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**CONTACT**

Jackson Peel  
Communications Director  
House Democratic Office  
[jackson.peel@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:jackson.peel@myfloridahouse.gov)  
850-717-5297

**House Democrats React to DeSantis' Inauguration Speech**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Following Governor DeSantis' speech aimed more at GOP primary voters than Floridians, members of the Florida House Democratic Caucus issued the following statements:

**Leader Fentrice Driskell (D-Tampa)** said the following,

“This is probably the first Florida governor to give an inaugural speech not speaking to the people of our great state and the challenges we all face, but directed at GOP primary voters and billionaire donors.

Any time he wants to distract from his own failed record, he creates a new fake “woke” boogeyman to battle but doesn't really address real issues Floridians are struggling with like housing affordability and health care that doesn't bankrupt families. We've had two special sessions to address the property insurance crisis and nothing has been done to actually give relief to Floridians who can no longer afford to live in Florida.

He speaks of freedom but that's not what his track record shows. It only took him only a few lines into his speech to begin rewriting the history of his COVID response. He claimed “results matter,” but Florida has had an unacceptable 83-thousand deaths from the pandemic.

He brags about our state's success without mentioning the record funding that came from the Biden Administration to stabilize our economy.

He claims to support law enforcement and ‘law & order’ yet he proudly pushes an extremist NRA-backed Unregulated Carry that will mean thousands of hidden guns being carried by unlicensed people across the state. What could be more ‘soft on crime’ than making it easier for criminals to carry guns on our streets? We should never confuse ‘soft on crime’ with ‘smart on crime,’ and this is not a smart plan.

Overall, I wasn't surprised by what he said, but I was predictably disappointed.”

**Representative Kelly Skidmore**, “DeSantis offered tired sentiments of ‘us and them,’ and no vision for a united future. Democratic members of the Florida House did attend and heard what he said, and we are here to remind the Governor that our state government is a democracy with checks and balances, not a factory of red meat catch phrases designed to agitate.

He covered no new ground, and offered no solutions to problems Floridians face. If he plans to run for president, he certainly needs a new speechwriter.”

**Representative Anna V. Eskamani (D- Orlando)**, “The Governor’s inaugural speech was incredibly boring and contained no new ideas, just MAGA talking points and buzz words. The only line that got a major applause was “Florida is where woke goes to die” which is a line Governor DeSantis has used before. No actual issues that every day families deal with — like housing affordability — were even mentioned, and the Governor once more avoided talking about abortion and reproductive rights. There was no vision, or commitment to solve problems. Based on what he did say, we can assume more culture wars are to come this legislative session.”

**Representative Christopher Benjamin (D- Miami Gardens)**, “When a leader says that he is no longer interested in polls that means he is not concerned that the majority of women in FL don’t approve of abortion bans, that the majority of Floridians are in favor of common sense gun control, that the majority law enforcement says “open carry” will make law enforcement more difficult or that the majority of Floridians want adult use marijuana laws. What this says is that we are willing to disregard the age-old maxim that government is for the people by the people. This why we must vote for leaders that will carry the voice of the people regardless of their own ambitions.”

**Representative Ashley Gantt (D- Miami)**, “When we are elected to serve the people of our great state, we must remember that everyone deserves the rights enumerated in the US Constitution and the Florida Constitution. The remarks made by the Governor, namely stating that “freedom lives in the State of Florida”, is starkly juxtaposed to his stance on teaching the truth about our country in silencing the truth about Black history and stripping bodily autonomy and sovereignty from women. That’s not freedom. That is just the exact opposite of it. Freedom is for all, not the select few who agree by will or coercion, with the imposition of your traditionally discriminatory ideologies.”

**Representative Lindsay Cross (D- St. Petersburg)**, “The people of Florida deserve real solutions to the issues facing our state. The results are clear - Florida’s water is dirtier and sicker than when Gov. DeSantis first took office. I am committed to enacting bold solutions this upcoming legislative session, so that we truly can leave Florida to God better than we found it.”

**Representative LaVon Bracy Davis (D- Orlando)**, “Today, the Governor had a unique opportunity with the world watching to unify a divided state. Instead of speaking to all Floridians- Democrat or Republican, rich or poor, black or white, he stood with the powerful and not the people in preparation for his run for president. This is unfortunate as he had a chance to mend and focus on the issues that affect all

Floridians and make us connected. Rather, he pushed divisive rhetoric. This aggressive attack on immigrants and other marginalized communities was just another example of the Governor stepping out on Florida and courting the nation for higher office.”

**Representative Johanna López (D- Orlando)**, “Many of the achievements Gov. DeSantis pointed to are the results of bipartisan work at all levels, including unprecedented COVID relief and infrastructure funds from the federal government. Yet, Gov. DeSantis continued to focus on partisan talking points and not the issues affecting Floridians, such as our affordable housing and crisis, rising inflation, and gun violence in our classrooms and streets. We can accomplish more when we work together.”

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