



SHIMP FOR PRESIDENT 2028

INVESTIGATIVE REPORT RON DESANTIS: ISRAEL TIES, DONOR NETWORKS, CAMPAIGN FINANCE, AND STATE POLICY

Public-record review through September 12, 2026

ACCOUNTABILITY | INTEGRITY | RULE OF LAW

This report separates verified public records from allegations, political criticism, and matters requiring additional evidence. Campaign contributions, travel, meetings, or support for Israel are not themselves proof of corruption, bribery, foreign control, or criminal conduct.

Prepared September 12, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ron DeSantis has one of the most extensive documented pro-Israel records of any sitting U.S. governor. His ties include repeated official travel to Israel, direct meetings with Israeli leaders, a 2019 Florida trade mission involving more than 100 participants and more than 20 memoranda of understanding, public opposition to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, state laws affecting companies that boycott Israel, and 2025 legislation facilitating local-government investment in Israeli bonds.

His donor network also includes prominent pro-Israel Republican figures. The clearest example is Miriam and Sheldon Adelson: Florida campaign-finance aggregations based on state filings show the pair gave at least **\$506,000 directly to DeSantis in 2018** - two \$250,000 contributions plus two \$3,000 contributions - while separately giving millions to the Republican Party of Florida. DeSantis later publicly described Miriam Adelson as a friend during his 2023 Jerusalem speech.

AIPAC finding: this investigation did **not** identify a verified direct contribution from AIPAC PAC to Ron DeSantis's presidential campaign or Florida gubernatorial campaign in the records reviewed. AIPAC PAC did not exist until late 2021. DeSantis nevertheless has deep political alignment with major pro-Israel donors and organizations, including extensive engagement with the Republican Jewish Coalition and other donors active in pro-Israel politics. That is politically significant, but it should not be mislabeled as direct AIPAC money without an underlying transaction.

A separate campaign-finance controversy concerns the transfer of approximately **\$82.5 million** from DeSantis's Florida political committee, Friends of Ron DeSantis, to the federal super PAC Never Back Down ahead of his 2024 presidential run. This produced FEC complaints and extensive legal scrutiny. It is relevant to an overall financial investigation, but the evidence reviewed does not establish that the transfer was Israeli or AIPAC money.

I. OFFICIAL TIES TO ISRAEL

2019 trade mission and Cabinet meeting

DeSantis made Israel his first international trade mission as governor in May 2019. The official itinerary included meetings with Israeli companies and officials, Israel Innovation Authority activity, business networking, a U.S. ambassador meeting, a ceremonial Florida Cabinet meeting at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem, and a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The mission involved a 110-person Florida delegation and more than 20 memoranda of understanding between Florida universities, research centers, government entities, and Israeli counterparts.

The governor's office described Israel as a vital economic and military ally and explicitly framed the trip as strengthening Florida-Israel economic, academic, and political ties. DeSantis also visited Ariel University and Gush Etzion, actions the governor's office presented as a message against BDS.

2023 Jerusalem visit

In April 2023 DeSantis returned to Israel and delivered a keynote address in Jerusalem marking Israel's 75th anniversary. His official remarks referenced meetings with Israeli President Isaac Herzog, former U.S. Ambassador David Friedman, and Miriam Adelson. DeSantis praised Florida-Israel economic ties and reiterated his record on Jerusalem, anti-BDS policy, antisemitism legislation, and engagement in the West Bank, which he referred to as Judea and Samaria.

Congressional-era positions

Before becoming governor, DeSantis advocated relocating the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and supported U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Those positions predate his gubernatorial donor relationships and demonstrate that his pro-Israel orientation was not created solely by later campaign contributions.

II. ISRAEL-RELATED STATE POLICY

Anti-boycott statutes

Florida law restricts state investment in companies and other entities identified as boycotting Israel and restricts certain public contracting with entities participating in a boycott of Israel. The statutory definition includes commercial and, in some circumstances, academic boycotts. These policies predate some of DeSantis's tenure but were actively embraced and expanded under his administration.

Israeli bonds

In 2025 Florida enacted HB 669, signed into law as Chapter 2025-174. The law prohibits local-government investment policies from requiring a minimum bond rating for investments in rated or unrated bonds issued by the Israeli government. The legislation passed the Florida Senate 36-0 and House 113-0.

Political significance

These measures demonstrate that DeSantis's Israel relationship is not limited to speeches or symbolic travel. It extends into Florida procurement, investment, education, and public-finance policy. Whether those policies are good or bad is a political judgment; the existence of the policies is a documented fact.

III. DONOR NETWORK: PRO-ISRAEL AND ISRAEL-ALIGNED DONORS

Miriam and Sheldon Adelson

Florida contribution records compiled by Transparency USA show that Miriam and Sheldon Adelson each gave \$250,000 directly to DeSantis on July 25, 2018. The same source reports earlier \$3,000 contributions from each, bringing the direct total reflected there to approximately **\$506,000**. The Adelsons also made very large contributions to the Republican Party of Florida, including multiple \$1.25 million contributions in 2018. Party contributions cannot be treated as DeSantis contributions unless evidence establishes earmarking or another legally relevant connection.

The Adelson family is strongly associated with pro-Israel Republican politics. In 2023 DeSantis publicly thanked Miriam Adelson during his Jerusalem speech, and Axios reported that he dined in Jerusalem with Adelson and other major Republican donors shortly before launching his presidential campaign.

Republican Jewish Coalition network

DeSantis became a high-profile speaker at Republican Jewish Coalition events and used those appearances to emphasize his Israel policy. Public reporting identified several Jewish or pro-Israel Republican donors and fundraisers in his political orbit, including Jay Zeidman, Gabriel Groisman, and Fred Karlinsky. Their religious identity is not relevant to legality; the relevant investigative question is their political activity, donation history, lobbying interests, and relationship to Israel policy.

Other major donors

DeSantis's broader funding base is not primarily an Israel-specific network. His 2022 gubernatorial fundraising included enormous contributions from donors such as Robert Bigelow and Kenneth Griffin and major institutional support from the Republican Governors Association and Republican Party of Florida. Never Back Down later relied on multiple seven-figure donors. These donors should be evaluated on their own interests rather than presumed to be part of an Israel-related network.

Donor / source	Reported amount	Investigative note
Miriam Adelson	~\$253,000 direct in 2018	Prominent pro-Israel Republican donor; later met DeSantis in Israel
Sheldon Adelson	~\$253,000 direct in 2018	Prominent pro-Israel Republican donor

Donor / source	Reported amount	Investigative note
Robert T. Bigelow	\$10,000,000 in 2022 cycle	Major DeSantis donor; no Israel nexus established here
Kenneth C. Griffin	\$5,000,000 in 2022 cycle	Major DeSantis donor; no Israel nexus established here
Republican Governors Association	\$20,950,000 in 2022-cycle aggregation	Institutional political support, not Israel-specific

IV. AIPAC: WHAT THE RECORD DOES AND DOES NOT SHOW

AIPAC PAC registered with the Federal Election Commission in December 2021. That means it could not have directly financed DeSantis's 2018 gubernatorial campaign as AIPAC PAC because the PAC did not yet exist.

For the 2024 presidential campaign, the FEC records reviewed for DeSantis's authorized presidential committees did not identify a direct AIPAC PAC contribution. AIPAC PAC's federal activity is heavily concentrated on congressional races, and this review found no verified transaction showing AIPAC PAC itself writing a contribution to DeSantis's presidential committee.

Conclusion: describing DeSantis as having received 'AIPAC money' is not presently supported by the direct-contribution records reviewed. A more accurate statement is that DeSantis has received substantial support from individual donors and political networks that are strongly pro-Israel, while maintaining close political relationships with pro-Israel advocacy constituencies.

This distinction matters because direct AIPAC PAC contributions, individual donations from AIPAC supporters, Republican Jewish Coalition activity, and independent expenditures are legally and financially different categories.

V. 2024 PRESIDENTIAL FINANCE STRUCTURE

Ron DeSantis for President

The principal 2024 campaign reported more than \$20.1 million in receipts during its first reporting period from May 15 through June 30, 2023, according to its filed FEC Form 3P. The campaign was separate from Never Back Down and from DeSantis's Florida political committee.

Never Back Down and the \$82.5 million transfer

FEC records and complaint materials document that approximately \$82.5 million was transferred from Friends of Ron DeSantis, a Florida state political committee, to Never Back Down, a federal super PAC supporting DeSantis's presidential candidacy. Friends of Ron DeSantis had raised more than \$225 million before termination.

The transfer became the subject of legal complaints alleging that federal campaign-finance restrictions had been circumvented. The complaint process itself does not establish a violation. Any investigative report must distinguish the allegations from an FEC finding.

Never Back Down subsequently became one of the most heavily funded outside groups in the 2024 Republican primary. FEC statistics show tens of millions in independent expenditures supporting DeSantis as well as significant spending opposing him by other groups.

VI. FOREIGN-NATIONAL CONTRIBUTION COMPLAINT

FEC Matter Under Review 8146 concerned allegations involving ECN Capital, a Canadian corporation, U.S. subsidiaries, and numerous political committees, including DeSantis committees. The complaint alleged prohibited foreign-national contributions.

The FEC voted 5-0 in January 2025 to dismiss the allegations against the DeSantis committees and the other respondents. The Commission's public disposition specifically records dismissal of the allegation that Ron DeSantis for

Governor 2018 and Ron DeSantis for Governor 2022 knowingly accepted prohibited foreign-national contributions.

Investigative conclusion: MUR 8146 may properly be cited as a complaint that was filed and investigated, but it should not be presented as proof that DeSantis accepted illegal foreign-national money. The FEC dismissed that allegation.

VII. GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS, AND ACADEMIC TIES

The 2019 Israel mission deliberately blended state government, universities, research institutions, tourism promotion, technology companies, and Israeli officials. The official itinerary listed meetings with Israeli companies, the Israel Innovation Authority, the U.S. ambassador, business leaders, and Netanyahu.

Florida officials later described more than 20 memoranda of understanding emerging from the mission. A thorough follow-up investigation should identify each MOU, whether money changed hands, which Florida public entities were involved, what procurement processes followed, and whether any Israeli company later obtained Florida grants or contracts.

The relationship also has an academic component. Florida officials promoted institutional partnerships with Israeli universities, including institutions in disputed territories. Those ties may be politically controversial but are not evidence of corruption absent a financial or legal irregularity.

VIII. AREAS THAT WARRANT DEEPER INVESTIGATION

- Obtain a transaction-level export of every contribution to DeSantis's 2018 and 2022 Florida committees and classify donors by business, lobbying, foreign-policy, and government-contract interests.
- Trace all donations by Miriam and Sheldon Adelson, Adelson-controlled entities, and major pro-Israel political donors to DeSantis committees, the Republican Party of Florida, and outside groups supporting DeSantis.
- Search every AIPAC PAC FEC disbursement and earmarked contribution for DeSantis-related committees to independently verify the current finding of no direct AIPAC PAC contribution.
- Identify every Florida-Israel memorandum of understanding signed during the 2019 and 2023 missions, including financial obligations, participating agencies, universities, and private companies.
- Review Florida procurement and grant records for Israeli companies or U.S. affiliates that received state money after participating in governor-led missions.
- Review State Board of Administration purchases and holdings of Israeli bonds during DeSantis's tenure, including timing, yields, ratings, and investment-policy exceptions.
- Map major donors against legislation involving Israel, BDS, Israeli bonds, security grants, university policy, and state procurement without presuming a quid pro quo.
- Review travel financing, security costs, delegation expenses, and public/private sponsorship for DeSantis's Israel trips.
- Audit the transfer of \$82.5 million from Friends of Ron DeSantis to Never Back Down against Florida and federal contribution-source rules, while incorporating actual FEC dispositions rather than only complaints.
- Separate lawful advocacy and donor alignment from any evidence of bribery, prohibited foreign funding, unregistered foreign agency, or corruption.

IX. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Verified: DeSantis has extensive official, political, economic, and donor ties to Israel and to prominent pro-Israel Republican networks. His administration has embedded support for Israel into Florida investment and contracting policy, and he has repeatedly traveled to Israel and met senior Israeli officials and major donors.

Verified donor relationship: Miriam and Sheldon Adelson contributed approximately \$506,000 directly to DeSantis's 2018 campaign according to Florida campaign-finance aggregations based on state filings, in addition to millions they separately contributed to the Republican Party of Florida.

Not verified: this review did not find evidence that AIPAC PAC itself directly contributed money to DeSantis's campaigns. It also did not find evidence sufficient to establish that DeSantis is controlled by Israel, acted as a foreign agent, accepted a bribe from an Israeli interest, or committed a criminal offense because of his Israel policy.

Potential concern: the scale of overlap among donor relationships, official Israel travel, state policy, and public investment decisions justifies detailed transparency review. The proper investigative question is whether any specific donor or foreign-linked entity obtained an official benefit in exchange for financial support - not whether a politician merely holds strongly pro-Israel views.

X. SOURCE REGISTER

Source class	Use in report
Florida Governor's Office	2019 Israel mission itinerary; Cabinet meeting; 2019 accomplishments; 2023 Jerusalem speech.
Florida Senate	Fla. Stat. §§ 215.4725 and 287.135; HB 669 (2025) Israeli Bonds.
Florida Division of Elections	Campaign finance database; campaign documents; public matching-fund records.
Federal Election Commission	Ron DeSantis presidential candidate and committee records; Never Back Down; MUR 8146.
FEC Form 3P	Ron DeSantis for President report covering May 15-June 30, 2023; \$20.11 million receipts.
Transparency USA	Florida contribution aggregations, including Adelson, Bigelow, Griffin, party and committee support.
Reuters / major national reporting	Campaign donors, Republican primary financing, Israel-related policy and donor context.
Axios	April 2023 report on DeSantis dinner in Jerusalem with Miriam Adelson and other GOP donors.
Jewish Telegraphic Agency	2023 overview of DeSantis's Jewish/pro-Israel donor and political network.

Research note: no public-source investigation can guarantee capture of every donor, private meeting, or undisclosed relationship. The findings above are limited to records and reporting that could be independently identified and should be supplemented with transaction-level state and federal exports before making criminal or corruption allegations.