

# [***DeSantis Doubles Down On War With Disney: Zero Chance State Will Back Down After Cancellation Of $1 Billion Project***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:688M-P431-JBCM-F2XM-00000-00&context=1516831)

Forbes.com

May 19, 2023 Friday

Copyright 2023 Forbes LLC All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 717 words

**Byline:** Sara Dorn, Forbes Staff

**Highlight:**  They [Disney] can do whatever they want, DeSantis said Friday, as he faces growing criticism from Democrats who blame him for losing the $1 billion project.

**Body**

**Topline**

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) said Friday there is zero chance the state will back down from its efforts to curb Disney s power, taking a defiant stance in his first public comments after the company canceled a $1 billion office project in Florida amid a political war with the governor.

<figure>

<figcaption>

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks after signing three education bills on the campus of New College of Florida in Sarasota, Florida, on Monday, May 15, 2023.

Thomas Simonetti/Washington Post via Getty Images

</figcaption></figure>

**Key Facts**

Disney on Thursday announced it was nixing plans to build a $1 billion office complex in Orange County, Florida, amid a ballooning feud with DeSantis and the state that began when Disney denounced the state s Don t Say Gay law.

DeSantis repeated his claim that allowing Disney to govern themselves . . . is not good ***politics*** or conducive to a free market economy, when asked by a state lawmaker in New Hampshire to respond to the news while he visited the critical early GOP primary state ahead of the expected launch of a 2024 presidential campaign.

They can do whatever they want . . . the chance of us backing down from that is zero, he added.

**Chief Critics**

DeSantis defensive stance comes as Florida s Democratic lawmakers blast the governor over the scrapped development: Rep. Darren Soto, who represents the district where the project would have been, attributed the decision to Gov. DeSantis failed Disney policies in atweet, while Rep. Maxwell Frostsaidthe state is suffering because of Gov. Ron DeSantis inability to lead. Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings (D) also seemed to blame DeSantis in a statement thatattributed the decisionto the lack of an inclusive and collaborative work environment between the state of Florida and the business community.

**Contra**

DeSantis office blamed the decision on Disney s financial straits, falling market cap and declining stock price, calling it unsurprising and claiming the state was unsure whether [the project] would come to fruition in a statement Thursday.

**Key Background**

Disney, citing Florida s business-friendly climate, announced in 2021 it would relocate more than 1,000 employees from southern California to the new office complex as part of the project that was expected to bring 2,000 new jobs to the state. But the company s rhetoric has since changed following DeSantis takeover of the board that controls its special district in the Orlando area and subsequent moves to restrict the company s decision making power. In March, Disney CEO Bob Iger called DeSantis anti-business and anti-Florida, and last week issued a veiled threat on an earnings-related conference call, telling analysts: Does the state want us to invest more, employ more people, and pay more taxes, or not? the**New York Times**reported. Disney sued the state last month in response to DeSantis various moves to curb its control over the special district, accusing him and his hand-picked board of a targeted campaign of government retaliation. Disney did not explicitly attribute its decision to pull the project due to its feud with DeSantis in an email to employees Thursday, in which Disney theme park and consumer products chairman Josh D Amaro cited considerable changes that have occurred since the announcement of this project, including new leadership and changing conditions.

**Tangent**

Former President Donald Trump pounced on the news Thursday, accusing DeSantis of single-handedly losing the investment and costing the state thousands of jobs because he was too weak to fight for his state.

**What To Watch For**

DeSantis isreportedly planningto launch his widely anticipated presidential campaign next week, which would make him the sixth formal challenger to former President Donald Trump. Sen. Tim Scott (R-S.C.) also filed paperwork to run Friday.

**Further Reading**

Disney Amid War With DeSantis Kills $1 Billion Florida Complex (Forbes)

Disney s Bob Iger To Ron DeSantis: Does The State Want Us To Invest More... Or Not? (**Forbes**)

Disney Sues DeSantis After Board Votes To Get Rid Of Special Agreement(**Forbes**)

Florida Lawmakers Pass More Bills Targeting Disney Amid Legal Fight(**Forbes**)

DeSantis Disney Board Meeting: Here s How Governor And His Appointees Could Change Disney World(**Forbes**)

**Load-Date:** May 20, 2023

**End of Document**