

Ahead of New Hampshire primary

Fascistic Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis suspends presidential campaign, endorses Trump

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After coming in a distant second place to ex-President Donald Trump in the Iowa caucuses last week, losing by a record 30 points, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis announced in a Sunday video on X/Twitter, two days ahead of the New Hampshire primary, that he was suspending his presidential campaign and endorsing Trump for president.

“It’s clear to me that a majority of Republican primary voters want to give Donald Trump another chance,” DeSantis said, adding that while “I’ve had disagreements with Donald Trump, such as on the coronavirus pandemic and his elevation of Anthony Fauci, Trump is superior to the current incumbent Joe Biden.”

DeSantis was the most prominent of the four former candidates for the 2024 Republican nomination who endorsed Trump between the Iowa caucuses last Monday and today’s New Hampshire primary.

Before DeSantis, IT millionaire Vivek Ramaswamy, Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum all announced they would back Trump, leaving him only one opponent still standing, former South Carolina Governor and UN Ambassador Nikki Haley.

In a show of subservience towards a Trump restoration, and perhaps in hopes of a vice presidential nod, Ramaswamy, Scott and Burgum all joined an election eve rally for Trump Monday night in New Hampshire to sing the praises of the aspiring dictator.

DeSantis was not at the rally, but Trump nonetheless adopted a conciliatory pose to the politician he had vilified as Ron DeSanctimonious and accused of disloyalty, since Trump’s endorsement played a major role in his winning the Republican primary in Florida during his first run for governor in 2018.

Following the 2022 midterm elections, in which Trump-

endorsed candidates floundered while DeSantis won his gubernatorial reelection campaign by a huge margin, several billionaires who previously backed Trump, such as the Murdochs, owners of Fox News, sought to make DeSantis the new standard-bearer of the party. Fox News provided the governor with favorable media coverage throughout the winter and spring of 2023 and even sponsored a debate between DeSantis and California Governor Gavin Newsom, as Trump refused to debate his challengers.

In his presidential campaign, the Florida governor sought to attack Trump from the right. DeSantis pledged that if elected, he would never enact any public health measures that would impede the economy, i.e., corporate profits, while doubling down on Trump’s anti-immigrant agitation. Like Trump, DeSantis appealed to far-right elements, even hiring fascistic campaign staff to produce outright neo-Nazi content that glorified DeSantis as the Florida Führer.

While initial polls had DeSantis within striking distance of Trump following the midterm elections, the more the right-wing governor campaigned, the more voters rejected him. In the Iowa caucuses, several media outlets have reported that the DeSantis campaign spent at least \$53 million to win fewer than 24,000 votes, well over \$2,000 per vote.

The only major Republican contenders who have yet to endorse Trump after dropping out are former governors Chris Christie (New Jersey) and Asa Hutchinson (Arkansas), and former Vice President Mike Pence, all of whom made mild critiques of Trump’s failed coup, but otherwise echoed his right-wing anti-immigrant, pro-corporate agenda.

In his video announcing the end of his campaign,

DeSantis not only endorsed Trump, but also attacked Nikki Haley, the last major Republican challenger. “[Trump] gets my endorsement because we can’t go back to the old Republican guard of yesteryear, a repackaged form of warmed over corporatism that Nikki Haley represents,” said DeSantis.

DeSantis’ endorsement, while not unexpected, reflects the consolidation of the Republican Party behind Trump and his fascistic “Make America Great Again” agenda. More than three years after Trump and his Republican allies conspired to try to block the certification of the 2020 presidential election, the former president has secured the endorsements of virtually all of his major rivals and a majority of the party in Congress.

In another key endorsement ahead of the South Carolina primary, which will be held one month after New Hampshire, Rep. Nancy Mace, whose district is centered on Charleston, South Carolina, endorsed Trump. Mace was one of the minority of House Republicans who supported certification of Biden’s election in 2020.

Speaking to AP, Mace said, “Trump’s record in his first term should tell every America how vital it is he be returned to office.”

Like all the major capitalist presidential candidates, DeSantis’ campaign depended on backing by the financial oligarchy. In August, the *Tampa Bay Times* reported that DeSantis’ campaign was “buoyed by billionaires” and had raised \$48 million through the first six months of the year. At its height, his Never Back Down PAC had some \$150 million on hand.

However, private jets and multi-million-dollar advertising campaigns left the campaign with little cash on hand after DeSantis’ crushing loss in Iowa. In New Hampshire, DeSantis was polling in the single digits and efforts to make a dent in South Carolina had also failed.

An analysis of Federal Election Commission (FEC) records by the *Tampa Bay Times* found that DeSantis’ largest contributor was Robert Bigelow, the 79-year-old owner of Budget Suites of America and longtime Republican donor. Bigelow, who once called the federal eviction moratorium enacted briefly during the initial year of the pandemic “legalized theft,” was drawn to DeSantis’ campaign over his “let it rip” COVID-19 policies, which have led to well over 93,000 COVID-19 deaths in Florida (and counting).

To Bigelow and other billionaire contributors such as Douglas Leone (\$2 million) and Richard and Elizabeth Uihlein (\$1 million each), DeSantis marketed himself as a more capable and competent executive of the American

empire, who would follow through on Trump’s agenda without the baggage (legal and personal) of Trump.

In the wake of Trump’s win in Iowa, and the failure of any other Republican to make a dent in his standing within the party, the financial oligarchy is increasingly at ease with another Trump presidency. In an interview with CNBC at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland last week, the CEO of JPMorgan Chase, Jamie Dimon, advised his fellow oligarchs not to be disturbed at the prospect of Trump winning. Dimon said: “Take a step back, be honest. [Trump] was kind of right about NATO, kind of right on immigration. He grew the economy quite well. Trade, tax reform worked. He was right about some of China.”

Dimon added that he “will be prepared for both [Trump or Biden administrations], we will deal with both, my company will survive and thrive in both.”

Similarly, Steve Schwarzman, CEO of Blackstone Group and a past Trump supporter, told CNBC interviewers at Davos that while he was previously looking for alternatives to Trump, he was now taking a “wait and see” approach.

“I think we have to see what happens,” Schwarzman said.

For workers and youth, there is no appetite to “wait and see” the outcome of a “choice” between the fascist Trump and “Genocide Joe” Biden. Both candidates and their parties have nothing to offer humanity except war, repression and death.

The central political task for workers and youth in the United States, and around the world, is not voting for the “lesser evil,” but mobilizing the working class and building an independent socialist movement capable of putting a stop to the genocide in Gaza and sweeping aside the entire rotten and grotesquely unequal capitalist system.



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