



## POLITICS

# Disney, Geico and other corporations backed Florida lawmakers now sponsoring restrictive voting bills

[Disney, Geico backed Florida lawmakers sponsoring restrictive voting bills \(cnbc.com\)](https://www.cnbc.com)

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## KEY POINTS

- State lawmakers sponsoring these bills have seen contributions from media giants Disney and Charter, prison behemoth the GEO Group, insurance company Geico and trip planner Expedia, along with CenturyLink and other massive corporations.
- Disney has contributed more than \$8,000 to the campaigns of the three lawmakers sponsoring similar Florida voting bills, according to state campaign finance records reviewed by CNBC.
- Critics say that with these types of bills flowing through state legislatures across the country, corporations have to go further than putting out statements and hold back on campaign contributions.

### In this article

Republican state lawmakers in Florida who received corporate support from Disney and other major companies during their campaigns are now sponsoring a slew of bills that could put restrictions on voting access in the key swing state.

The Brennan Center for Justice lists three Florida proposals that it says, in their current form, would amount to voter restrictions. State lawmakers sponsoring these bills have seen contributions from media giants Disney and Charter, prison behemoth the GEO Group, insurance company Geico and trip planner Expedia, along with CenturyLink and other massive corporations.

CenturyLink rebranded itself Lumen Technologies in 2020. These companies have so far remained silent on the issue of voting rights.

Though former President Donald Trump defeated Joe Biden in Florida during the 2020 election, both parties have consistently put the state at the top of their election target lists. In last year's election, [millions were spent in the state by billionaire Mike Bloomberg and others](#).

The move by states to push ahead with new voting laws comes after Trump falsely claimed that the election was rigged against him [and tried to overturn the results](#). The Florida bills range from putting restrictions on when election officers can use electronic poll books to having heightened security at drop boxes.

[Corporations have been under pressure to respond since](#) Republican Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp signed what critics deem a discriminatory law that would restrict minority communities' access to the polls. [Major League Baseball](#) announced it would move its All-Star Game out of Atlanta in protest. And several corporations have come out against the law, including Delta and Coca-Cola.

Corporate executives, such as Dell Technologies founder Michael Dell, have also responded to the proposed new voting laws out of Texas.

Republican leaders, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., have pushed back on corporations that have recently spoken out. "Corporations will invite serious consequences if they become a vehicle for far-left mobs to hijack our country from outside the constitutional order," McConnell said in a [statement](#) on Monday. "Businesses must not use economic blackmail to spread disinformation and push bad ideas that citizens reject at the ballot box."

Still, beyond public statements from companies denouncing the voting bills, [there is no indication so far that they will stop financing the campaigns of lawmakers](#) crafting these proposals. A study by [Public Citizen](#) says that since 2015, corporations have given \$50 million to "state legislators supporting voter suppression bills, including \$22 million during the 2020 election cycle."

Since 2018, Disney has contributed more than \$8,000 to the campaigns of the three lawmakers sponsoring similar Florida voting bills, according to state campaign finance records reviewed by CNBC. The [company](#) did not respond

to a request for comment on whether it will continue to back these lawmakers going forward or if it will lobby against the bills.

The Public Citizen report says that since 2015, Disney has contributed \$28,000 to various Florida state senators backing a bill that could suppress the vote. The Walt Disney World Resort is based in the Sunshine State.

The GEO Group, which builds and invests in prisons across the country, has also been a major donor to Florida lawmakers sponsoring restrictive voting bills. GEO Group is headquartered in Florida.

The company has given more than \$3,000 since 2018 to state lawmakers sponsoring potential restrictive voting bills. Florida state records lists the campaign contributions coming through the GEO Care division, which, according to its website, “delivers comprehensive approaches to manage, rehabilitate and treat individuals inside secure settings and throughout the community.”

The Public Citizen report shows that GEO Group has contributed \$19,000 to lawmakers who are backing a new voting bill.

Geico, the insurance giant, gave at least \$3,000 to one of the sponsors of a new voting bill, records show.

The GEO Group, Expedia, Lumen and Geico did not respond to requests for comment. Charter declined to comment.

As for the bills themselves, each one contains likely hurdles for voters and election officials if they are passed into law.

One of the [bills](#) was filed on Jan. 14, days after the deadly riot on Capitol Hill and following Congress certifying Biden’s Electoral College victory.

Among the bill’s many themes, [it says](#), “beginning in 2022 and each election thereafter, an electronic poll book may not be used as a precinct register unless it is approved.” An electronic poll book is often used by election officials to maintain information on voters. Any obstacles to gaining access to these types of devices could hinder election officials.

Another [bill](#) introduced last month in the state House chamber is currently being reviewed by the Appropriations Committee. The bill calls for extra security at Florida drop boxes where voters can submit absentee ballots.

“A secure drop box at an office of the supervisor must be monitored in person by an employee of the supervisor’s office or a sworn law enforcement officer during regular office hours,” the bill proposes.

“During other hours, a secure drop box at an office of the supervisor may only be accessible if it is secured from tampering and monitored by video surveillance. The supervisor must keep recordings of video surveillance of such secure drop boxes and provide a copy to any candidate or political party submitting a written request for the recordings within 24 hours after receipt of such request,” the bill goes on to say.

The bill also says that voters using a drop box “must present his or her Florida driver license or Florida identification card to the employee or law enforcement officer monitoring the drop box. The employee or law enforcement officer must ensure that the address on the identification provided matches the printed residence address on the mailing envelope.”

[NBC News](#) reported in March that the same bill would prohibit the giving of “any item” at polling locations, similar to a provision in Georgia’s new law.

The third bill was recently criticized by the editorial board of the Miami Herald. The [paper](#) says the bill would limit vote-by-mail applications to one election cycle, while the current law allows Florida mail application requests to remain current for two general election cycles.

Critics say that with these types of bills flowing through state legislatures across the country, corporations have to go further than putting out statements and hold back on campaign contributions.

“Look at the deadly riot at the Capitol on Jan. 6, the refusal to accept the election results, followed by the legislation to restrict the ability to vote. That has really stirred up people,” said Bruce Freed, the president of the nonpartisan Center for Political Accountability, which tracks corporate money in politics. “Companies are ensnared in it because of the money they gave politically. They are seen as enabling it with their contributions.”