



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on May 1, 2026

Trump's Candidate Dominates Florida's Governor Race; DeSantis Refuses to Endorse Anyone

With Florida's Donald Trump-endorsed gubernatorial candidate Congressman Byron Donalds dominating in the polls so far, Governor Ron DeSantis publicly refused to endorse any candidate in the race right now.

When asked by this writer whether he would be backing any candidate for the widely watched contest, DeSantis was touchy. "If I do, you'll know it," he said during an event announcing a transportation infrastructure project off Interstate 95.



AP Images
Ron DeSantis



Multiple analysts have suggested DeSantis might be waiting to endorse his wife, Casey, if she were to enter the race late. Others have suggested that the governor, once seen as untouchable in state politics, might back his own hand-picked deputy, Lt. Gov. Jay Collins.

But the bruising battle with Trump world during the 2024 Republican primary dealt a major blow to DeSantis' popularity with Republicans in the state. Several sources suggested the governor may be reluctant to cross the president once again — especially considering that DeSantis has expressed interest in running for president in 2028.

Further underscoring the ongoing rift between the two, DeSantis admitted after being questioned by a reporter that he would not be attending a major upcoming Trump event in The Villages. The governor said he had "prior commitments" that prevented him from going.



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Byron Donalds Leading

The Republican gubernatorial primary race this August is fast approaching. And with multiple candidates vying for the conservative vote as the nation looks on to see what the Sunshine State will do next, Rep. Donalds has relied on Trump's endorsement to start off with a commanding lead.

According to a [new Stetson University Center for Public Opinion Research survey](#), Donalds is leading his closest challenger, former state House Speaker Paul Renner, by over 30 points. Donalds is also besting the other contenders in both fundraising and national media attention.

Other candidates in the race so far include Collins, who is polling at 6 percent, and firebrand James Fishback, who is polling at 5 percent but gaining strength with younger voters. Medical-freedom advocate Rachel Rodriguez and James Shaw are also in the running.

Donalds is clearly the front-runner. However, DeSantis, whose endorsement is reportedly being sought by Renner and Collins, has previously argued that Donalds was not "part" of the conservative triumphs of recent years in Florida. Numerous conservative leaders in the state are skeptical of Donalds, too.

Just this week, [a controversial video](#) began circulating in which attendees at a private gathering were urged to become "shareholders" in Donalds' "company" so they could meet with him and help "steer" Florida. Concerns over Donalds' honesty about his criminal record and his longtime aide's problems with the law are also haunting the front-runner's candidacy.

Many Still Undecided

With unease about Donalds becoming more pronounced among grassroots voters and conservative leaders, almost half of voters are still up for grabs, the new poll shows. Indeed, nearly 30 percent of likely Republican voters are undecided, and close to one in five are backing "other" candidates.

Once-loyal lawmakers scared of DeSantis have increasingly defied the Florida governor since the bruising battle with Trump. Just this week, they killed his AI "Bill of Rights" and medical freedom bills. But DeSantis remains popular. And he continues to rack up wins, [just last week signing laws to ban DEI and "climate" schemes in the state](#).

With what DeSantis calls the "Free State of Florida" becoming a model for other conservative states, all eyes are likely to be on the gubernatorial race in the months ahead. Stay tuned for more.



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