

Antonia Hover

From: Ellen Plendl
Sent: Monday, February 6, 2023 7:50 AM
To: Consumer Correspondence
Subject: Docket No. 20210015
Attachments: Florida Power & Light's nasty bill and rate request!; Consumer Inquiry - Florida Power & Light Company

See attached customer correspondence and reply for Docket No. 20210015

Antonia Hover

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 4, 2023 9:50 AM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: Florida Power & Light's nasty bill and rate request?!
Attachments: Florida Power & Light's nasty bill.pdf; 'Ghost' candidate probe unearths big business transfers to dark money groups.pdf; Supreme Court to Weigh Florida Power & Light Rates _ Daily Business Review.pdf

Saturday 4 February 2023 1000 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

DeSantis no ‘environmental savior’

In her Jan. 22 column, Anna Upton of The Everglades Trust (an acknowledged political nonprofit) gushes over Gov. Ron DeSantis’ commitment to The Everglades. She crowns him “America’s Everglades Governor” — and by inference an environmental steward — but is betrayed by a deliberate Okeechobee-sized blind spot in her fawning column.

DeSantis’ bar for protecting The Everglades is extremely low and devoid of political risk, as it employs favorable optics and is “the right thing to do.” In addition, substantial Everglades funding comes from the federal government he despises, which also makes for an easy lift.

His science and resilience officers will be no match for the next big hurricane, as he declines acknowledging climate change and proposes no mitigating measures. He won’t take on the supportive but environmentally degrading sugar industry, the friendly developers overtaxing fresh and wastewater infrastructure or the environmentally burdensome large cruise ships docking in Key West.

And only with apologies has he vetoed Florida Power & Light’s nasty bill to penalize home solar owners.

He has also misguidedly prohibited state retirement funds from investing in profitable but “woke” corporations that include environmental, climate and societal concerns in their investment strategies. He’s no environmental savior.

Michael Miller, Ponte Vedra Beach

'Ghost' candidate probe unearths big business transfers to dark money groups



Annie Martin, Orlando Sentinel

Fri, February 3, 2023 at 6:09 PM EST · 5 min read



In this article:

Jason Brodeur
Florida Legislator



ORLANDO, Fla. — When state investigators delved into the finances of several entities tied to Florida's 2020 "ghost" candidate scandal, they unearthed major cash contributions from some of the state's biggest business interests, including an affiliate of the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

That entity, dubbed Secure Florida's Future, contributed \$630,000 late in the 2020 election cycle to a network of dark-money groups since subpoenaed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement. Bank records unearthed by the probe were obtained by the Orlando Sentinel this week.

[The investigation](#) emerged from [reporting by the Sentinel](#) and other news outlets on three independent "ghost" candidates who ran for three Florida Senate seats in 2020 and were promoted by an advertising blitz apparently meant to help Republicans win those races.

One of the Republicans who benefited was state Sen. Jason Brodeur, who was working for the Seminole County Chamber at the time of the 2020 election and won the race to represent the former Senate District 9, which included all of Seminole County and part of Volusia.

The newly disclosed records shed new light on how big business interests, like the sugar industry and Florida Power & Light, fuel dark money groups that work to sway elections behind the scenes.

Brodeur has long been a favorite of those businesses, which also supported his candidacy through his political committee. FPL, for instance, contributed \$15,000 to his committee in 2019 and 2020 for his Senate election campaign. FPL and the sugar industry are also among the largest contributors to the Florida Chamber's political committee, which gave generously to Brodeur's campaign.

The \$630,000 contribution from Secure Florida's Future, a nonprofit chaired by Florida Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Mark Wilson, went to Foundation for a Safe Environment, another nonprofit run by Republican consultant Stafford Jones. It was recorded on Sept. 2, bank records show.

On Sept. 30, Jones' nonprofit transferred the same sum to Let's Preserve the American Dream, a nonprofit run by Ryan Tyson, a consultant with [close ties to the state's big business lobby, Associated Industries of Florida](#). One day earlier, Let's Preserve reported a \$600,000 contribution to a third nonprofit, Grow United, which [spent the money on an ad blitz](#) that promoted the "ghost" candidates to voters in Central and South Florida.

Wilson declined to say for what purpose the contribution from Secure Florida's Future was intended. He said he was not aware of any

investigation targeting the group. Jones said the contribution from Secure Florida's Future was not related to the transfer to Tyson's group.

"The contribution from Secure Florida's Future had no bearing on and was not related to another contribution that we made almost a month later," he wrote in an email.

Grow United was run by consultants [working closely with FPL](#) at the time of the 2020 election and, in addition to helping Brodeur, the spoiler candidate scheme [helped oust one of the utility's biggest critics](#) in the Legislature. Nobody from FPL has been accused of wrongdoing and the utility has denied knowledge of the spoiler candidate scheme.

The power giant is not alone among Florida's biggest companies in its connections to the network of politically active dark money groups.

The newly disclosed records show Foundation for a Safe Environment received \$200,000 from U.S. Sugar less than a week before the November 2018 election. The next day, the nonprofit transferred the same amount to the Florida Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, the campaign arm for Florida Senate Republicans.

A spokesperson for U.S. Sugar could not be reached for comment on Friday.

U.S. Sugar also supported Brodeur's 2020 Senate campaign, contributing \$10,000 to his committee in October 2019. During his first year in the Senate, Brodeur sponsored legislation that protects the agriculture industry from lawsuits related to health damage. That was a priority of the sugar industry, which has faced legal action from South Florida residents who say sugar cane burning caused them respiratory problems.

Brodeur was reelected to the state Senate in November but [left his position at the Seminole County Chamber](#) at the end of the year.

Five people have been charged in connection with the 2020 “ghost” candidate scheme. One, former candidate Alex Rodriguez, [has pleaded guilty to charges](#) he took nearly \$45,000 to enter a Miami race. The man accused of bribing Rodriguez, former lawmaker Frank Artiles, has pleaded not guilty and is awaiting trial.

Artiles also was paid \$15,000 by the Republican consulting firm Data Targeting to work on South Florida legislative races in 2020, according to records obtained by the Miami-Dade State Attorney’s Office.

Another, former Seminole County GOP Chair Ben Paris, [was found guilty of a misdemeanor charge](#) that he caused his cousin’s name to appear falsely on independent candidate Jestine Iannotti’s campaign finance reports. Paris was working for Brodeur as a vice president at the Seminole County Chamber at the time of the election.

Iannotti and consultant Eric Foglesong have pleaded not guilty to charges they submitted false campaign contribution reports for Iannotti and are awaiting trial in Seminole County.

But the “ghost” candidate scheme isn’t the only way dark money groups funded by big business interests worked behind the scenes to help Brodeur, a former Florida House member, win a tight Senate race in 2020.

Secure Florida’s Future also indirectly provided the funding for [a secretive political committee](#) that didn’t disclose its donors. That entity, Floridians for Equality and Justice, spent more than \$160,000 on mail ads slamming the Democratic front-runner in Brodeur’s race and urging primary voters to back an underdog candidate instead.

Floridians for Equality and Justice and its spending in the 2020 race was the subject of the FDLE probe that produced the bank records released this week. Banks for that committee, Secure Florida's Future and Foundation for a Safe Environment were subpoenaed in the probe.

Seminole-Brevard State Attorney Phil Archer [declined to file charges](#) based on the investigation. However, he said in a press release that state campaign laws "should mandate complete transparency and accountability" and urged lawmakers to address the loopholes that allow groups to hide the source of political contributions.

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[NEWS](#)

Supreme Court to Weigh Florida Power & Light Rates



Opponents of Florida Power & Light's increased base electric rates contend that a four-year settlement with the Florida Public Service Commission is not in the "public interest" and was improperly approved by the regulatory commission.



February 03, 2023 at 12:48 PM



News

By Jim Saunders | February 03, 2023 at 12:48 PM



More than a year after customers started seeing higher bills, the state Supreme Court will hear arguments in challenges to a settlement that increased base electric rates for Florida Power & Light.

The Florida Public Service Commission in late 2021 approved the settlement, which included a complicated mix of issues such as FPL's profit levels and expansion of solar energy.

In two challenges consolidated at the Supreme Court, opponents contend the four-year settlement is not in the "public interest" and was improperly approved by the regulatory commission. One of the challengers, the group Floridians Against Increased Rates, contends state law didn't give the commission authority to approve parts of the settlement.

"If allowed to stand, the 2021 FPL settlement will result in FPL's customers paying hundreds of millions of dollars per year, totaling in the billions of dollars, in excessive costs over the next four years," Floridians Against Increased Rates argued in an April brief. "This is a gross miscarriage of justice—imposed on FPL's customers by the PSC's failure to act consistently with its own contemporaneous decisions—and the court should reverse the [commission's] order accordingly."

But the commission and FPL dispute the opponents' arguments, with the utility saying in a brief that the regulators' final order approving the settlement "is fully supported by competent, substantial evidence showing that the settlement is in the public interest."

"The settlement's negotiated terms benefit customers by enabling them to continue to receive low bills, high reliability, improved emissions and excellent customer service, while simultaneously allowing FPL to maintain the financial strength required to secure those benefits," FPL said in a July brief.

The Supreme Court arguments, scheduled for Wednesday, come at a time when utility customers across the state face higher bills because of a combination of factors, including increased base rates and natural-gas costs that soared last year.

Base-rate cases are closely watched, as they involve billions of dollars and mounds of highly technical information. Base rates make up a large portion of customers' monthly bills and also help determine how much profit that utilities can earn.

FPL filed a base-rate proposal in early 2021 and ultimately reached a settlement agreement with several parties, including the state's Office of Public Counsel, which represents consumers in utility issues. Other parties in the settlement included the Florida Retail Federation, the Florida Industrial Power Users Group and the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy.

The Public Service Commission later approved the settlement, which included a \$692 million rate increase in January 2022 and another \$560 million hike that took effect last month. The settlement also will allow increases in 2024 and 2025 to pay for solar-energy projects.

The settlement set a range for FPL's allowed return on equity, a key measure of profitability. That range initially went as high as 11.7%, with what is known as a "midpoint" of 10.6%. The commission last year approved an increase of the maximum to 11.8%, with a midpoint of 10.8%, because of part of the settlement tied to the U.S. Treasury bond yield rate.

Floridians Against Increased Rates and a coalition of three other groups, Florida Rising, the Environmental Confederation of Southwest Florida and the League of United Latin American Citizens of Florida filed the challenges at the Supreme Court. They were not part of the organizations that reached the settlement.

The challenges deal with a series of issues in the settlement, including the allowed return on equity. The opponents pointed, for example, to FPL being allowed to earn a higher return on equity than Duke Energy Florida and Tampa Electric Co.

"Both FPL's returns and the rates based thereon are unfair, unjust, unreasonable and excessive because they are facially excessive as compared to the PSC's contemporaneous decisions in [Duke and Tampa Electric base-rate settlements]. ... FAIR simply asks for the fair, just and reasonable result, namely that FPL's rates be set ... to achieve returns comparable to those approved for utilities in the same business, in the same state, operating under the same statutes, and in the same time frame," the Floridians Against Increased Rates brief said.

But the Public Service Commission said in a July brief that the argument that regulators should be bound to returns "established for Duke and TECO, in settlement agreements that were based on very different circumstances, is both contrary to the law and the record evidence."

"The investments that Duke and TECO have undertaken do not correspond to the risks and uncertainties as those undertaken by FPL," the commission's brief said.

Jim Saunders reports for the News Service of Florida.

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From: Ellen Plendl
Sent: Monday, February 6, 2023 7:50 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 E-mail 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
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1-800-342-3552 (phone)
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