

MUR 7561

Amendment

OFFICE OF
GENERAL COUNSELJoseph Weinzettle
PO Box 282
Tarpon Springs, FL 34688
PH (

2019 FEB 12 AM 10:31

February 7, 2019

RE: MUR 7561/COMPLAINT against FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC, 610 South Boulevard, Tampa, FL 33606 PH (813) 254-3369Office of the General Counsel
Federal Election Commission
1050 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20463**VIOLATION OF 52 USC 30121 FOR ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS FROM FOREIGN NATIONALS AND FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS**

1. FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC knowingly accepted contributions from foreign nationals and foreign organizations in the 2018 campaign. PAC officers knew, or reasonably should have known, that substantial foreign contributions were provided to the DeSantis campaign on social media, and that foreign content was adopted for official campaign messaging. PAC facilitated these substantial foreign contributions by payments to intermediaries in 2018.

FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC officers knew, or reasonably should have known, that foreign contributions to state and federal candidates are prohibited by 52 USC 30121.

2. FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC is staffed by veteran Republican Party of Florida consultants and shared officers with the Ron DeSantis for Governor campaign. PAC officers knew, or reasonably should have known, that there was substantial foreign influence on the campaign.

The DeSantis campaign and the Republican Party of Florida (RPOF) were in contact with foreign nationals and foreign organizations prior to and during the 2018 campaign. RPOF Chairman Blaise Ingoglia engaged with WikiLeaks on Twitter at least as early as October 28, 2017.

Foreign profile **@MihaiBasarab** contacted candidate RON DESANTIS and campaign manager BRADLEY C. HEROLD at their respective Twitter campaign accounts on December 12, 2017 (below):

@MihaiBasarab

12 Dec 2017

Replying to **@GovRonDeSantis @repdesantis**

Rs need to play the same game. We're loaded with preeminent IT guys in Romania ready willing and able if called upon

The DeSantis campaign apparently accepted the offer of foreign support, which became active in early 2018. **@MihaiBasarab**, whose 2016 posts promoted WikiLeaks and Russian Intelligence Services persona "Guccifer 2.0" (attached), provided support for DeSantis and other RPOF candidates in 2018.

Campaign manager HEROLD's social media team included an apparent foreign organization based in "Romania," @blueinsight33. "BLUEINSIGHT" offers "Ethnographic Edge" targeting, according to its website blueinsight.ro.

Once approved by a 'Florida GOP' persona on Twitter January 11, 2018, @MihaiBasarab appears to have initiated anti-George Soros messaging targeting Florida voters. Fake accounts coordinated with real campaign officials to promote DeSantis and suppress potential voters for Democrat Andrew Gillum.

Anti-Soros messaging from January 11, 2018 to December 18, 2018 on Twitter includes inauthentic (likely foreign) and official accounts such as @FloridaGOP (samples attached). Anti-Soros/pro-DeSantis messages increase in March, and then surge in late September, October and through the November 6 election.

An official DeSantis campaign email in March carried the anti-Soros message, as cited by reporter Ali Schmitz (attached). DeSantis included anti-Soros messages in his campaign speeches in October at Tampa and Winter Haven (even after a mail-bomb was sent to Soros), as reported by WUSF and *The Daily Beast*.

(<http://wusfnews.wusf.usf.edu/post/ron-desantis-focuses-andrew-gillum-during-tampa-stop>;
<https://www.thedailybeast.com/ron-desantis-spread-george-soros-fear-days-after-a-bomb-was-sent-to-soros>, attached)

3. FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC payments, by timing and vagueness of their reported purpose, were likely in support of foreign contributions. PAC payments to RPOF consultant and DeSantis campaign manager BRADLEY C. HEROLD's firms are timed just prior to increases in social media activity.

FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC paid \$1,046,869.99 to HEROLD's firms Something Else Strategies and Parabellum Strategies from 7/20/2018 to 8/27/2018 (below).

07/20/2018 EASLEY, SC 29642	6,375.00 SOMETHING ELSE STRATEGIES, LLC MEDIA PRODUCTION MON	212 GOLDEN WILLOW COURT
07/24/2018 ORLANDO, FL 32803	990,319.99 PARABELLUM STRATEGIES DIRECT MAIL SERVICES ECC	1412 E. RIDGEWOOD STREET
08/21/2018 EASLEY, SC 29642	7,555.00 SOMETHING ELSE STRATEGIES, LLC MEDIA PRODUCTION ECC	212 GOLDEN WILLOW COURT
08/21/2018 EASLEY, SC 29642	8,450.00 SOMETHING ELSE STRATEGIES, LLC MEDIA PRODUCTION ECC	212 GOLDEN WILLOW COURT
08/23/2018 EASLEY, SC 29642	21,650.00 SOMETHING ELSE STRATEGIES, LLC MEDIA PRODUCTION ECC	212 GOLDEN WILLOW COURT
08/27/2018 EASLEY, SC 29642	4,200.00 SOMETHING ELSE STRATEGIES, LLC MEDIA PRODUCTION ECC	212 GOLDEN WILLOW COURT
08/27/2018 EASLEY, SC 29642	8,320.00 SOMETHING ELSE STRATEGIES, LLC MEDIA PRODUCTION ECC	212 GOLDEN WILLOW COURT

Source: Florida Division of Elections Campaign Finance Database

The payments preceded increased messaging on social media by apparent foreign nationals and foreign organizations on behalf of the DeSantis campaign in September, October, thru the November 6 election and recount.

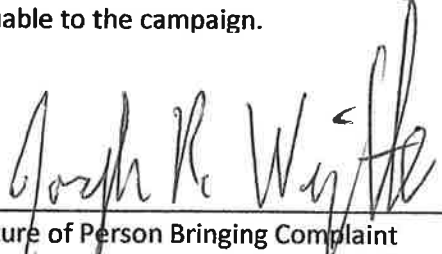
4. FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC received substantial benefit from foreign contributions. Campaign messaging and voter targeting by foreign nationals appears to have had an impact on voter turnout in favor of DeSantis and RPOF candidates. Florida Republican voters reportedly turned out at 68%, Democrats about 60%. In the Tampa Bay area, non-affiliated voter turnout was 43.4%. (Florida Division of Elections as cited in Taylor, "Florida Republicans' turnout beats Democrats," *Tampa Bay Times*, December 20, 2018)

5. The contributions of foreign nationals and foreign organizations were highly valuable to the campaign. The scope of foreign assistance is not known (publicly), but may be similar to previous UK-based Cambridge Analytica campaigns in the U.S. Reportedly, Cambridge Analytica was paid \$345,000 for the 2014 North Carolina campaign and \$5.9 million for the 2016 Presidential campaign.

CONCLUSION

FRIENDS OF RON DESANTIS PAC knew, or reasonably should have known, that accepting contributions from @MihaiBasarab, "BLUEINSIGHT"(Romania), WikiLeaks or other foreign nationals would be in violation of 52 USC 30121. PAC officers knew, or reasonably should have known, that its disbursements likely included payments to foreign nationals and foreign organizations working on behalf the DeSantis campaign. PAC officers knew that the contribution of foreign nationals and foreign organizations was substantial and valuable to the campaign.


Submitted under penalty of perjury,

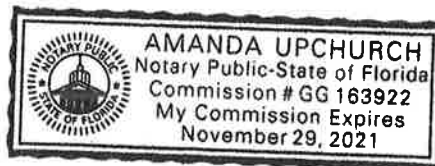

Signature of Person Bringing Complaint

Sworn on the date of:

February 7th, 2019

Signature of Notary Public:


Amanda Upchurch



Attachments

1. **@MihaiBasarab** October 18, 2016 message citing **@Guccifer_2** and October 27, 2016 message **#wikileaks**
2. Anti-George Soros messages in support of DeSantis campaign: January 11, 2018--December 18, 2018, **@MihaiBasarab** to **@FloridaGOP**
3. DeSantis campaign anti-Soros email, as cited by Ali Schmitz **@SchmitzMedia** March 12, 2018
4. Sam Stein, "Can't Stop, Won't Stop/Ron DeSantis Spread George Soros Fear Days After a Bomb Was Sent to Soros," *The Daily Beast*, October 29, 2018

<https://twitter.com/MihaiBasarab/status/788558739527917577>



#LiveFreeOrDie @MihaiBasarab 18 Oct 2016

Replying to @NetworksManager @JaredWyand

@GUCCIFER_2 found that @TheDemocrats & @HillaryClinton stole DJT tax returns guccifer2.wordpress.com/2016/10/18/tru...



#LiveFreeOrDie @MihaiBasarab 27 Oct 2016

foarte adevarat

#wikileaks #trump #hillary twitter.com/_RealValentina...

This Tweet is unavailable.

Translated from Romanian by Microsoft

Very true #wikileaks #trump #hillary

Anti-George Soros messages in support of DeSantis campaign:
January 11, 2018--December 18, 2018

<https://twitter.com/MihaiBasarab/status/951586496858947585>

#LiveFreeOrDie

@MihaiBasarab

11 Jan 2018

BREAKING: Soros Trying to Buy State Election with \$250k Donation

<http://truthfeednews.com/breaking-soros-trying-to-buy-state-election-with-250k-donation/> ... **@FL4TRUMPDOTCOM**

0 replies 0 retweets 1 like Reply Retweet Like 1 Direct message

<https://twitter.com/WINBIGLY1/status/954128417364029440>

Wayne J. Scott

@WINBIGLY1

18 Jan 2018

Replying to **@Rose__III** **@WarRoomShow** **@PrisonPlanet**

Ron DeSantis is a PATRIOT DEEP STATE Dictators Obama Clinton SOROS Lynch Polosi Schumer MSM above Prosecution til Now

0 replies 1 retweet 1 like

Reply Retweet 1 Like 1 Direct message

<https://twitter.com/newsjunkie523/status/979487265700360193>

newsjunkie523

@newsjunkie523

29 Mar 2018

More newsjunkie523 Retweeted Fox News

Elect DeSantis. Not Soros funded Gillam. newsjunkie523 added, 0:31

Fox News Verified account

@FoxNews

.**@RepDeSantis** to run for governor of Florida **@foxandfriends**

0 replies 1 retweet 0 likes

Reply Retweet 1 Like Direct message

<https://twitter.com/flbluesgirl304/status/986647618435633153>

@flbluesgirl

@flbluesgirl304

18 Apr 2018

More

Replying to **@GovRonDeSantis** **@repdesantis** **@GOPoversight**

@realDonaldTrump **@TomFitton** **@JaySekulow** **@JudgeJeanine**

Mr DeSantis,

Why isn't the Soros programs order to cease & desist on bringing illegals to US? Shouldn't the ppl responsible be arrested & their assets FROZEN? They knowingly are breaking US laws, arrest them!

0 replies 0 retweets 0 likes

Reply Retweet Like Direct message

<https://twitter.com/wvufanagent99a1/status/1044289570286817281>

@wvufanagent99a1

24 Sep 2018

Replying to @EricCarr **@RonDeSantisFL**

Great job **@RonDeSantisFL**! And you learn something new everyday. I had no idea that in addition to **@AndrewGillum** being a Soros backed socialist, he is also an anti-semitite. I guess the two do go hand-in-hand.

#DeSantis

#FLGov

#FLGovRace

#Gillum

#AntiSemiteAndy

#SayNoToSocialism

<https://twitter.com/MagaGoldHat/status/1045019984601251840>

Goldy General of Gold Army and Golden Angels

@MagaGoldHat

26 Sep 2018

Attention Florida MAGA George Soros and Tom Steyer are pumping 10 Million into Andrew Gillum campaign against Ron Desantis, we need grassroots to activate and register to volunteer

<https://rondesantis.com/volunteer/> and Rick Scott against Bill Nelson for US Senate

<https://rickscottforflorida.com/get-involved/volunteer/> ...

30 replies 697 retweets 562 likes

Reply 30 Retweet 697 Like 562 Direct message

Deplorable Build The Damn Wall Coal Peep 🐻 🐻

<https://twitter.com/DutyOfAPatriot/status/1052735988567437312>

🇺🇸 Lady Liberty 🇺🇸

@DutyOfAPatriot

17 Oct 2018

More 🇺🇸 Lady Liberty 🇺🇸 Retweeted Ron DeSantis

We are in a battle for our very way of life!

Soros funded Gillium is an avowed Communist. He doesn't need to claim it when everything he supports screams it.

Fight against Communism. Fight against mob rule!

GET OUT THE VOTE! VOTE REPUBLICAN!

🇺🇸 VOTE RON DeSANTIS 🇺🇸 🇺🇸 Lady Liberty 🇺🇸 added,

Ron DeSantis

Verified account

@RonDeSantisFL

"Year-after-year, Gillum rejected pleas for help from the city's police. Now, after four years of having the highest crime and murder rates in the state, Tallahassee is ranked as one of the least safe cities in the entire country." -@dbongino ...

20 replies 704 retweets 698 likes

Reply 20 Retweet 704 Like 698 Direct message

https://twitter.com/gr8tjude_08/status/1059781552866017280

🇺🇸 Hey Jude 🇺🇸 🇺🇸 🇺🇸

@gr8tjude_08

6 Nov 2018

More

Hey Florida the race is close! We need to keep Florida great by voting for Ron DeSantis Florida Governor

No Soros socialist! pic.twitter.com/l8wXw5LhJW

4 replies 48 retweets 53 likes

Reply 4 Retweet 48 Like 53 Direct message

<https://twitter.com/FloridaGOP/status/1075084167774396417>

Florida GOP Verified account

@FloridaGOP

18 Dec 2018

Billionaire Democrat extremist, George Soros, paid \$500K to the group that harassed Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi at a movie theater. Liberals have made it clear if you disagree with them you deserve to be heckled no matter where you are.

59 replies 313 retweets 266 likes

Reply 59 Retweet 313

Like 266 Direct message

<https://twitter.com/SchmitzMedia/status/973287351643500546>



Ali Schmitz @SchmitzMedia 12 Mar 2018

There's something truly incredible about this @RonDeSantisFL email name-dropping **Soros** when Adelson and Mercer are part of the **DeSantis'** national finance team. tampabay.com/florida-politi...

But while my radical left-wing
Democrats can count on
limousine liberal billionaires
like George Soros to fill their
campaign war chests and
spread their globalist agenda
of taxes, spending,
overreach, and corruption,
I'm counting on grassroots

U.S. Rep. Ron DeSantis' campaign is touting an impressive list of billionaire supporters this morning, a week after the congressman was endorsed for governor by President Donald Trump.

Las Vegas casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, Breitbart co-owner Rebekah Mercer and hedge fund manager John Thaler are now members of his national finance team, according to DeSantis' campaign, although the congressman still has not confirmed he's running for governor.

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/ron-desantis-spread-george-soros-fear-days-after-a-bomb-was-sent-to-soros>

CAN'T STOP, WON'T STOP

Ron DeSantis Spread George Soros Fear Days After a Bomb Was Sent to Soros

Attacks against the Democratic financier just haven't stopped.

Sam Stein

10.29.18 10:51 AM ET

EXCLUSIVE

Photo Illustration by The Daily Beast

Just days after federal authorities discovered a bomb left on George Soros' property, Ron DeSantis, the Republican candidate for governor of Florida, spread fears that the Democratic financier could infiltrate the state's government.

Speaking at Inman Park Baptist Church in Winter Haven this past Friday, DeSantis was in the midst of arguing that a victory by his opponent, Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum, would fundamentally destroy Florida's economy, when he noted the ability of a governor to appoint swaths of people to statewide agencies and boards.

"He could be seeding, into our state government, you know, Soros-backed activists," DeSantis said of his opponent.

Portraying Soros as a liberal boogeyman has been a rite of passage for conservatives for years. That's been especially true this cycle in Florida, where Soros has been one of the top financial supporters of Gillum's gubernatorial campaign.

But DeSantis' remarks came at a particularly delicate time. That Tuesday, news broke that an explosive device had been found at Soros' suburban New York home. It was the first revelation of what turned out to be a mass assassination attempt on numerous leading Democrats. Just hours after DeSantis spoke, the suspect in those bombings—a Donald Trump-loving Florida man—was arrested by authorities.

BUSINESS AS USUAL

House GOP Launches New Anti-Soros Ad Despite Bomb Attempt
Will Sommer

DeSantis has been repeatedly criticized during the campaign for his ties to fringe figures, including white nationalists, and his use of racially tinged comments. He urged voters not to "monkey this up" by electing Gillum, in what was viewed by many as a reference to Gillum's race. He attended a conference with infamous alt-right figures, and has refused to return money from a donor who once called Barack Obama a "Muslim n----r."

DeSantis has recoiled at accusations that he's soft-peddled racism, though it became a flashpoint during a recent gubernatorial debate.

The DeSantis campaign did not return a request for comment. But he is not the only Republican official who has found himself in hot water over the use of Soros as a campaign pressure point in the wake of the bomb scares.

Two days after Soros was targeted, the National Republican Campaign Committee released an ad in which it attacked a Democratic candidate for being financed by Soros. That ad, along with a prior one by the committee, was criticized for having anti-Semitic undertones (Soros is Jewish).

On Wednesday, House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) removed a tweet he had posted that attacked Soros and other Democratic donors. The tweet had been posted just one day after the Soros bomb threat. Its removal became news again after a gunman killed 11 people at a synagogue in Pittsburgh. The alleged shooter had reportedly rationalized his actions by citing a conspiracy theory that Soros was funding a caravan of migrant Hondurans en route to the United States, and reportedly told authorities: "They're committing genocide to my people. I just want to kill Jews."

Sam Stein
@samstein
sam.stein@thedailybeast.com