

# [***Here Are The 5 DeSantis Allies Including Conservative Donors, Christian Activists He Picked To Run Disney s District***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:67NK-6021-JBCM-F36N-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** The governor s appointees include one of the major proponents behind what s known as the Don t Say Gay bill, which Florida is penalizing Disney for opposing.

**Body**

**Topline**

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) appointed five political allies Monday to the board that will now oversee Walt Disney World s special district, giving donors, political activists and other GOP businessmen and attorneys power to make decisions about Walt Disney World s property after Florida lawmakers penalized Disney for opposing the state s law known by critics as Don t Say Gay.

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Cinderella Castle at Walt Disney World's Magic Kingdom Park in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

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**Key Facts**

**Bridget Ziegler:** A member of the school board in Sarasota, Florida, Ziegler was one of the primaryproponentsbehind the Parental Rights in Education bill, known as Don t Say Gay, and co-founded the right-wing activist group Moms for Liberty, which has pushed for the anti-woke policies in schools that DeSantis administration has enacted.

Ziegler s husband Christian was recently elected to lead the Republican Party of Florida, which Florida ***Politics***reportshas donated $1.75 million to DeSantis campaign (Ziegler and her husband have personally donated $42 and $252, respectively).

**Martin Garcia:**A Republican attorney from Tampa, Garcia s appointment has been criticized after he donated $50,000 to DeSantis political action committee, and he was alsonamedin court testimony as having been consulted when DeSantis administration was preparing to suspend local prosecutorAndrew Warrenfor espousing pro-abortion rights views.

**Ron Peri:**A Florida-based businessman who runs The Gathering USA, a right-wing Florida-based Christian ministry for men.

**Michael Sasso:**A Florida-based attorney whorunsthe Orlando chapter of the conservative Federalist Society, whom DeSantis hasappointedtomultiplestate commissions in the past and hasdonated$770 to the governor s campaign and PAC.

**Brian Aungst, Jr.:** A Florida-based attorney who specializes in land use, whom the governor has also previouslyappointedto a state judicial nominating commission.

**What To Watch For**

DeSantis appointees still have to be approved by the state senate, after which they ll take over the board that oversees the special district. The governor said Monday the board will have its first meeting next Wednesday, where they re expected to approve additional funding for first responders like firefighters.

**What We Don t Know**

How big of an impact the board will have. The special district previously called Reedy Creek but now renamed to the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District doesn t control Walt Disney World itself or its offerings, but does operate the infrastructure on its property in the same way as a municipal government. That means the board will have control over things like issuing construction permits, waste management, roads and other major structural facets of Disney s property, even if they re not connected to Disney itself. While board members won t have any direct control over Disney s rides or other park offerings, DeSantis hinted Monday the board members could try to use their leverage over Disney with construction permits and the like to influence the company to be less woke.

**Crucial Quote**

When you lose your way, you've got to have people that are going to tell you the truth, DeSantis said about Disney. I think all of these board members very much would like to see the type of entertainment that all families can appreciate.

**Surprising Fact**

Disney has not commented since DeSantis signed the bill on Monday, but the company has previously said it did not intend to fight the government overhauling its special district. We are focused on the future and are ready to work within this new framework, Walt Disney World President Jeff Vahle said in a statement after the bill imposing the special district changes passed the state legislature.

**Chief Critic**

State Rep. Anna Eskamani (D-Orlando), who represents the area where Walt Disney World is located, slammed the special district bill and DeSantis appointees in astatementMonday as extreme and political donors and hostile conservative cronies, and says, Disney still maintains the same tax breaks but their First Amendment rights it sends a message to any private individual or company that if you don t purport to what the Governor wants, then you ll be punished.

**Key Background**

Reedy Creek was first created by the Florida government in 1967 and has largely existed without controversy before becoming a political target last year. While the special district is separate from Disney, the company previously had significant influence over it. As the district s majority landowner, the company had outsized power in electing its board, and Disney hand-picked the other residents who resided on the property and had a vote in how it was run, asreportedby the. The district s long standing status was challenged after Disney publiclyopposedthe Don t Say Gay bill after coming under widespread pressure to do so, saying it should never have been passed or enacted, and that its goal as a company is for this law to be repealed by the legislature or struck down in the courts. That spurred DeSantis and Florida Republicans to attack Disney andenactlegislation getting rid of Reedy Creek entirely. After local officials said getting rid of the special district would force itstax burdenonto local taxpayers, however, the legislature changed course, deciding instead to pass legislation that would keep the special district intact but now change its board to be appointed by the governor.

**Further Reading**

DeSantis Now Controls Disney World s Special District Here s What That Means(Forbes)

DeSantis appoints conservative supporters to new Disney board(Washington Post)

Ron DeSantis Appoints Parental Rights Advocate to Oversee Disney World(Variety)

What Bridget Ziegler s Agenda Means for LGBTQ Youth(Bloomberg)

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