



(credit: PBI Actuarial Consultants)

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, in coordination with an equally myopic and partisan Florida Legislature, has approved new state legislation ([HB 1645](#)) that eliminates the term “climate change” from numerous existing Florida statutes that former Republican Governor Charlie Crist signed into law in 2008.

The legislation, which takes effect on July 1st, is not just symbolic: it also prohibits construction of wind turbines in Florida’s offshore waters and repeals state grant programs that encourage energy conservation and the deployment of renewable energy sources in the Sunshine State. Instead, the new legislation commits the state to continued reliance on fossil fuels in the future. (Natural gas currently powers approximately 74% of Florida’s total net electricity generation.)

The new state laws build on similarly wrong-headed fossil fuel-based policies that Governor DeSantis has embraced in recent years. For example, [the New York Times reports](#) that in 2023, DeSantis rejected \$346 million in funds the federal government had offered to assist Florida residents to make their homes more energy efficient-despite pleas from the Florida Legislature that DeSantis accept the federal funding.

These latest political misadventures by Governor DeSantis are equal parts ostrich-like, head-in-the-sand behavior; straight out of the Flat Earth Society playbook; and reminiscent of Mad Magazine’s/Alfred E. Neuman’s “What, Me Worry?” philosophy. All in an effort to score some cheap political points rather than serve Floridians’ long-term interests and welfare.

This latest, misguided political missile would be laughable if it were not so damaging to the future of Florida and its 21.5 million residents.

According to the recent New York Times article, 2023 was Florida’s hottest year since

1895. The state's coastal waters heated to 90 degrees F. last summer, bleaching Florida's coral reefs and killing its marine life. Hurricane Idalia made landfall in Florida last August 30th, causing an estimated \$3.6 billion in damage. And in 2022, Hurricane Ian caused over 140 deaths and \$109.5 billion in property damage in Florida, becoming the costliest hurricane in state history according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Ironically, Florida is likely to be the American state most dramatically and quickly threatened by a changing climate-plagued by even more destructive hurricanes, unprecedented storm surges, and steadily rising sea level. Florida, the third most heavily-populated state in the nation, is also one of the most low-lying states in the U.S. All of its largest cities-Miami, Jacksonville, Tampa, St. Petersburg, etc.-are located on Florida's coastline. Those cities are especially vulnerable to sea level rise and related environmental disasters attributable to well-documented climate change.

So, in a rational world, Florida's political leadership would be leading the nation in devising policies to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and taking aggressive steps to address the unavoidable, projected impacts of climate change. Instead, Florida's government leaders-led by Governor DeSantis-are doing the exact opposite: pretending that climate change doesn't exist, that global warming is not a clear and present danger to Floridians; continuing their addiction to fossil fuels rather than transitioning to environmentally-benign renewable energy sources; and jettisoning rational public policy in favor of weaponizing the issue of climate change to score cheap political points. Florida's residents, environment and economy will be the inevitable losers.

History will likely remember Ron DeSantis as a political ostrich with his head firmly embedded in the policy and political sand. The newly-enacted Florida statutes and policies do a fundamental disservice to millions of Floridians, and to the state's future well-being.