



**Florida**

## **PAC fires back at California Gov. Newsom over ad criticizing Florida Gov. DeSantis**

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(The Center Square) – California Gov. Gavin Newsom inviting Floridians to move to the “free state” of California has now been made into a parody by a Florida PAC.

The PAC, The Vote The R project, created a new ad, which depicts Newsom speaking and a voiceover stating, “I urge you to join us in California where we’ll take the money you earn and give it to people who don’t work.

“Visit San Francisco, where you can walk through human feces. If you’re lucky, you might step on a syringe.

“Check out Los Angeles, where gas is so expensive your kids only need to skip a meal, or two, or 10, to afford it.”

The ad isn’t authorized by any candidate or candidate’s committee. It was created in response to a gubernatorial reelection campaign ad Newsom launched in Florida. Instead of attacking his Republican gubernatorial opponent in November in California, Newsom attacked Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and U.S. Sen. Rick Scott, telling Floridians, “Freedom is under attack in your state.”

Media pundits and other political observers have speculated that Newsom, a Democrat, and DeSantis, a Republican, could be presidential candidates for their respective parties in 2024, depending on what Democratic President Joe Biden and former Republican President Donald Trump decide.

“I urge all of you living in Florida to join the fight or join us in California,” Newsom said. “Where we still believe in freedom. Freedom of speech. Freedom to choose. Freedom from hate. And the freedom to love. Don’t let them take your freedom.”

The ad likely was referring to Florida's recent bans on teaching about sexual orientation and gender identity in kindergarten through third grade, its restrictions on abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy and other policy issues.

In response, the Vote the R's ad states, "California: where freedom means lockdowns for you, while I go to the places you can't afford," referring to Newsom.

Trey Radel, the PAC's founder who lives in Florida, told The Center Square, "Gavin Newsom is the worst kind of liberal. He's a hypocrite who locks down his state, while he fine-dines. He advocates for and implements insanely expensive gas prices, hurting the middle class and poor, while he flies private. He forces you to mask up, while he hangs with his buddies at the Super Bowl, eating, drinking, and even snapping pictures – unmasked – like an entitled pre-teen."

Newsom apologized in November 2020 after receiving criticism for eating at the French Laundry, an expensive Napa Valley restaurant, while ordering Californians to remain on lockdown. He also received criticism for sending his children to private schools where they attended in-person instruction while he banned public schools from providing in-person instruction for nearly two years.

While Newsom attacked DeSantis in the Florida ad, Radel argues DeSantis' "smart, sensible policies ... have made Florida an economic powerhouse. People are literally fleeing blue states like New York and California and coming here."

Former state legislator in California, Chuck DeVore, who's now the Chief National Initiatives Officer at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, told The Center Square that Newsom's "attack is laughable."

Devore has written extensively about why he and others left California and has opined on the movement, "Don't California My Texas," referring to those don't want California policies transforming Texas.

"According to Census data, California has lost a net of around 100,000 residents to other states, with the largest share moving to Texas – Florida too," DeVore said. "Texans are understandably concerned, but other than a segment of high-tech employees, polls suggest the majority of Californians moving to Texas are conservative. 'Don't California my Texas' is really more of a warning to state and local elected officials not to copy California's high-tax, heavy regulatory burden policies."

Newsom's campaign did not immediately return a request for comment.

Florida continues to rival Texas as a top destination for businesses and residents exiting higher-tax states. Many of those businesses and residents are relocating from California, citing high taxes and expansive restrictions as their reasons for leaving.

California lost more residents to migration in recorded U.S. history during Newsom's term and also lost a congressional seat. By contrast, Florida gained a congressional seat and surpassed New York to become the third-most populous state.

Compared to California having some of the highest taxes and highest unemployment in the U.S., Florida continues to outpace the nation in employment growth and Florida tourism is continuing a record streak.

DeSantis has been touting Florida as the freest state in the U.S., signing a state budget with record tax breaks and fighting against the Biden administration over vaccine mandates, illegal immigration and other policies.

Florida also just recorded its highest surplus in state history of \$21.8 billion.

While Florida ranks third in education outcomes according to U.S. News' "Education Rankings," California ranks 20th. Florida's new curriculum standards have also been touted as a model to follow in new national standards recently proposed by the National Association of Scholars' Civics Alliance. California's curriculum standards emphasizing race have been put on hold after widespread pushback from parents and concerned citizens.

Florida also ranks second best for businesses by Chief Executive Magazine compared to California's last place ranking.

Florida is the second-freest state, according to a Cato Institute ranking, compared to California's 48th ranking.