

## Florida Congresswoman: DeSantis is bringing the culture wars into the classroom

Congressman, thank you so much for taking the time to be with us. I wanted to talk to you, because here you have Ron DeSantis, out on the stump, in Iowa, in New Hampshire, bragging about his time as Governor, trying to sell his time in Governor's mansion as a success story. What should the rest of the nation know about what it is to have DeSantis lead the place you live.

*It's a disaster. Now not only is it a disaster, it seems that every single day he's rolling out policies that really are fighting our basic freedoms. We see that with the abortion six week ban, we see that also with the migration policy that you talk about. Really what he tries to do is strong-arm the American public or Floridians to follow what he wants you to do and it really causes a tension in our State and along our business communities. 'Cause as you see he keeps exacerbating this fight that he has with Disney and he's sticking to it. And what he's doing is that he's starting to alienate some of our other businesses and people. Every time I travel everyone tells me they're afraid to come to Florida, they feel like they won't be accepted in Florida, there are too many rules in Florida, there are hateful people in Florida... And this is what he has been able to do in this past years, he's grown the feeling of hate, he's been fueling the fire amongst communities, picking culture wars and he hasn't really been doing everything he says he's doing: make Florida more free. He's actually limiting us in Florida. His playbook is a little bit more like a dictatorship where he believes that his ideology is assumed and embrace by everyone, and this is definitely terrible for America.*

It strikes me that you start with this idea of freedom, as you said, given the fact that Ron DeSantis is championing for the right. This idea of Florida as a bastion of freedom while fundamentally taking freedoms away. And I guess the question we've all been asking is

at what point that begins to tip. Which is why I was intrigued this week. There was this story there was a schoolboard meeting and you had parents who actually defended that Florida teacher who's made national headlines because she's under State investigation for playing a Disney movie which happened to have a gay character. The *Washington Post* write "Remarkably, this backlash to the backlash is gaining momentum in some of the reddest parts of the country. A raucous school board meeting in Fernando County, Florida, captured what's striking about this new phenomenon." Seeing featured teachers pointedled declaring that right-wing attacks are driving them to quit, even as parents and students forcefully stood up on their behalf, demanding a halt to the hysteria. Does that comport with what you are hearing from your constituents as you travel through your District? Do you think we are reaching out for it, where Floridians are realizing the impact that these policies are having here on in their lives?

*Yes, we're definitely here and I think it's because of its implementation. When were looking at these policies being passed, I think people thought like 'they're not gonna be that bad'. But it's the implementation that is starting to halt people and startle everyone because now it's actually changing our everyday life. When we were free to talk about our backgrounds, African American history, who we are, immigration issues, we were free to talk and live as Americans. But now you see that you're being interrupted every step of the way. Even in education, as you mentioned. Now you have the Governor with his hand in your classroom telling you what you can and you cannot teach. In fact he's bringing in his wars into the classroom. Disney is a direct war that he's in right now so anything that you're touching that has to do with Disney now you have the Governor saying 'I don't want you to do that'. It's so interesting to me that a Republican Governor – we used to see Republicans believe in business, who believe in making sure we don't have Big Government – now he's pretty much tooting his horn saying "I believe in Big Government to the point where I'm going to strong-arm you to believe what I believe." And that's what's making most Floridians say "Hey, this is too much now."*