.

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