

Trump's Broken Promises on Florida's Economy



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Trump claimed that "our country is coming back incredibly" in the first presidential debate. But that same night, central Florida was dealt a crushing blow: Walt Disney Co. announced it would lay off 28,000 employees, with a staggering 15,300 jobs cut in Florida alone. Worse, the hotel industry has lost nearly 40%, or 76,746, of their pre-shutdown jobs in the state, with hundreds of thousands more at risk.

Floridian's Hispanic population has been especially hard-hit. In mid-July, during Florida's worst spike of the coronavirus, Hispanics made up 44% of cases, despite being 25% of the population. The toll on the economy, especially in low-income communities like Allapattah in Miami-Dade, decimated workers and families. And with Trump's stalled stimulus talks, federal relief is nowhere in sight. **"Between the health crisis and this economic crisis, you don't even know what's going to happen to you,"** said Flavia, an undocumented worker who lost her job at the start of the pandemic.

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Trump continues to jet back and forth from the Sunshine State making promises – some of them very specific – that he hasn't kept. Still, his boasting of a strong economy in Florida, no matter how fictional, has become central to his reelection bid. And recent polling shows that Americans give him an edge over Joe Biden when it comes to things like jobs, manufacturing, and standing up to China.

That's why Democrats must tell the whole story to Florida voters: the state's economy, jobs, businesses, and health care are all worse because of Donald Trump, and real Floridians have been hurt. They can't take four more years of Trump's lies and broken economic promises.

If you want data – the facts and figures about Trump's impact on the economy of Florida – the Center for American Progress Action Fund has put them all together. But to give your friends and neighbors the full flavor of Trump's betrayal of Florida, you should also tell them about how he has let these Floridians down:

"We're building it up again," Trump said of the economic resurgence. "Third quarter numbers will be announced before the election and I think they are going to be tremendously, they're going to be great."

– Trump National golf resort in Doral, FL, 9/25/20

- **"I'm worried about us being in the dark or being without water."** When Trump and the GOP-led Senate walked away from negotiations to deliver on a desperately needed stimulus deal, Florida workers were left out to dry. Latonya Carter lost her job in Pensacola six months ago when the state's hospitality industry nosedived. "I was hoping for another stimulus check so I could pay my bills," Carter said. "I've never experienced anything like this. I just don't know how it got so bad." And new data show unemployment claims are spiking faster in Florida than other states as large companies announce mass layoffs.

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- What are we supposed to do? Who's enforcing what around here?** Despite the state hitting 760,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 16,000 deaths, Governor DeSantis followed the President's rosy proclamations that we're about to turn a corner and rushed into Phase 3 of reopening, in a clear rebuke of CDC guidelines. "It's the Wild West," said Tim Petrillo, whose hospitality group runs 11 bars, restaurants, and clubs in Fort Lauderdale. "There's no unanimity among governments, and there's no communication between the county and state in knowing what to do next." Business owners, already exhausted from policing mask use in the absence of a statewide mask mandate, are now forced to gamble risks to customers and staff while financially pressed to operate at full capacity. "We're still so far away from a vaccine. Why are we letting up now?" Holmes Beach Mayor Judy Titsworth said. "We finally got our numbers to turn, and now I'm afraid we might go backward."
- "While the rest of the economy is in a recession, the travel industry is in a depression."** Christopher Thompson, president and CEO of Brand USA, said tourism in Florida would take years to recover, despite President Trump's promises of a speedy recovery. With the state branded as the coronavirus epicenter for months, he estimates that international tourist spending may not return to pre-coronavirus levels until 2024. "Today's environment is the worst we've ever faced."
- "If you're working a minimum-wage job and you haven't worked for five months, how do you catch up on rent? How?"** With one in four hospitality jobs in Florida cut, workers are left fumbling with a broken unemployment system, stretching the one-time check from the CARES Act. Worse, with the federal boost of \$600 per week for unemployment gone, many laid-off workers in Florida were forced under the poverty line. Hernan Gonzalez, a 58-year-old sommelier who had worked at the Diplomat Hotel for sixteen years, was one of them. "In Miami, it's very difficult to make it on \$275 dollars a week," he said, referring to the state's current benefits. "It's basically impossible to survive with that money."
- "We are being thrown out into the dark and told to find our way,"** union president Justin Katz said about schools reopening in Florida. Pressured by Trump, Gov. DeSantis has hastily moved up the school reopening date, throwing Miami-Dade and Broward County off schedule, leaving them unprepared and underfunded. "We're at a breaking point. We have no confidence such a difficult, complicated task will be enacted in a fair manner."
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- Why does he not value us:** While Florida farmers deal with \$522 million in COVID-19 losses,” wrote Nikki Fried, Florida’s Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, “Trump’s USDA was slow to provide assistance, with financial aid capped at a single day’s loss for some large farms.” Both DeSantis and Trump have shown little regard for farmworkers in the state, as many were left without PPE or basic information on COVID-19 safety protocols. DeSantis went so far as to blame the rise in Florida’s cases on “overwhelming Hispanic farmworkers and laborers.” **“It’s shameful,”** Antonio Tovar, executive director of the Farmworker Association of Florida, said.
- “I’m potentially sitting here with polyps right now, and no way to get a colonoscopy because I can’t afford it.”** Trump promised “everybody’s going to be taken care of much better than they’re taken care of now.” But his “beautiful” health plan never materialized. Instead, health care has gotten further out of reach for Floridians like Marsha Miller, who was laid off in March. More than 240,000 Floridians and 55,000 children in Florida lost health insurance under the Trump Administration—and that was before Trump’s failed pandemic response cost Miller and 600,000 Floridians their jobs and health coverage. If Trump succeeds in overturning the Affordable Care Act, millions more could lose coverage.

Trump praised Florida’s quick return to “a normal life” at a maskless rally just one week before he himself contracted COVID-19. That ‘normal life’ comes at the cost of Floridians’ safety, and it could derail the road to recovery. With massive revenue losses, budget shortfalls, and 1.4 million that’ve been out of work, Florida’s economy is on the brink. Unfortunately, Trump has sold Florida workers and families a bill of goods. He has lied, broken promises, and betrayed their trust—and Florida Democrats must make sure voters know it.