

**Antonia Hover**

---

**From:** Ellen Plendl  
**Sent:** Monday, January 23, 2023 8:53 AM  
**To:** Consumer Correspondence  
**Subject:** RE: Docket No. 20230000  
**Attachments:** Untitled; more of the same!; Untitled; ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida!; Consumer Inquiry - Florida Power & Light Company

See attached customer correspondence and reply for Docket No. 20230000.

## Antonia Hover

---

**From:** Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 16, 2023 12:21 PM  
**To:** Ellen Plendl  
**Attachments:** Florida judge gives 'ghost' candidate OK to travel to Sweden.pdf; Some Northwest Florida FPL customers remain concerned of future rate changes \_ WEAR.pdf; \_Sinkhole\_ that shut down Wynwood street is not what it seems - Axios Miami.pdf

Monday 16 January 2023 1230 hours

Ellen Plendl  
Regulatory Consultant  
Florida Public Service Commission  
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach  
1-800-342-3552 (phone)  
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida despite given unfettered access to elected and appointed government officials and agencies in the furtherance of policies and agendas, which consist of pursuing poorly thought out sourcing of energy resources and a decidedly anti-consumer stance with the rate-paying public across the board. Ongoing investigations continue undercover the long-standing practices by these captains of industry to extract ever larger fees and electrical rates to aggrandize their oversized ambitions by direct and indirect political arrangements in backrooms.

The attached documentation clearly indicates the ongoing conditions of the electrical infrastructure in the State of Florida as well as the lengths to which these captains of industry try to influence governmental policy makers.

Please place these observations and articles in the appropriate docket to underscore the overwhelmingly calculated cold-hearted manner that these captains seem to influence the very elected/appointed representatives that should, instead, be seeking to comfort their constituents day-to-day hardships to pay for the aggrandizement of these out sized economic sectors.

Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Beatrice Balboa  
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008  
Pompano Beach, FL 33062-6631  
USA

Florida judge gives 'ghost' candidate OK to travel to Sweden  
By Martin E. Comas  
Orlando Sentinel

•  
Jan 10, 2023 at 6:34 pm

Former state Senate candidate Jestine Iannotti – who faces criminal charges related to the 2020 “ghost” candidate scandal – can live in Sweden for up to 90 days to visit her children and partner, a circuit court judge ruled Tuesday.

Judge Donna McIntosh, however, told Iannotti’s attorney that she would be required to return to Seminole County for any mandatory court appearances related to her case or any others in which she may be subpoenaed to testify.

“I just want to see her back,” McIntosh said.

Iannotti had asked the court last week to allow her to travel to Sweden for up to eight months starting Feb. 1 to spend time with her family. Chief Assistant State Attorney Stacey Straub Salmons did not object to Iannotti temporarily leaving the country, and noted that Iannotti has been cooperating with prosecutors on other cases tied to the “ghost” candidate scandal.

The brief afternoon court session followed a separate but related morning hearing in which McIntosh heard arguments on whether to order one former and three current Orlando Sentinel journalists to turn over records relating to Florida Power & Light, Matrix LLC and other nonprofit organizations and their possible involvement in the scheme to put up “ghost” candidates during that 2020 election season.

The records, which include checks, bank statements, emails, text messages and internal ledgers, were delivered to the Sentinel in a large envelope from an anonymous source.

An attorney for Eric Foglesong, a political consultant who is charged with falsifying finance records in that year’s state Senate election for District 9, said the documents would help him adequately prepare for Foglesong’s defense.

Political consultant Eric Foglesong is called forward to enter a plea during his arraignment in Seminole circuit court in Sanford, Tuesday August 2, 2022. Foglesong pleaded not guilty to felony charges of misreporting contributions to a “ghost candidate” during the campaign for a Florida Senate seat in 2020. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel)

Foglesong served as a consultant for Iannotti, who ran as an

independent candidate in the state Senate race that included Republican Jason Brodeur and Democrat Patricia Sigman. Iannotti never actively campaigned and spent much of the 2020 election season living in Sweden.

"Maybe there's a text message from a consultant that would absolve Mr. Foglesong," Jacob Stuart Jr. said in urging McIntosh to subpoena the records. "[Foglesong] is looking at a possible prison term. ... How is the Sentinel hurt in allowing us to look at this information?"

Sentinel attorney Minch Minchin argued that Florida's reporter's privilege law is designed to protect information that journalists gather while reporting news. Reporters also have a First Amendment right not to be forced to reveal their information or confidential sources in court.

Minchin cited several examples of previous court cases in which journalists were not compelled to release their records or sources of information.

"This is nothing but a fishing expedition," Minchin said of Foglesong's request.

He also said the reporters' records were not relevant to Foglesong's case.

Foglesong faces three felony and two misdemeanor charges, including that he falsified campaign records to conceal \$1,200 he gave Iannotti. He has pleaded not guilty.

Sentinel attorneys said the records are not physical evidence of a crime.

Stuart said the Sentinel has published more than 60 articles, columns and editorials regarding the "ghost" candidate scandal, which "paint a picture of a conspiracy" and possible criminality by other individuals and organizations.

Many of those articles were by investigative reporter Annie Martin, opinion columnist Scott Maxwell, content director for local news Jeff Weiner, and former investigative reporter Jason Garcia, who left the paper a year ago.

Stuart agreed he could instead subpoena the records from the organizations mentioned in the Sentinel articles.

"But that doesn't mean we would get text messages from another third party," he said. "We cannot obtain something, if we don't know where to obtain it. ... We are under a pressing clock for a

trial date this year.”

Salmons, of the State Attorney’s Office, told McIntosh that her office has nothing “in our possession” related to the records. She noted that her office is neutral in Foglesong’s motion.

“But we too are interested in these items and materials,” particularly if they include evidence of criminal conduct, she said.

The Sentinel is not a party to the case in which Foglesong is a defendant. Sentinel attorneys said they will appeal if McIntosh rules in favor of subpoenaing the records.

After listening to arguments for nearly an hour, McIntosh said she will issue a written ruling on Foglesong’s request to subpoena the journalists’ records.

None of the Sentinel’s articles or editorials regarding the ghost candidate scandal connects Foglesong with FPL, Matrix or other organizations, a search of the newspaper’s archives showed. Nor did the search show any coverage or reporting that Foglesong conspired with any organization on behalf of candidates for the state Senate.

Iannotti is facing six charges, including a felony related to submitting false campaign contribution reports.

A nonprofit organization run by consultants working for FPL paid for ads promoting Iannotti and two other independent state Senate candidates as progressives, in an apparent attempt to pull away votes from the Democratic candidates. Brodeur ultimately won the election that year. And he was reelected in last November’s general election.

Brodeur and FPL have denied any involvement in the scheme.

If Iannotti fails to return to Florida for a mandatory hearing, it would be a violation of her bond and could lead to her arrest and extradition. McIntosh said Iannotti could submit a new motion requesting additional time in Sweden during or after the 90-day period.

At Tuesday’s hearing, she sat quietly in the back of the courtroom wearing a mask.

Salmons said her office and Iannotti are working on a possible plea agreement, and it’s likely that Iannotti will be required to return to Florida to testify in other cases.

Jestine Iannotti leaves the Seminole County Jail after her arrest, Wednesday, May 25, 2022. Iannotti is one of three charged in a 2020 “ghost” candidate scheme involving a campaign for a state senate seat in Central Florida. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel) (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel)

Iannotti has helped the State Attorney’s Office in prosecuting two other people charged in the “ghost” candidate scheme. She testified in court last August that then-Seminole County GOP chair Ben Paris asked her to run for office. Her testimony helped convict him of a misdemeanor.

Last year, she told investigators that Foglesong identified Brodeur as a contributor to her campaign, according to court records. Brodeur’s name did not appear on any contribution reports for her candidacy.

# Some Northwest Florida FPL customers remain concerned of future rate changes

by Olivia Iverson  
Monday, January 9th 2023



WEAR

Those customers have experiences all across the board.

Promoted Links

Not all customers saw the increased rates that some criticized the company for.

One year later, not all bill increases stayed for good, but some customers remain skeptical for the future of their bill.

Gulf Power's merger with Florida Power and Light, and the rate changes that came with it, impacted customers differently in 2022.

"That bill basically doubled," Ryan Zenka, FPL customer said.

Zenka says the jump in his bill in January stuck through most of the year.

Other customers who prepared for the worst, saw relief.

Century Historical Society President Jerry Fischer told WEAR News over the phone Monday their bill dropped significantly after tripling the first month of the year.

Some led efforts to criticize the power company over the rate changes.

Attorney Mike Papantonio led a public campaign to demand answers from the Public Service Commission who approved the rates.

He told WEAR News over the phone Monday, those efforts went nowhere, criticizing the politicians who didn't "do their job" and support his efforts.

Representative Alex Andrade believes Papantonio misled the public.

He points to the ongoing challenge of those rates in Florida's Supreme Court, saying "our justice system doesn't allow for interference by politicians."

Florida Power and Light continues its four-year transition to decrease rates to match those customers in other parts of the state.

FPL spokesperson Sarah Gatewood says the company plans to go back to the PCS to address impacts they saw from continued fuel price increases and Hurricane Ian.

"Those are all temporary just until those costs are recovered, and then they roll off of the bill," Gatewood said. "Those will be, whatever time frame that is, as soon as those costs are done, they will be off the bill. And our four-year rate plan will still be in effect. So that base rate will step down every year until we are completely in line with the rest of FPL."

Some customers, like Zenka, remain skeptical of any future decreases to their bills.

"I think they're not going to level out at all," Zenka said. "I think they'll just keep going up."

FPL continues to highlight the options the offer customers to cut down on their usage, and to potentially save money.

WEAR News has provided a link from FPL on ways to cut down on usage, [here](#).



# "Sinkhole" that shut down Wynwood street is not what it seems

 Martin Vassolo



Miami police tweeted about a sinkhole in Wynwood. Screenshot: MiamiPD on Twitter

Did you hear about that "sinkhole" that formed in Wynwood this week?

**Driving the news:** [WSVN reported](#) on Monday that the ground gave way on Northwest Second Avenue — right in the middle of the popular tourist neighborhood, closing the street for hours.

- Miami police also [tweeted about the "sinkhole."](#)

**Why it matters:** Sinkholes can be deadly. Floridians may recall the story of a Tampa man who was killed when a [sinkhole formed under his bedroom and swallowed him](#).

**Yes, but:** This wasn't a sinkhole, just a poorly timed utility project.

- Florida Power & Light tells Axios its crews are undergrounding the power lines along Second Avenue, which involves "digging up sections of the roadway."
- FPL spokesperson Shawn Johnson said the work is supposed to take place overnight from midnight to 8am, but an "over-eager" contractor showed up hours early Monday and removed the metal plates

blocking the hole to continue the job.

**What they're saying:** Miami police responded, saw a hole in the ground and declared it a sinkhole, Johnson said.

- "As soon as we got wind of it, we got it all covered up," he said.

**The bottom line:** Whatever you want to call it, drivers should expect early-morning delays on Second Avenue going forward.

- FPL did not provide a timeline for when the project will be completed, but once it's done, the road will be repaved, Johnson said.

## Antonia Hover

---

**From:** Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, January 18, 2023 11:07 AM  
**To:** Ellen Plendl  
**Subject:** more of the same?!  
**Attachments:** Fort Myers Beach raise questions about the future of infrastructure - NBC2 News.pdf; DeSantis inauguration sponsored by companies he loves to bash.pdf

Wednesday 18 January 2023 1100 hours

Ellen Plendl  
Regulatory Consultant  
Florida Public Service Commission  
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach  
1-800-342-3552 (phone)  
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida despite given unfettered access to elected and appointed government officials and agencies in the furtherance of policies and agendas, which consist of pursuing poorly thought out sourcing of energy resources and a decidedly anti-consumer stance with the rate-paying public across the board. Ongoing investigations continue undercover the long-standing practices by these captains of industry to extract ever larger fees and electrical rates to aggrandize their oversized ambitions by direct and indirect political arrangements in backrooms.

The attached documentation clearly indicates the ongoing conditions of the electrical infrastructure in the State of Florida as well as the lengths to which these captains of industry try to influence governmental policy makers.

Please place these observations and articles in the appropriate docket to underscore the overwhelmingly calculated cold-hearted manner that these captains seem to influence the very elected/appointed representatives that should, instead, be seeking to comfort their constituents day-to-day hardships to pay for the aggrandizement of these out sized economic sectors.

Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Beatrice Balboa  
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008  
Pompano Beach, FL 33062-6631  
USA

# Fort Myers Beach raise questions about the future of infrastructure

 By **Jennifer Kveglis** 1 day Ago

FORT MYERS BEACH, Fla. — Florida Power and Light underground power lines could soon be coming to Fort Myers Beach.

In place of overhead power lines, the underground cables aim to withstand harsh weather conditions and create a stronger power grid.

The underground cables have been a concept brought to NBC2 since 2013. Now ten years and a Category 4 hurricane later, a FPL “Storm Secure” sign is posted on the corner of Estero Blvd and Carolina Ave.

# DeSantis inauguration sponsored by companies he loves to bash

Story by Isaac Arnsdorf • 6h ago | 5 likes 14 shares 1 Comment

Gov. Ron DeSantis (R-Fla.) has built his national profile, and possibly a future presidential run, on challenging major companies on controversial social issues. But some of those same companies and their lobbyists bankrolled his inaugural festivities this month.



DeSantis inauguration sponsored by companies he loves to bash © Lynne Sladky/AP


1

Two major fundraisers are lobbyists for Disney, the entertainment giant that DeSantis moved to punish for speaking out against its

that DeSantis's administration divested of state funds in retaliation for the firm's social impact standards. Additional listed sponsors included CVS Health and Walgreens, chain pharmacies that DeSantis criticized at a [recent news conference](#) on drug prices.




Sign in



Get Started Earning A Degree

Ad AIU Online



lobbyists in inaugural fundraising and festivities. DeSantis's team opted not to impose such restrictions.

A DeSantis spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment. One fundraiser, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk on behalf of the governor's team, defended the approach as an expression of independence.

"When you start saying, 'I'm only going to take money from people I support,' I don't think that's a good look," the fundraiser said. "The fairest thing a politician can do is, if someone wants to support their cause they can support their cause, but just make

decisions based on philosophy and merit, not who's a donor."

### [DeSantis takes aim at federal government as he is sworn into a second term](#)

To his critics, though, DeSantis's jousting with corporations looks like an abuse of government power — New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu (R), also overwhelmingly reelected and eyeing a presidential run, has called it "[big government authoritarianism](#)." Others say the confrontations only serve to generate culture-wars publicity while still condoning corporate giveaways — putting a fresh, combative spin on the implied pact between big business and social conservatives that has been the linchpin of the Republican coalition since the 1980s "Reagan revolution."

"DeSantis is not a real populist. He actually allows corporations to get away with a lot as long as they don't question him," said Rep. Anna Eskamani (D-Orlando), an outspoken opponent of corporate tax breaks on the state House's Ways and Means Committee.

"Even when they're targeted, they walk back with their tail between their legs and write big checks because they only want to maintain close relationships and get their bills and tax breaks passed."

DeSantis has emerged from his landslide reelection last November as the most highly anticipated potential 2024 challenger to Trump, even topping the former president in some early surveys. The governor is planning to use his state's upcoming legislative session to pick more fights with big business over data privacy and ethically minded investing, highlighting issues [designed to help him in a presidential primary](#). He revisited the theme in his inaugural speech, calling Florida "where woke goes to die."

"He showed the world, stay in your lane, do what you do, and don't get involved in stuff outside your business interests," said a Republican lobbyist in Florida, speaking on the condition of anonymity to be candid about sensitive client matters. "That's red meat to Republicans, especially in these times around covid and CRT," meaning critical race theory.



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) speaks during the Republican Jewish Coalition meeting in Las Vegas on Nov. 19. (David Becker/for The Washington Post)

Related video: Gov. Ron DeSantis outlines new COVID-19 policies (WPTV West Palm Beach, FL)

states most prominent lobbyists. Nick Iarossi of Capital City Consulting, Brian Ballard of Ballard Partners, Bill Rubin of Rubin, Turnbull & Associates; and Jeff Hartley of Smith, Bryan & Myers.

Iarossi was an early backer of the governor and has become an especially close associate to a politician who keeps an unusually tight circle. As a lobbyist, he represents companies in DeSantis's crosshairs.

His client BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager, drew DeSantis's ire for [advocating](#) investment strategies that take account of sustainability and climate change, sometimes known in the industry as ESG for environmental, social and governance risks. DeSantis has attacked ESG as something that "sacrifices returns at the altar of the select few, unelected corporate elites and their radical woke agendas."

In December, Florida's chief financial officer said the state would withdraw \$2 billion from BlackRock's management to protest the company's ESG standards. On Tuesday, DeSantis announced additional measures against ESG in the state pension system, specifying that BlackRock and asset managers will make investment decisions based exclusively on maximizing returns. The governor also proposed legislation barring ESG considerations in lending.

Another of Iarossi's clients, the Tampa Bay Rays baseball club, also lost state money for crossing the governor. In June, he vetoed funding for a new team training facility after the Rays called for gun control and donated to the advocacy group Everytown for Gun Safety in response to the mass killings in Buffalo and Uvalde, Texas.

Iarossi also lobbies for PayPal, the online payment processor that DeSantis attacked last year for cutting off accounts linked to far-right groups such as the Proud Boys, who were charged in the attack on the U.S. Capitol, and the truckers who shut down Canada's capital. In proposing bans on "discriminating" based on users' ideology, the governor said companies "should not be colluding with one another to marginalize people that they have political disagreements with."

Ballard — who has also been close to Trump and expanded his lobbying operation into Washington during Trump's presidency — represents Google and Amazon, which have been frequent targets for DeSantis's attacks on "Big Tech." DeSantis has pushed to penalize the companies, alongside Facebook and Twitter, for allegedly disfavoring conservative viewpoints and profiting from user data.

"Are consumers going to have the choice to consume the information they choose? Or are oligarchs in Silicon Valley going to make those choices for us?" DeSantis said in 2021. "No group of people should exercise such power, especially not tech billionaires in Northern California."

Rubin, who has also been close to past Florida governor and potential 2024 candidate Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.), lobbies for the Carnival cruise line. DeSantis clashed with the cruise industry over [requiring vaccinations](#) to restart operations after the pandemic.

Hartley, along with another sponsor, the Southern Group lobbying firm, represent Disney. When the company, one of the state's largest employers, publicly opposed DeSantis's bill restricting LGBTQ discussions in Florida schools (known to its critics as the "don't say gay" law), he retaliated with legislation eliminating the special tax treatment governing the Disney World theme park in Orlando. The standoff is [expected to resurface](#) in this year's legislative session, with talks focusing on appointments to the board overseeing the district. Disney did not respond to requests for comment.

### [How Ron DeSantis used Disney's missteps to wage war on corporate America](#)

The complete list of inauguration donors is not yet available because of the state campaign finance reporting schedule, but some of the contributions were disclosed in the Florida Republican Party's latest report. One of the top-tier sponsors was Florida Power & Light, which gave the party \$1 million on Dec. 30. The state utility known as FPL also contributed to DeSantis's campaign and reached a settlement agreement with his administration to raise rates by almost \$5 billion over five years. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

Another top sponsor, known as Propel Florida, gave the party \$500,000 on Dec. 20. The company has been spending on lobbying and political contributions since 2020 to push data privacy legislation, presented as a check on "Big Tech."



Other listed sponsors include a subsidiary of Heritage Insurance, at \$100,000, and People’s Trust Insurance, at \$25,000. Both companies [participated](#) in a taxpayer-financed relief program for property insurers signed by DeSantis. The companies did not respond to requests for comment.



DeSantis speaks after his inauguration for a second term on Jan. 3 in Tallahassee.  
© Lynne Sladky/AP

The state party also received a \$25,000 contribution on Dec. 16 from Walgreens, which appeared as an inauguration sponsor alongside rival CVS Health. DeSantis has been at odds with those companies over vaccines, which he has [increasingly vilified](#), and last week he singled out chain pharmacies and pharmacy benefit managers (another of CVS’s business lines) at a media event about prescription drug costs.

“You shouldn’t have to rely on one big corporate chain every time,” DeSantis said at the event.

A Walgreens spokesman said the company supports the inaugurations of incoming governors nationwide on a bipartisan basis. “Walgreens is supportive of initiatives that improve access and transparency to prescriptions and lower patients’ out of pocket costs,” the company said in a statement. “That’s why we look forward to working with Governor DeSantis on this important issue to all Floridians.”

Sponsor Scott Bessent, who gave the state party \$50,000 on Dec. 27, previously managed investments for Democratic super-donor George Soros before starting his own fund with an initial investment from Soros of \$2 billion. DeSantis has joined other Republicans in portraying Soros as an enemy, such as sending campaign fundraising appeals seeking “immediate support to stop Soros from destroying Florida.”

## Antonia Hover

---

**From:** Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 20, 2023 11:28 AM  
**To:** Ellen Plendl  
**Attachments:** Sunburn — The morning read of what's hot in Florida politics — 1.20.23.pdf; Florida Power & Light buries power lines underground in Golden Gate neighborhood.pdf; Florida judge rejects request to subpoena journalists' documents in 'ghost' candidate case.pdf; A year after notifying targets, state won't reveal status of 'ghost' candidate probe.pdf

Friday 20 January 2023 1130 hours

Ellen Plendl  
Regulatory Consultant  
Florida Public Service Commission  
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach  
1-800-342-3552 (phone)  
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida despite given unfettered access to elected and appointed government officials and agencies in the furtherance of policies and agendas, which consist of pursuing poorly thought out sourcing of energy resources and a decidedly anti-consumer stance with the rate-paying public across the board. Ongoing investigations continue undercover the long-standing practices by these captains of industry to extract ever larger fees and electrical rates to aggrandize their oversized ambitions by direct and indirect political arrangements in backrooms.

The attached documentation clearly indicates the ongoing conditions of the electrical infrastructure in the State of Florida as well as the lengths to which these captains of industry try to influence governmental policy makers.

Please place these observations and articles in the appropriate docket to underscore the overwhelmingly calculated cold-hearted manner that these captains seem to influence the very elected/appointed representatives that should, instead, be seeking to comfort their constituents day-to-day hardships to pay for the aggrandizement of these out sized economic sectors.

Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Beatrice Balboa  
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008  
Pompano Beach, FL 33062-6631  
USA

**“Florida judge rejects request to subpoena journalists’ documents in ‘ghost’ candidate case”** via Martin E. Comas of the Orlando Sentinel — A former and three current Orlando Sentinel journalists do not have to hand over records relating to Florida Power & Light’s and other organizations’ possible involvement in the ‘ghost’ candidate scheme to **Eric Foglesong**, a political consultant charged with falsifying campaign finance records, a judge ruled Wednesday. In her ruling, Circuit Judge **Donna McIntosh** said Florida law makes clear that ‘professional journalists enjoy a qualified privilege’ not to disclose their information, including the identity of any source, that they obtained while doing their jobs in gathering news.

# Florida Power & Light buries power lines underground in Golden Gate neighborhood

---

REPORTER: RODARIS RICHARDSON

PUBLISHED: JANUARY 19, 2023 3:33 PM EST

UPDATED: JANUARY 19, 2023 9:58 PM EST

GOLDEN GATE

Power lines are part of the deal in many Southwest Florida neighborhoods, but soon they'll be gone from a Golden Gate neighborhood.

On Thursday, Florida Power and Light began work on burying power lines.

“We know that underground power lines perform about 85% better than overhead power lines during Hurricane Irma. And they perform about 50% better in day-to-day conditions,” said Troy Todd, a senior project manager for FPL.

And that's what has Alonso Wiener excited.

Power's going to go out during powerful hurricanes like Ian.

But he's tired of losing electricity during a typical day.

"We've had issues in the past where power flickers, especially during summer," Wiener said. "You know Floridians, you take the ac from us, we suffer so yeah, we're very happy that that's not gonna happen."

The power company said the utility is still analyzing how well underground power lines held up during Ian compared to overhead power lines.

No matter the results, the company plans to keep burying power lines.

Already, FPL has converted 17 miles worth of overhead lines.

This year, we're expected to add seven miles of overhead power lines to be converted to underground. And as a result, that'll potentially impact another 1000 customers with better reliability, the power company said.

"We're very happy that this is going to fix the power insecurity that we could have," Wiener said.

FPL hopes in time, every power line will be buried.

So, you might be wondering how did FPL decide to bury the power lines in that Golden Gate neighborhood?

There is criteria set by the Public Service Commission and part of that criteria is to look at where outages happened during previous hurricanes.

During Irma, the neighborhood was without power for 11 days.

## Florida judge rejects request to subpoena journalists' documents in 'ghost' candidate case

By Martin E. Comas

Orlando Sentinel

•

Jan 18, 2023 at 5:45 pm

A former and three current Orlando Sentinel journalists do not have to hand over records relating to Florida Power & Light's and other organizations' possible involvement in the "ghost" candidate scheme to Eric Foglesong, a political consultant charged with falsifying campaign finance records, a judge ruled Wednesday.

In her ruling, Circuit Judge Donna McIntosh said Florida law makes clear that "professional journalists enjoy a qualified privilege" not to disclose their information, including the identity of any source, that they obtained while doing their jobs in gathering news.

She also dismissed Foglesong attorney's argument that the documents held by the Sentinel journalists are relevant to his defense. The journalists are investigative reporter Annie Martin, columnist Scott Maxwell, content director for local news Jeff Weiner and former investigative reporter Jason Garcia, who left the paper a year ago.

"While Defendant [Foglesong] asserts that the information in the possession of the Orlando Sentinel purportedly reflects a statewide scheme to put forth ghost candidates in the 2020 election, Defendant fails to allege, much less show, how that is relevant to unresolved issues in this case," McIntosh said in her ruling. "It is hard to imagine how information regarding the alleged involvement of FPL, Matrix LLC, Grow United and People Over Profits in a scheme to promote ghost candidates would tend to prove or disprove Defendant's guilt in this matter."

She added that Foglesong has not made "a clear and specific" effort to obtain the information in the documents from other sources.

"Defense counsel has candidly admitted that no attempts have been made to obtain the information directly from FPL, Matrix LLC, Grow United, or People Over Profits," McIntosh wrote in her ruling.

Sentinel's attorney Minch Minchin of Jacksonville praised the ruling.

"The judge came to the correct conclusion: This was a pretty

straight forward attempt to take the journalists' work product," he said. "The judge properly saw the defendants' subpoena for the fishing expedition that it was."

Foglesong's attorney, Jacob Stuart Jr., said in a written statement to the Sentinel that "we are disappointed" but "respect" the ruling.

"Make no mistake, we remain steadfast that Mr. Foglesong is innocent and will continue our shared work in preparing his defense for a jury trial in the future," Stuart said.

Foglesong, a Winter Park resident, faces three felony and two misdemeanor charges related to overseeing candidate Jistine Iannotti's 2020 independent candidacy for Senate District 9, which at the time covered all of Seminole County and a southern portion of Volusia County.

He has pleaded not guilty.

Iannotti is referred to as a "ghost" candidate because she never campaigned for the state Senate seat and spent much of the 2020 election season traveling in Stockholm, Sweden. But she was promoted by GOP operatives with political advertisements and mailers showing her as a progressive candidate, apparently as an effort to siphon votes away from Democrat Patricia Sigman. The race was won by Republican Sen. Jason Brodeur in the November 2020 general election.

Foglesong is accused of contributing \$1,200 to Iannotti's campaign while hiding the source of the money by falsifying her contribution reports, according to charging documents.

Last November, Stuart asked the court to order the four journalists to turn over records relating to FPL, Matrix LLC, Grow United and People Over Profits, and the organizations' possible involvement in the "ghost" candidate scheme.

The Sentinel received the records in a large envelope from an anonymous source, and it included checks, bank statements, emails, text messages and internal ledgers.

At a court hearing this month, Stuart said that he needed the records to adequately defend Foglesong, particularly because he would likely be sentenced to prison if convicted. Stuart also argued that seeking the information from FPL and the other organizations would be overly cumbersome and time consuming, considering that a trial is scheduled for this year.

"Maybe there's a text message from a consultant that would

absolve Mr. Foglesong,” Stuart said during the Jan. 10 court hearing in urging for the records. “How is the Sentinel hurt in allowing us to look at this information?”

None of the Sentinel’s dozens of articles or editorials regarding the ghost candidate scandal connects Foglesong with FPL, Matrix or other organizations. Nor did any of the Sentinel’s reporting show that Foglesong conspired with any organization on behalf of candidates for the state Senate.

Brodeur and FPL have denied any involvement with the “ghost” candidate scheme. Brodeur’s name did not appear on any contribution reports for Iannotti’s candidacy.

McIntosh ruled that the records in the Sentinel journalists possession were not physical evidence of a crime. Otherwise, they likely would have had to turn them over, according to Florida law.

To obtain a journalist’s records, a person must show the documents are relevant and material to an unresolved issue in a case, according to the state law. The person must also show they have exhausted all alternative sources of obtaining the information, and that there is a compelling need for the documents, according to the law.

Foglesong did not meet any of those three criteria, McIntosh ruled.

Foglesong “has failed to demonstrate that there is a compelling interest in requiring disclosure” of the documents,” she said in her ruling.

Earlier this month, McIntosh granted a request by Iannotti – who faces criminal charges and is currently free on bond – to live in Sweden for up to 90 days to visit her children and partner before her trial. Iannotti is required to return to Seminole County for any mandatory court appearances related to her case or any others in which she may be subpoenaed to testify.



# A year after notifying targets, state won't reveal status of 'ghost' candidate probe

Story by Annie Martin, Orlando Sentinel • 5h ago



Comments

More than a year after Miami prosecutors told three people and one organization involved in [Florida's 2020 "ghost" candidate scheme](#) that [they were targets of an investigation](#), it's unclear if the probe has progressed, with the prosecuting office unwilling say whether it's still active.

The Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office sent "prior to" letters in December 2021 to political consultant Alex Alvarado, former Democratic fundraiser Dan Newman, nonprofit chair Richard Alexander and Let's Preserve the American Dream, a nonprofit with close ties to Florida's big business lobby, Associated Industries of Florida.



The probe emerged from the investigation that resulted in the arrest of former state lawmaker Frank Artiles and a man he was accused of paying to run for a competitive state Senate seat in 2020.

This week, a spokesperson for State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle's office declined to say whether the investigation was still ongoing.

"There is no record of filed charges for these individuals/entities in our computer data base," spokesperson Ed Griffith wrote in an email.

The letters, dated Dec. 23, 2021, said Let's Preserve the American Dream and the three individuals were under investigation for "possible violations of Florida elections laws and campaign finance laws." They did not provide any details about what those

violations could entail.

Alvarado is a consultant who ran two committees that spent a combined \$550,000 on ads championing three independent state Senate candidates, including one in a Central Florida race, as part of an apparent vote-siphoning scheme in 2020. According to records and interviews in the case against Artiles, Alvarado [paid two young women to list their names](#) in the committees' registration records while he controlled the groups behind the scenes.

An attorney representing Alvarado did not respond to questions from the Sentinel about the status of the investigation. Records in the Artiles case show [investigators surveilled Alvarado's Tallahassee home](#) and his wife's workplace in October 2021 in preparation for a possible search warrant, though it's unclear if a search was ever conducted.

Those committees received all of their money from Grow United, a nonprofit organization controlled by consultants working closely with Florida Power & Light. Executives for the utility said they had no knowledge of the "ghost" candidate scheme that has resulted in the arrests of five people, including Artiles. Alexander was listed as the chairperson for Grow United on incorporation filings but documents released as part of the case against Artiles suggest he had no role in running the organization. He did not respond to a phone call seeking comment this week.

Newman is a former Democratic fundraiser who worked with Grow United and Let's Preserve the American Dream. He declined to comment on the status of the state attorney's investigation.

Mohammad O. Jazil, an attorney for Let's Preserve the American Dream, wrote in an email that the organization complies with state and federal laws.

"Its executive director met voluntarily with state prosecutors—without the promise of immunity and without invoking any Fifth Amendment privileges—to assist the prosecutors with their work," Jazil wrote. "Any attempt to suggest otherwise because of a selective reading of a letter sent over a year ago is irresponsible and does a disservice to the Sentinel's readers."

NewDay USA 100 VA Cashout Loan

Ad NewDay USA (NMLS#1043) ▶

Let's Preserve the American Dream's executive director, Ryan Tyson, sat for a nearly two-hour-long interview with investigators in September 2021, [in which he acknowledged ordering a \\$600,000 contribution to Grow United](#) the previous year, according to a transcript of an interview.

He said he also told the political consultant who controlled Grow United to expect a request for a donation from Alvarado, another operative who was working as a subcontractor to Let's Preserve the American Dream. But Tyson said he had no control over whether Grow United ultimately passed the money on to Alvarado's political committees.

Tyson and Let's Preserve the American Dream are closely linked to Associated Industries of Florida, the big-business lobbying group whose members include FPL, sugar grower Florida Crystals and phosphate miner Mosaic Co. The nonprofit, which was originally named "Associated Industries for America's Future," is run out of AIF's headquarters in Tallahassee. Tyson is a former AIF vice president and a longtime political advisor to the organization.

Artiles, who was accused of paying Alex Rodriguez nearly \$45,000 to run in a South Florida Senate race, is awaiting trial. Rodriguez pleaded no contest in August 2021 to taking the bribes. As part of his plea deal, Rodriguez agreed to testify against Artiles during his trial.

In Central Florida, political consultant Eric Foglesong, former candidate Jistine Iannotti and former Seminole County GOP Chairman Ben Paris [also were charged in connection with the scheme](#). Foglesong and Iannotti, who are accused of submitting falsified campaign contribution reports, pleaded not guilty and are awaiting trial.

[A jury found Paris guilty in September](#) of causing his cousin's name to be falsely listed on Iannotti's contribution reports.

## Antonia Hover

---

**From:** Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, January 22, 2023 3:21 PM  
**To:** Ellen Plendl  
**Subject:** ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida?!  
**Attachments:** Lee County woman seeks to receive, pay FPL bill to avoid later surprises.pdf; Swamplandia, by Andrew Cockburn.pdf; Harris headed to Florida on Roe v. Wade anniversary - POLITICO.pdf; Coming Soon\_ A National Charging Network for Electric Vehicles - The Bulwark.pdf

Sunday 22 January 2023 1530 hours

Ellen Plendl  
Regulatory Consultant  
Florida Public Service Commission  
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach  
1-800-342-3552 (phone)  
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my ongoing deepest disappointment that the electrical utility industrial sector continues to mismanage the electrical infrastructure throughout the State of Florida despite given unfettered access to elected and appointed government officials and agencies in the furtherance of policies and agendas, which consist of pursuing poorly thought out sourcing of energy resources and a decidedly anti-consumer stance with the rate-paying public across the board. Ongoing investigations uncover the long-standing practices by these captains of industry to extract ever larger fees and electrical rates to aggrandize their oversized ambitions by direct and indirect political arrangements in backrooms.

The attached documentation clearly indicates the ongoing conditions of the electrical infrastructure in the State of Florida as well as the lengths to which these captains of industry try to influence governmental policy makers.

Please place these observations and articles in the appropriate docket to underscore the overwhelmingly calculated cold-hearted manner that these captains seem to influence the very elected/appointed representatives that should, instead, be seeking to comfort their constituents day-to-day hardships to pay for the aggrandizement of these out sized economic sectors.

Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,  
Beatrice Balboa  
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008  
Pompano Beach, FL 33062-6631  
USA

# Lee County woman seeks to receive, pay FPL bill to avoid later surprises

---

REPORTER: ANDRYANNA SHEPPARD

WRITER: JOEY PELLEGRINO

PUBLISHED: JANUARY 18, 2023 4:07 PM EST

UPDATED: JANUARY 18, 2023 7:24 PM EST

FORT MYERS

What happens if your power is on, but the electricity company says your balance has been \$0 for almost three months? One Lee county woman doesn't want to find out and is battling to get and pay her Florida Power & Light bill.

Cynthia Taylor hasn't seen an FPL bill since October 2022.

"This is the last one I received, so I haven't gotten November, December, or one for January," Taylor said. "I always pay the whole amount, and my electricity has never been shut off or nothing like that."

Taylor says it all started with Hurricane Ian. She didn't have power for almost two weeks afterward, but when her electricity came back on, FPL didn't bill her.

“I was raised to pay my bills,” Taylor said. “So, every month, I pay my bills out, the whole amount. Whatever it’d be, I pay it.”

Taylor called FPL multiple times, and each time she was told she didn’t have a balance. One representative even told her the meter was changed.

“It’s not working; you don’t see no numbers on here,” Taylor said of her meter. “No numbers.”

All Taylor wants to do is pay for the utility she’s using.

“I just want to stay on track,” Taylor said. “At the end, you may think you’re getting away with something... then it might harm you worse because you’re thinking you’re getting away. And I’m not gonna do that.”

WINK News emailed FPL asking if someone from the company would fix Taylor’s meter and send her a bill. FPL says it got in touch with her but could not say much else. Instead, WINK News got an update from Taylor.

“I got a call that same afternoon. I had been calling them like, what, three or four or five times and no response back. When you stepped in, it was like, right, yeah. So, I appreciate you,” Taylor said.

The meter was finally fixed.

“I was excited after they came out because I got some peace and rest,” Taylor said. “I was able to sleep throughout the night again because I was just tossing and turning.”

Taylor’s past electricity bills rarely went above \$150, so she doesn’t expect to pay more than \$450 for the missing months. She still has not been billed, however, and is not due for the upcoming month yet.

Two weeks after Ron DeSantis moved into the governor's mansion in Tallahassee, Florida, in January, a political action committee, Susie Wiles, summarized a pair of important goals in a confidential memo to DeSantis. "It is the governor's desire," she wrote, "to fundraise and maintain a high political profile at all times—inside and outside the state." Wiles's word, DeSantis has spent the past four years pursuing these objectives with unrelenting vigor.

His methodical ascent to national political stardom has now taken a quantum leap, thanks to the evidence of his reelection victory and the losses suffered by many of Donald Trump's chosen candidates in the November election. Trump's apparent humiliation ignited joy across the political spectrum: at long last, a leader had arisen to pull the Republican Party from his toxic grip. Richard Viguerie, known as a "funding father" of modern conservatism, celebrated the disappearance of Trump since he left office—"He costs us 20 percent of the Republican vote," he wrote. DeSantis as "the future," praising his "spine and fight." The Murdoch media machine, presumably on the ground, has thrown its weight behind the Florida governor, as bluntly expressed by the *New York Post* with the headline "DeSantis: The Future of the Republican Party" and a comparison to the young Bill Clinton. Even DeSantis's opponents have noted his projection of competence. The *Wall Street Journal* lauded the governor's performance during Hurricane Ian as "pretty remarkable." The quasi-liberal online outlet *Reason* proclaimed that DeSantis might be the "more popular, effective, and stable" leader that "non-MAGA conservatives are looking for."

DeSantis may indeed be the chosen leader of the non-MAGA right, but he has been careful to maintain a low profile. In 2018, during his first campaign for governor, he professed his intent to "drain the swamp in Tallahassee, Florida, like Washington." This past September, he told the National Conservatism Conference of his determination to "drain the swamp of the Universe," who, "not content to line their pockets, not content to make huge profits, want to use their power to destroy the world."

But throughout his time in office, DeSantis has done his best to line corporate pockets, an approach that has sometimes spectacularly so. When Las Vegas real estate mogul Robert Bigelow pressed a check for \$100 million in July, the governor was so overcome by the enormity of the sum that he reportedly clutched it tightly against his chest. Bigelow's donation was largely inspired, so he told the Associated Press, by his belief that the rising tide of conservatism, like Reagan, the record suggests that it will also grant him political influence—whatever goes into the DeSantis campaign's financial lubrication, has tended to receive an agreeable reception. Wiles's fundraising memo, leaked in 2021, was published alongside an instructive email correspondence between senior staff regarding a high-priority donor. Referring to a golf game scheduled for DeSantis and three lobbyists from the golf industry, Wiles asked, "Is this the one that is \$25k per?" "A little more," the committee's financial consultant, Duke Barker, replied, "going to do \$100k." Duke then moved \$75,000 to the Republican Party of Florida, whose funds Wiles had previously used for those of the DeSantis political action committee; by late 2022, Duke had donated \$3.26 million, according to the *Wall Street Journal* Watch. In a memo, Barker laid out a projected price list for potential donors. Inclusion in a golf foursome cost \$25,000, while a one-on-one carried the stiffer tab of \$100,000. Skipping the golf for a fifteen-minute meeting cost \$25,000; inclusion in a dinner came to \$150,000; and one hour at an "intimate and high dollar" gathering cost \$250,000.

His problem was that the Florida Republican establishment had already picked its candidate: agricultural rising star in the party. DeSantis's only hope was to get a signal boost from Trump. But Trump, according to his friends and advisers, had never heard of this obscure congressman, who, in any case, had failed to endorse him. DeSantis finally managed to get Trump's attention, so the friend informed me, with appearances on Fox, including a recent one in which he vehemently denounced the Mueller investigation into Trump's alleged collusion with Russia. Shortly thereafter, DeSantis received a coveted endorsement in a fulsome tweet: "Congressman Ron DeSantis is a brilliant young leader, Yale graduate, and a true patriot. He will make a great Governor of Florida. He loves our country and is a true fighter!" Buoyed by this blessing, DeSantis showed fealty, appearing frequently on Fox to echo his mentor's themes—denouncing the FBI for planting a false narrative, commending his patron as a model for children. He even ran a campaign commercial, narrated by his wife, in which he was reading *The Art of the Deal* to his infant child: "Then Mr. Trump said, 'You're fired.' I love that part! It's all about Trump," as Orlando journalist Jason Garcia put it to me. "There was no sense of what he would do in the gubernatorial nomination, he eked out a razor-thin victory against the Democratic nominee, the charismatic Tallahassee mayor."

The story of DeSantis's climb to the governor's mansion on the shoulders of Donald Trump carries more weight because of the vast difference in their personalities. Trump may call himself a Floridian today, but he is still a New Yorker. As Blumenthal observed to me—a comedian in the mode of Don Rickles, always ready to make a joke. DeSantis is more controlled and intensely private: his public schedule, for example, is issued at the end of the day, when his day's activities take an interest are safely past, and he has rarely sat for a hard interview during his time in office. To compare DeSantis to extroverts like Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton seems patently absurd. But another former president—George H. W. Bush—does bear comparison: Richard Nixon, who similarly lacked charisma and sought to make his way through the profession—does bear comparison: Richard Nixon, who similarly lacked charisma and sought to make his way through the profession. Among other traits, the Florida governor shares with the thirty-seventh president a willingness, after a long period of hesitation, to gamble. Nixon defied the conventional wisdom of his party and went to China; DeSantis flew in the face of conventional wisdom in Florida's lockdown in the summer of 2020 and abolishing all COVID-19 restrictions one year later. He closed schools and thrilled the tourist industry by lifting travel restrictions. The state, with its high number of deaths, but the lockdown rejection, especially his refusal to keep schools closed, has proved widely popular. It is a major factor in his sweeping reelection victory.

In the governor's standard recitation of his battle honors, his defiance of pandemic-era restrictions should be mentioned. The *Washington Post* has described as his "willingness to take aim at industries that wield power in his state." DeSantis's entire reputation is based on his public altercation with the Disney Company, initially sparked by the so-called "Don't Say Gay" law, which bans "classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity" through the third grade and which was passed by the Florida legislature. Disney, a huge presence in the state and previously a generous DeSantis donor, eventually objected to the law. DeSantis loudly condemned the corporation and signed a bill abolishing the special tax status it has enjoyed since 1971. The thousand-acre theme park. As he told those cheering conservatives in September: "We took action and we're not going to have its own government. They are going to live under the same laws as everybody else, and they're going to share of taxes in the state of Florida."

Maybe. State Representative Anna V. Eskamani, whose district neighbors the Disney enclave, calls the law "a tax on children." She suggested to me that it would be replaced by a new bill that removes some of Disney's authority

A closer look at other names topping DeSantis's donor list reveals a similar pattern. Near the top is the Seminole Tribe of Florida, which operates six out of the seven tribal casinos in the state. They are the owners of Hard Rock International, which has paid DeSantis \$1.5 million a year; the tribe has funneled \$3.8 million to DeSantis and other Republican accounts since the governor took office. Coincidentally or not, DeSantis signed an agreement in 2021 giving the tribe a monopoly on online sports betting, a move also blocked by a federal judge.) Ordinary Floridians have not fared so well. According to an analysis by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, Garcia in his instructive newsletter *Seeking Rents*, consumers are paying as much as \$1.5 billion more in sales taxes than former governors, much of it due to sales taxes being newly enforced on online marketplaces such as Amazon.

Meanwhile, most Florida businesses pay no corporate taxes at all, partly through several easily exploited loopholes. They have had their tax bills slashed by an estimated \$2.8 billion. Businesses have also enjoyed diminished contributions to the state unemployment fund for laid-off workers. Unsurprisingly, corporate donors have promised land. Also near the top of DeSantis's donor list, contributing \$16.25 million, is multibillionaire John Griffin, who moved his home and businesses to the state in 2022. Griffin, whose trading firm Citadel Securities has paid over \$1 million in criminal offenses that include misleading clients, had for years complained about growing crime in Chicago. In 2019, he was fined for waterfront property on Biscayne Bay.

Along with viewing the Miami skyline from his front window, Griffin can also keep an eye out for the environmental problems that regularly appear in the dying bay, victims of the pollution infesting Florida's waterways, much of it caused by aging and defective sewage facilities, both products of unchecked development. The fetid waters join the asthma-causing air pollution from burning sugarcane that falls on poor black and Hispanic communities in the farmlands southeast of Lake Okechobee. As a reminder that, in many ways, Florida functions as a Third World country, complete with special privileges for the rich, a ban on smoking was banned when the wind blows east toward the Palm Beach enclaves of the mega-rich forty miles away. It is such a pressing issue in Florida that DeSantis created the Blue-Green Algae Task Force, which duly issued a list of recommendations, almost all of which he has failed to implement. He did, however, take action on blue-green algae by signing the Farm Act, and effectively immunizing sugar corporations from lawsuits prompted by their polluting practices.

Unlike most successful politicians, DeSantis does not rely on a tight group of long-serving, trusted advisors. Instead, he has his wife, Casey, a former TV journalist. He is currently on his third chief of staff as governor. Among the names in his circle, one name stands out: Susie Wiles, author of the "high political profile" fundraising memo. Wiles is one of the architects of modern Florida politics, most interestingly those connecting DeSantis and Trump. In 2010, she was instrumental in helping profiteer Rick Scott for his gubernatorial campaign. Scott, whose hospital company had paid a \$1.7 billion to the state, won the Republican primary thanks to a vastly expensive TV and radio ad blitz, with little or no contact with voters. He was widely tipped to lose the general election, but Wiles managed to craft a campaign that carried Scott to victory. DeSantis recruited by Trump to run his 2016 campaign in Florida, one that he was expected to lose but won by a narrow margin. Wiles received much of the credit. DeSantis recruited her, with Trump's encouragement, for what *Politico* called "the most important" job and she succeeded once again. As the leaked memos indicate, she was set to chart DeSantis's path to reelection and is continuing to work for Trump on his reelection campaign.

Then, nine months into DeSantis's term, something happened: the governor not only abruptly cut ties with Wiles but also fired her. The firing was widely reported, and it is clear that DeSantis is not alone in cutting ties with Wiles.



Trump's friends and advisers believe that, in primary fights beyond Florida, Republican voters will opt for what they deem the ersatz version. Among their myriad differences, one Trump confidant recently revealed instincts, at variance with the Republican Party's isolationist wing, a constituency to which Trump caters ("DeSantis is a neocon. It's going to be one of Trump's greatest assets.") Another Trump friend and adviser told me that 2024 will resemble 2016, with Trump rising above a crowded lineup of hopefuls. "Who will you back? "A wild, bucking bronco, or something tamer and well-behaved?"

The moneyed establishment—represented by the Griffins and Murdochs of this world, with encouragement from those who loathe Trump—has expensively opted for DeSantis. Bereft of his former megadonors, Trump still has a base of small-donor MAGA supporters. Once again, he can run from his favorite position: against the establishment. The candidate who repeatedly remind the faithful, is the chosen candidate.

**DECISION — “Florida judge rejects request to subpoena journalists’ documents in ‘ghost’ candidate case,” by Orlando Sentinel’s Martin E. Comas:** “A former and three current Orlando Sentinel journalists do not have to hand over records relating to Florida Power & Light’s and other organizations’ possible involvement in the ‘ghost’ candidate scheme to Eric Foglesong, a political consultant charged with falsifying campaign finance records, a judge ruled Wednesday. In her ruling, Circuit Judge Donna McIntosh said Florida law makes clear that ‘professional journalists enjoy a qualified privilege’ not to disclose their information, including the identity of any source, that they obtained while doing their jobs in gathering news.”

TECH

## Coming Soon: A National Charging Network for Electric Vehicles

The new infrastructure could decisively shift the auto market—but it has gas station and convenience store owners worried.

by PAUL ALEXANDER · JANUARY 19, 2023

Last fall, the Biden administration announced a \$900-million disbursement of funds to states as part of a previously announced five-year, five-billion-dollar plan to help construct a nationwide charging-station network to accommodate travel by electric vehicle (EV). The funds are from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. The forthcoming construction will augment the comparatively modest existing EV infrastructure that has been built by a coalition of like-minded electricity-based companies.

To highlight the importance of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the press has focused on projects like the reconstruction of the ramshackle Brent Spence Bridge connecting Covington, Kentucky with Cincinnati, Ohio, mostly because Joe Biden and Mitch McConnell provided a rare joint media appearance there to announce the project. However, the funds from the infrastructure law that can be truly transformative are those earmarked for the charging-station network. That's because the creation of such an electric infrastructure, with 500,000 stations in rural and urban locations from coast to coast, will likely usher in nothing short of a revolution in transportation in America.

The funds distribution will be overseen by a joint office between the Departments of Energy and Transportation. The joint office's efforts will enable up to 50 percent of new vehicles sold in the United States to be electric by 2030.

At present, there are 1.7 million EVs on the road in the country, but, with these new funding efforts, some analysts project that by the end of the decade that number could climb to over 26 million, representing approximately 10 percent of the nation's 259-million light vehicle fleet. While the administration's goal—EVs comprising half of new car sales by 2030—is ambitious, Ed Hirs, an energy fellow at the University of Houston, believes it is “doable,” mostly because a remaining concern about EVs voiced by consumers is the ability to travel moderate to long distances without running into trouble finding places to recharge their cars. Charging stations at home allow travel to and from work with ease, but what happens if one makes a trip of several hundred miles, like an interstate business trip or a family vacation? A nationwide charging-station network, according to Hirs, “will solve the mobility problem.”

Automakers appear to understand that reality. Ford Motor Company has boasted it will “lead America's shift to electric vehicles” with the construction of two massive campuses in Tennessee and Kentucky; the company anticipates investing \$50 billion in EVs through 2026. Kia aims to have eight EV models available in the United States by 2029; one new plant in Georgia will manufacture nothing but EVs. Volvo has announced plans to produce only electric vehicles, cars, and SUVs by 2030. And General Motors has committed to building one million EVs a year by 2030; by 2035, it anticipates discontinuing the use of the internal combustion engine.

“If you want to sell more EVs, you have to manufacture more EVs,” says Phillip B. Jones, executive director of the Alliance for Transportation Electrification, “and the U.S. automakers have committed tens of billions of dollars to do that. We have been addicted to oil, but we are moving to electric. It's a fundamental shift in American society.”

Not surprisingly, Big Oil has noticed that the death grip it has maintained on the American consumer is now under existential threat, perhaps for the first time since it seized the personal transportation market a century ago. Gulf Oil opened the first gas station in 1913 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; by 1920, oil companies had built 15,000 stations nationwide; but by 1930, that number had exploded to over 100,000. The creation of this national refueling network allowed Big Oil to control the personal transportation business for decades. There are 115,000 gas stations today—down from a national high of around 200,000 in 1970—and that number has started to shrink again as EV charging stations are being constructed.

“Taking personal transportation out of the hands of oil and gas and giving it to utilities makes sense,” says Casey DeMoss, the former executive director of the Alliance for Affordable Energy. “The cost per mile is significantly lower [by as much as 75 percent], and if we can continue our standard of living without poisoning ourselves, we should do that.”

\* \* \*

**A**s this transition to electricity occurs, public resistance has been mounting by organizations and trade groups representing gas stations, convenience stores, and truck stops. “In Georgia,” Vox reported, “where several automakers want to build new EV-focused manufacturing plants, gas station trade groups are advocating for legislation that would limit the state power authority's potential role in EV charging.”

Last year, in Florida, urged on by anti-electric trade groups, lawmakers proposed legislation that would prevent utilities like Florida Power & Light and Tampa Electric from having their customers pay for the cost of building charging stations—in a rate case, Florida Power & Light had won the ability to raise \$175 million from ratepayers to construct charging stations—because such an arrangement posed an “unfair advantage” to private companies who wanted to build similar charging stations, although there did not seem to be any concerted effort to construct such a statewide charging infrastructure with private funds. Still, state legislator David Borrero complained that ratepayer funding “gives the investor-owned utilities a significant unfair competitive advantage over third parties like gas stations, or other electricity pump-station manufacturers, from being able to enter into the field.” The legislation died in committee.

Also last year, a coalition of gas station and convenience store owners made similar complaints against Xcel Energy in Minnesota when the utility asked state regulators for permission to raise \$170 million from ratepayers to build a charging infrastructure. Ryan McKinnon of Charge Ahead Partnership grumbled that “it’s a sweet deal that they’re getting to be able to use ratepayer money to build the stations,” while Lance Klatt of the Minnesota Service Station and Convenience Store Association, calling Xcel “the 500-pound gorilla,” argued that “we just believe in a more open market approach and in competition.” Charge Ahead Partnership did not reply to a request for comment.

These varying coalitions across the country representing gas stations, convenience stores, and truck stops are attempting to halt expansion of a national charging infrastructure by blocking public utilities at the legislative and rate-commission level. That’s likely because they can see what the future holds. “Boston Consulting Group analysts,” *Vox* reported, “estimate that if EVs do take off, as much as 80 percent of the fuel retail market could be unprofitable by 2035. Should demand for gasoline completely disappear, many of the more than 100,000 [gas] stations throughout the country would be at risk of going out of business.” Hence the legal maneuvering to stop the electric infrastructure expansion. “The convenience stores and the truck stops are going to fight,” Casey DeMoss says, “and they are going to lose.”

The infusion of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law monies from the Biden administration will only intensify the battles waged against public utilities by the last vestiges of the oil and gas era. Who wins—the companies looking ahead or those desperately clinging to the past—will determine how the future will unfold for the electric vehicle. Some observers believe the EV movement should embrace—and project—the inevitable. As Ed Hirs puts it, “The old advertisement, sung by Dinah Shore, said, ‘See the USA in your Chevrolet.’ There’s something fundamentally American about getting in the car and driving to Grandma’s house. That’s what the electric vehicle industry needs to aspire to—and achieve.”



## Bulwark+

Analysis and reporting on politics and culture in America. No partisan loyalties. No tribal prejudices.

---

Support The Bulwark and subscribe today.

 substack

**+ JOIN NOW**

---

### Paul Alexander

*Paul Alexander has published eight books, focusing on authors Sylvia Plath and J.D. Salinger and political figures Karl Rove, John Kerry, and John McCain. His biography of Salinger was adapted into the documentary Salinger which first appeared on American Masters on PBS.*

**COPYRIGHT 2023, BULWARK MEDIA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRIVACY POLICY**

## **Antonia Hover**

---

**From:** Ellen Plendl  
**Sent:** Monday, January 23, 2023 8:51 AM  
**To:** 'Beatrice Balboa'  
**Subject:** Consumer Inquiry - Florida Power & Light Company

Ms. Beatrice Balboa  
beatricebalboa@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Balboa:

This is in response to your January 18, January 20, and January 22 emails to the Florida Public Service Commission (FPSC) regarding Florida Power & Light Company (FPL).

We will add your feedback and the articles you shared to our public record.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at 1-800-342-3552 or by fax at 1-800-511-0809.

Sincerely,

Ellen Plendl  
Regulatory Consultant  
Florida Public Service Commission  
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach  
1-800-342-3552 (phone)  
1-800-511-0809 (fax)