

The Bradenton Times

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ELECTION **2024**

Douglas Egger REPUBLICAN STATE COMMITTEEMAN [VIEW ALL RACES](#)

GUEST OPINION

Tropical Storm Debby Exposes Decades of Failed Republican Policies



(<https://zeta.creativecirclecdn.com/bradenton/original/20230922-153252-Guest.jpg>)

Posted Thursday, August 15, 2024 1:13 pm

by Adriaan DeVilliers

The recent “inconvenience” caused by Tropical Storm Debby is obvious to Manatee County residents. But my Manatee County neighbors need to know that those “inconveniences” should *not* have been nearly so severe and intrusive.

I, too, was impacted by the failure of our infrastructure, but as an engineer, I was particularly frustrated because it did not need to be that way. Like many of you, I am a resident of Manatee County, a homeowner, taxpayer, and businessman. I am also a husband, a father, and a transplant from another country. Most importantly, I am a citizen who is concerned about the future of our community and the country at large.

Let’s forget about culture wars between Democrats and Republicans and look at what our elected officials have and have NOT done on our behalf. Let’s look at their records.

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Since 1996, the Republicans have had a clear trifecta majority in Florida's government. They have been in control of all three branches of our government – the state Senate, the state House of Representatives, and the Governor's House.

So, when uncontrolled development leads to grossly lagging infrastructure, the blame belongs to the Republicans in charge. We all suffer when their decisions lead to flooding, traffic jams, and pollution of our rivers and bays. Not to mention, dramatic increases in red tide incidents translate into losing millions of dollars in our tourism industry and the costly trickle-down effect on our overall economy.

While Tropical Storm/Hurricane Debby is still fresh in our minds, let's use it to expose the truth. Here are the facts:

1. Sarasota and Manatee Counties experienced never-before-seen flooding and uncontrolled sewage discharges caused by "only" about 16.5 inches of rain from a tropical storm that passed about 100 miles offshore. Interestingly, Debby impacted our area MORE than Charley (2004), Frances (2004), Jeanne (2004), Wilma (2005), Irma (2017), Michael (2018), Ian, 2022, or hurricane Idalia (2023) – all of which were much more powerful storms.
2. Following Debby's brush with the Gulf Coast, nearly seven million gallons of sewage was discharged from treatment facilities, lift stations, and manholes throughout Sarasota and Manatee Counties. Most of that sewage made its way to our coastal waters.
3. Lake Manatee had to discharge water to prevent a catastrophic dam failure.
4. Roads were flooded up to car-roof levels in places more than ten miles inshore, preventing evacuations.

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TOP STORIES

It's Election Day, Get Out and Vote! (/stories/its-election-day-get-out-and-vote,101534)

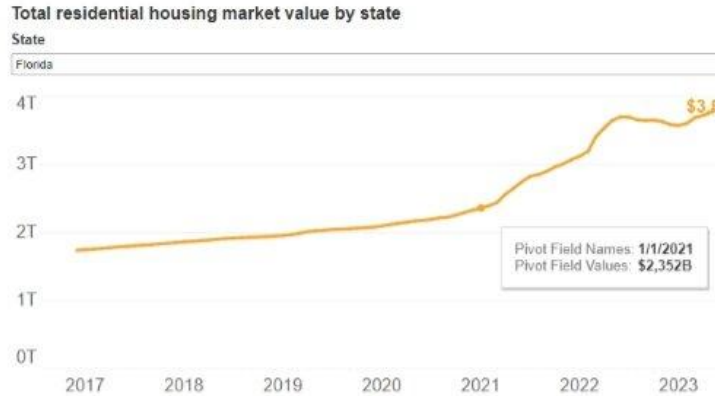
10 hours ago

Political Operatives Use Texts and Other Questionable Tactics in Lead Up to Election Day (/stories/political-operatives-use-texts-and-other-questionable-tactics-in-lead-up-to-election-day,102123)

by Dawn Kitterman | Yesterday at 4:28 PM

5. Homes built 14 feet above FEA flood levels that did not require flood insurance were inundated with water and up-boiling sewage.

So why is our infrastructure lagging so drastically behind development? The clear answer is politics.



(/uploads/original/20240815-131317-641-Data.JPG)

Florida has the distinction as the second fastest growing real estate market in the entire US, with a 2023 market value of almost \$4 billion. When looking at it over time, there has been a distinct acceleration in residential development under Republican Governor Ron DeSantis. The question is WHY? I believe the answer is campaign financing.

In February 2022, YMP Real Estate Management Chairman and CEO Moshe Popack hosted Ron DeSantis and a handful of top contributors at his 10,000-square-foot Miami Beach mansion. DeSantis' political committee reported a \$200,000 non-monetary/in-kind donation from Popack at that meeting. It became the largest single fundraiser for an individual in Florida in the past 20 years. During 2021/2022, DeSantis and

LWV Manatee County Commission Notes: 8/13/24 (/stories/lwv-manatee-county-commission-notes-81324,101839)

by Ginger McCallum | 3 days ago

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Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission | 3 days ago

Satcher is Making Voters Uneasy by Blurring the Line Between Candidate and SOE (/stories/satchers-race-for-the-supervisor-position-under-watchful-eye-of-the-public,101743)

by Dawn Kitterman | 3 days ago | More news

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his aligned political committee raised more than \$7 million from real estate developers, investors, and realtors – making that industry one of his biggest donor groups.

Closer to home, Will Robinson, a real estate lawyer and the Republican incumbent Representative for Florida House District 71 in Manatee County, has a similar donor profile, albeit at lower totals (ROBINSON, WILLIAM (WILL) – FollowTheMoney.org) Since his 2018 race, he has raised nearly \$1 million, the majority of which is from the real estate development, finance, and insurance industry.

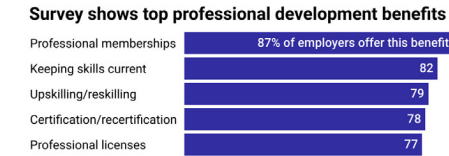
Our elected officials have been clearly operating from a playbook of “how to buy influence to grease the wheels for my business,” and we are all suffering from those questionable practices. Since DeSantis, Will Robinson, and others came to power in Tallahassee, those wheels have been super-greased. Let’s be clear – Development and related growth is good for Manatee County and the State of Florida – as long as it is done responsibly. It must be in balance with infrastructure and with regard to low-cost housing, the environment, and the communities it serves. There lies the key to the mess we are in today.

As reported on August 8, 2024 in this newspaper, “At Thursday’s land use meeting, Manatee County Commissioners took their final vote on a massive giveaway to developers and enacted a discounted impact fee schedule that will ensure growth does not have to pay for itself. Ron DeSantis and the Florida legislature have made it harder for communities to charge adequate impact fees to support the infrastructure required by new growth.” This is the real reason for our current situation. Tallahassee has been making every

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INTERESTING NEWS

5 of the most common professional development benefits (/premium/stories/5-of-the-most-common-professional-development-benefits,102177)



Note: The survey was conducted among SHRM member organizations and received more than 4,200 responses.
Data source: Society for Human Resource Management

(/premium/stories/5-of-the-most-common-professional-development-benefits,102177)

How do employers help their staff refine and develop their skills? Xactly identified some top professional development benefits employers offer.

Jill Jaracz, Data Work By
Paxtyn Merten
Yesterday at 1:30 PM

effort for decades to grease the wheels for developers and, in the current administration, has gone far beyond that to maximize the profits of developers. Not only did they minimize impact fees, they have also gutted all considerations to involve communities they are supposed to serve. They have practically outlawed the Home Rule for small communities and municipalities. They have all but eliminated meaningful reviews for environmental impact at the development permitting stage. They have even outlawed any mention of global warming.

How does all of this tie back to the unexpected floods we saw with Tropical Storm Debby? As an engineer, I can explain. Undeveloped land has a natural balance to handle rainfall and runoff. With development, the ground is replaced by roofs and roads and a significant reduction in the ability to handle heavy rainfall. Without infrastructure to manage a storm like Debby, flooding will surely occur. If that infrastructure is missing or inadequate, we will find ourselves once again dealing with Debby-like results.

Our residents deserve better from our elected officials. Let's think about that when we head to the polls in November.

Adriaan DeVilliers is resident of Palmetto and owner of Camp Engineering, LLC, a civil engineering firm. He is the Democratic candidate for Florida House District 71.

Comments

4 COMMENTS ON THIS ITEM

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Jump on the Travel Trend Bandwagon: Make Memories, Not Debt, On Your Next Trip (/premium/brandpoint/stories/jump-on-the-travel-trend-bandwagon-make-memories-not-debt-on-your-next-trip,102203)



(/premium/brandpoint/stories/jump-on-the-travel-trend-bandwagon-make-memories-not-debt-on-your-next-trip,102203)

(BPT) - From international bucket list trips to road trips to vacations with multi-generations to solo travel, there are so many travel trends worth exploring. If you're eager to plan a trip ...

Yesterday at 1:01 PM

Please log in to comment by clicking here. (/login.html?referer=%2Fstories%2Ftropical-storm-debby-exposes-decades-of-failed-republican-policies%2C101511)

David Daniels

Well written, factual. But we keep re-electing R's like Will Robinson and Jim Boyd. These two have voted for every pre-emptive bill that has been proposed. These two consistently vote in favor of insurance companies and against consumer-based homeowners insurance reforms. These two consistently vote against transparency by adding public record exemptions year after year. These two voted to severely restrict the ability to file ethics law complaints. They voted to preempt any regulations that would require water breaks for outdoor workers like roofers, construction workers, farm workers, and landscapers. These two voted to make it harder to collect dues for some labor unions - teachers and nurses, but not other unions - police and fire. Whenever a local community comes up with a innovative initiative, on workforce housing for example, these two consistently vote to pre-empt. These two are influenced by the lobbyists that write the bills in Tallahassee. Vote accordingly.

3 DAYS AGO [REPORT THIS \(/REPORT_ITEM.HTML?SUB_ID=101511&COMMENT_ID=1881&REFERRING_URL=%2FSTORIES%2FTROPICAL-STORM-DEBBY-EXPOSES-DECADES-OF-FAILED-REPUBLICAN-POLICIES%2C101511\)](#)

Cat L

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READER'S POLL

How are you voting in the August primary? (/stories/how-are-you-voting-in-the-august-primary,101515?showpoll=1)

What unethical politicians and marketing firms weaponize is loyalty and love. Republicans are very loyal and tend to have a deep love of their country. Through ads they can manipulate those feelings to make a group of people move toward or away from something. Then to that add a manufactured enemy, say the undefined nemesis called "liberal," then off goes the chemical fight or flight response.

With enough repetition, all they have to do is mention the trigger word "liberal" to steer the direction of a crowd.

3 DAYS AGO [REPORT THIS \(/REPORT_ITEM.HTML?SUB_ID=101511&COMMENT_ID=1885&REFERRING_URL=%2FSTORIES%2FTROPICAL-STORM-DEBBY-EXPOSES-DECADES-OF-FAILED-REPUBLICAN-POLICIES%2C101511\)](#)

 **pattybeenutty**

Thank you, Adriaan, for a very inclusive commentary, but it is so sad that R's do not believe anything you wrote. They follow the crowd and go off the cliff into a deep dark hole of I will not vote for an intellectual Democrat who cares about our state. Democrats are not all liberal, but we do make sense.

2 DAYS AGO [REPORT THIS \(/REPORT_ITEM.HTML?SUB_ID=101511&COMMENT_ID=1891&REFERRING_URL=%2FSTORIES%2FTROPICAL-STORM-DEBBY-EXPOSES-DECADES-OF-FAILED-REPUBLICAN-POLICIES%2C101511\)](#)

 **ruthlawler**

5 days ago

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[View results \(/stories/how-are-you-voting-in-the-august-primary,101515?\)](/stories/how-are-you-voting-in-the-august-primary,101515?)

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Mr. DeVilliers presents logical and factual information. His knowledge as an engineer and his ability to explain the situation in laymans terms is a breath of fresh air. WHY do the voters continue to elect the same cookie cutter politicians due to their party designation, who only vote in adherence to their party, in spite of what is good for the residents. I will be voting for Adriaan DeVilliers for my representative for Florida House District 71. I encourage others to do the same. Ruth Lawler

YESTERDAY AT 4:51 PM REPORT THIS (/REPORT_ITEM.HTML? SUB_ID=101511&COMMENT_ID=1894&REFERRING_URL=%2FSTORIES%2FTROPICAL-STORM-DEBBY-EXPOSES-DECADES-OF-FAILED-REPUBLICAN-POLICIES%2C101511)

OTHER ITEMS THAT MAY INTEREST YOU

Et Tu, Herald Tribune? (/stories/et-tu-herald-tribune,102124)

KVO Must Go... Same for his Minions (/stories/kvo-must-go-same-for-his-minions,101532)

Who is April Culbreath? (/stories/who-is-april-culbreath,101516)

EarthTalk: Keeping Cities Cool As Climate Warms (/stories/earthtalk-keeping-cities-cool-as-climate-warms,101501)

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