

Emotional Exploitation: Uncovering the Allure of Climate Change Denial in Florida Politics

Author's Statement

This paper was written for 76-101 Interpretation and Argument in a section focused on modern American denialism, which I took with Professor Courtney Novosat in Spring 2023. The goals of the course include introducing students to comparative genre analysis and developing their research skills by allowing them the chance to contribute to an ongoing academic conversation through a research proposal and original research project of their choice. The goal of the final assignment in the course is a contribution paper that closes a gap between existing research and the discourse surrounding denialism by developing an original research question. Through this assignment, I learned the challenges of formulating a practical research question, collecting useful data, and accurately interpreting data without extrapolation. Most importantly, I came to realize through my research that logic may not be the most powerful tool in a speaker's arsenal, emotion is.

Sherry

Abstract

As the Earth warms, climate change denialism is becoming increasingly hazardous, especially for Florida. It is no longer adequate to primarily concentrate on deterring the effects of climate denialism by fact-checking. Instead, the focus should be on the source of climate denialism. To this end, this paper will explore the strategies Florida politicians exploit to convince their constituents of climate denialism¹ and identify the most compelling techniques. This pilot study of speeches and Tweets uses thematic analysis to reveal how people are most effectively persuaded of climate denialism when their identity and lifestyle are threatened, and when the future is made intangible to them. Because the appeal of climate change denialism stems from amplifying certain emotions—most notably fear—disrupting these psychological effects would be a better alternative to fact-checking, which presumes individuals are strongly moved by truth and reason, something that is evidently not the case.

Introduction: Spread of Denialism in Fort Myers, Florida

In the continental United States, Florida is one of the states most affected by climate change, evidenced by the increasing prevalence of devastating hurricanes and rising sea levels. Even so, a sizable proportion of Floridians continue to deny the existence of climate change vigorously. As recently as April 2022, the Lake Research Partners found a significant decrease in the portion of Fort Myers, Florida, residents who believed in climate change from 2018 to 2022. In 2018, 75% of the residents believed climate change was happening; only 68% acknowledged that climate change was happening in 2022. Naturally, the region also witnessed an increase in

¹ In this paper, climate change denialism refers to the rejection of the existence of climate change and/or the rejection of the importance of climate change and/or refusing to take action against climate change. Throughout this paper, the phrase “climate denialism” will take on the same meaning as “climate change denialism.”

those who do not believe climate change is happening— from 12% in 2018 to a striking 23% in 2022. Since Fort Myers has been experiencing an approximate 2°F (1.6°C) increase in temperature since 1902, the increase in those who do not believe in climate change is alarming and is suspected to be a result of Florida’s changing political landscape.

Florida was a swing state until the 2016 presidential election. Since the 2016 presidential election, Florida has become more conservative, and right-leaning politicians—especially far-right-leaning politicians—are prone to spread climate denialism.² As the effects of climate change become more pronounced, radical conservatives seem to promote their denialist messages more energetically to maintain the integrity of their position. While existing research has examined some difficulties for people to acknowledge climate change, it does not examine whether politicians can effectively manipulate people’s emotions. More importantly, current research does not elaborate on how politicians cause people to consider believing in climate change as a “belief tax,” that is punishment resulting from a belief. Already, this belief tax seems to have converted approximately 11% of Fort Myer residents to climate change deniers. To better understand the connection between politics, climate denialism, and psychology, this paper will explore how right-leaning Florida politicians convince their constituents of climate change denialism using thematic analysis. My work seeks to understand the psychological impacts of political messages about climate change and which rhetorical techniques are most effective.

² See, for example, this article from *The New York Times* from November 2020 framing climate denial as Donald Trump’s lasting presidential legacy: What Will Trump’s Most Profound Legacy Be? Possibly Climate Damage.

Synthesis of Existing Research on the Psychology Behind Climate Denialism

Despite knowing right-wing politicians' involvement with climate denialism, evident by the 11% increase of climate change deniers in Fort Myers, it remains uncertain how they convince their constituents of climate denialism and why their messages are persuasive. For instance, it is known that climate change denialists "cloak their criticism of a particular theory in scientific garb, without providing an alternative 'theory'" (Blancke et al. 78). However, mimicking science indicates denialist claims are subject to the same weakness as science—they are falsifiable, or, able to be proven incorrect. While political polarization decreases with increasing falsifiability and vice versa (Campbell et al. 524), climate denialist claims remain undeterred despite their claims' ability to be proven incorrect. Thus, it appears that the truth may not motivate the rejection of climate change denialism, which makes it all the more necessary to explain the appeal of climate change denialism.

Unfortunately, even the most direct evidence of climate denialism's appeal does not explain the unique attractiveness of the viewpoint, just the allure of beliefs in general. In "Why and When Beliefs Change" by Tali Sharot, Max Rollwage, Cass R. Sunstein, and Stephen Fleming, it is revealed when the "external, non-accuracy dependent outcomes of holding conservative beliefs are reduced or eradicated [...] individuals may shift their beliefs based on the other dimensions" (Sharot et al. 144). This suggests that "political polarization might well resolve [...] when one environment rewards a certain set of beliefs and another environment rewards a different set of beliefs", which means a "belief subsidy" (reward resulting from a belief) can turn into a "belief tax" (punishment resulting from a belief) when environments change. This phenomenon could explain individuals' engagement with denialism because belief in climate denialism provides a defense against the negative effects that confidence in climate

change would realize. Affirming the previous statement, “The Psychological Impacts of Global Climate Change” by Thomas Doherty and Susan Clayton revealed that “approximately half [of the people who took the survey] report feeling disgusted, hopeless, helpless, or sad about the issue, and a quarter report feeling depressed or guilty” (Doherty and Clayton 269). These feelings are several examples of the previously mentioned “belief tax,” which is crucial for decreasing individuals’ perceived value of a belief.

Noting the potential correlation between certain emotional states and the likelihood of believing in climate denialism, I explored other similar behaviors, such as procrastination, which is connected to feelings of “not wanting to face the future reality.” Since both procrastination and denialism require a willful rejection of some reality, there could be a connection between the appeal of procrastination and denialism. Further research reveals that “making the future tangible is only one of the psychological barriers that have made climate change into an elusive problem” (Akpan). Understanding this psychological resistance to envisioning a bleak future, politicians could very well intentionally craft their messages to emphasize the *intangibility* of climate change, which could strengthen people’s belief in climate denialism.

Methodology: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is the analysis of qualitative data that involves identifying patterns in meaning across the dataset to derive common themes, which are largely used in different fields of social sciences. More specifically, in the field of political science, thematic analysis has been used to understand the themes and motivations behind the tweets of the New Democracy (ND) and the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), which are the two main political parties in Greece (Poulakidakos et al.””” 119). The same methodology has been used to identify

ideological contrasts between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump before and after the 2016 presidential election (Zompetti 29).

Similar to the studies above, this paper also uses thematic analysis to analyze the set of strategies used in the political speeches and tweets, specifically of Florida right-wing politicians Governor Ron DeSantis and Senator Marco Rubio from 2021 to 2022. My thematic analysis focuses on the motivation behind each politician’s tweets and speeches as well as the rhetorical appeals and techniques they use to convince their audience of climate denialism. To conjecture about how politicians may manipulate the perception of climate change denialism, I analyze the content of speeches and tweets Governor DeSantis and Senator Rubio delivered and posted from 2021 to 2022 concerning climate change. I then identify common themes and rhetorical techniques used across the speeches and tweets. Though, unlike the previously mentioned research, which only identified common themes, this study also quantifies and examines the amount of support each strategy yields.

After analyzing the content of the tweets, to quantify approval, I use the following standard ratio: $\frac{\square\square\square\square\square\square\square\square\square\square}{\square\square\square\square\square\square\square\square\square\square}$. For YouTube videos, the number of views and likes were recorded to measure the success of a politician’s tactics. The percentage returned can be interpreted as the ratio of people who viewed the tweet or speech that supported the message of the tweet or speech.

Twitter did not allow users to see the number of views a post received before December 16, 2022, which means the ratio of support is, at best, an approximation. To mitigate the problem concerning Twitter, the median number of views across posts of similar design³ was used

³ Similar designs mean only tweets with video attachments, with visible number of views, will be used to calculate the average number of views for a tweet with an unknown number of views; the same logic of calculation was used for tweets without any attachments, for those with images, and for those with URL attachments.

starting from December 16, 2022, to calculate support. This calculated median will be treated as the number of views received by tweets posted before December 16, 2022, which is when the number of views for tweets is unknown. Only the number of likes will be factored into the consideration for calculating the percentage of support politicians receive because other engagement mechanisms can communicate either positive or negative sentiment, whereas, those who like a post are certain to feel positive about it.

The same assessment method for Tweets will also be used for published YouTube videos of speeches as a way to measure the amount of support a speech received. To identify the theme and which rhetorical techniques are used, the meaning of the message and the intended effect of the message will be analyzed. After analyzing select numbers of posts, posts that exhibit different appeals and different themes will be grouped into different categories, indicating the distinct strategies that politicians use. In other words, there will be two groups of data that will be analyzed: one that separates the data by rhetorical appeals and the other by common themes. To determine the effectiveness of each rhetorical technique and theme, the average amount of support for each post exhibiting similar rhetorical techniques and themes is compared, respectively. The theme and rhetorical technique with the highest ratio of the number of likes to views will be viewed as the “most effective,” whereas the one with the lowest average will be viewed as the “least effective” for this limited data set.

Results: Contrasting Strategies Used Between Rubio and DeSantis

Experimental Data for Marco Rubio

Three of Senator Marco Rubio’s Twitter posts and two of his speeches were examined for the techniques of persuasion used. All of Rubio’s posts rely on denouncing climate change as a

significant concern. In two of his posts, he downplays the importance of climate change by magnifying the significance of other issues. In the remaining post, he minifies climate change by condemning the efforts made concerning climate change.

Figure 1: Experimental Data for Marco Rubio’s Tweets Regarding Climate Change

Marco Rubio				
Content of the Tweet	Date of the Tweet	Number of Views	Number of Likes	Technique of Persuasion
“This is the week that proved that being dependent on a criminal like #Putin for our oil is a bigger threat to America than climate change.”	3/5/2022	154,650	7314	Rubio strategically begins with pathos by introducing Putin as a “criminal”—framing Putin as a national security threat—allowing Rubio to follow with an analogy—an appeal to logos—that compares a national security threat to climate change to minify the importance of climate change by magnifying the threat of Putin.

<p>“While working Americans are struggling with high prices, worried about the border and terrorized by crime the Senate is spending all night voting on a democrat climate change bill.”</p>	8/7/2022	129,400	3272	<p>Rubio relies dominantly on pathos by evoking feelings of fear and hardship through phrases like “struggling with high prices”, “worried about the border”, and “terrorized by crime.” Following these phrases with the Senate’s action on climate change serves to convey neglect towards the priorities of working Americans, which simultaneously renders climate change inferior to other issues.</p>
<p>“I can’t wait until we have a Senate led by people in touch with the real concerns of working Americans So we can reverse all the climate garbage</p>	8/8/2022	129,400	2,417	<p>In this passage, Rubio once again calls on pathos by proclaiming efforts made toward climate change as “garbage”, which serves to convince his audience that climate change and efforts</p>

democrats rammed through by the slimmest of margins.”				toward that cause are not worthwhile because it is not one of the “real concerns of working Americans.”
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Figure 2: Experimental Data for Marco Rubio’s Speeches Regarding Climate Change

Marco Rubio				
Title of Youtube Video	Publishing Date of the Video	Number of Views	Number of Likes	Technique of Persuasion
Sen. Marco Rubio Addresses America Returning to the United Nations Climate Change Conference	10/29/2021	728	46	Rubio begins by informing his audience that China and Russia are the biggest emitters of greenhouse gasses. Appealing to logos, he reasons: because of that the nations should “ruin their economies first before you ask America to ruin its economy.” More broadly, Rubio was attempting to prevent his

				audience from supporting climate change efforts by suggesting those efforts would devastate the American economy, which is an instance of faulty causality.
Marco Rubio Slams Radical Climate Activists: ‘I Don’t Understand It’	11/7/2022	5573	386	Rubio employs an appeal to ethos through the use of an ad hominem by calling radical climate activists “crazy.” He then proceeds to claim the same group of people is causing “traffic congestions” and inflation using faulty causality—an appeal to logos. Both techniques combine in an attempt to convince Rubio’s audience that supporting climate change will threaten Americans’ lifestyles.

Instead of employing the same strategy for his speeches, Rubio relies on depicting climate change as a hindrance, mainly by claiming that prioritizing climate change would disrupt

the American economy and the normalcy of people's lives. The median number of views Rubio receives for tweets without any attachments is approximately 154,650 (see Figure 1). Compared to those numbers, his posts with a video acquired a median of 129,400 (see Figure 1). When Rubio trivializes the importance of climate change, the amount of support he receives is around 3.04% (calculated by taking the average of the amount of support between three posts). Upon examining both of Rubio's speeches, it can be seen that he only attempted to convince people of climate denialism by claiming that climate change will damage the American economy and lifestyle. This strategy yielded an astonishing 6.63% support, on average, which suggests the method is more than twice as effective as simply trivializing climate change.

Experimental Data for Ron DeSantis

To understand Ron DeSantis's approach to the issue of climate change, one of his Twitter posts and two speeches were analyzed. The only tweet DeSantis made concerning climate change occurred on January 28, 2021, so the number of views for the tweet was unspecified. Therefore, to approximate the number of views for the tweet that contained an image, the mean and median number of views of tweets of similar structure—only tweets with images attached—were examined after December 16, 2022, because that is when the number of views for tweets is visible. This procedure yielded a median number of views of 720,000 (see Figure 3). Due to the wide range of the number of views, using the mean would be problematic because it is heavily influenced by outliers. On the other hand, using the median would provide a more accurate representation of the number of views because it is more consistent in the presence of outliers. Using the calculated median, and the recorded number of likes for DeSantis's tweet on January 28, 2021, the percentage of those who support the tweet is around 0.05%.

Figure 3: Experimental Data for Ron DeSantis's Tweet Regarding Climate Change

Ronald DeSantis				
Content of the Tweet	Date of the Tweet	Number of Views	Number of Likes	Technique of Persuasion
<p>“Our state’s environment and water resources make Florida unique and are critical to Florida’s identity. The protection of these resources is a top priority of the #FloridaLeads budget.”</p>	1/28/2021	720,000	390	<p>DeSantis promotes climate resilience, the idea of adapting to the changing climate, instead of stopping climate change from occurring. This tactic downplays the need to take action to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions by mentioning that the “environment and water resources” are “critical” and “unique” to Florida. DeSantis attempts to build an emotional connection between the environment and his audience, which can cause the audience to support DeSantis’s idea because it</p>

				seems the environment is now connected to people's identities.
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In a speech in which DeSantis utilizes the same strategy, the portion of support he received was approximately 1.21%, with the total number of views being 1,400 and the total number of likes being 17. In DeSantis's second speech, he used the same strategy and advertised climate change as a left-wing issue. This speech obtained 23,000 views with a staggering 1,500 likes, accumulating a surprising 6.5% of support, which is calculated using the ratio of the number of likes to the number of views. In DeSantis's tweets and speeches, he always relies on climate resilience as a tactic to undermine climate change. However, he only relies on depicting climate change as a left-wing issue 33% of the time.

Figure 4: Experimental Data for Ron DeSantis's Speeches Regarding Climate Change

Ronald DeSantis				
Title of YouTube Video	Publishing Date of the Video	Number of Views	Number of Likes	Technique of Persuasion
Gov. DeSantis pledges \$1B to protect Florida against effects of	11/6/2021	1,400	17	DeSantis chose to promote his idea of climate resilience, which is an appeal to logos, by emphasizing that focusing

<p>climate change</p>				<p>on adapting to the changing climate is more important than focusing on controlling the changing climate. Doing so promotes adaptation, but not mitigation, which would cause his audience to ignore the root cause of global warming.</p>
<p>‘We’re Not Doing Any Left-Wing Stuff: DeSantis Asked About Infrastructure and Global Warming</p>	<p>12/11/2021</p>	<p>23,000</p>	<p>1,500</p>	<p>DeSantis attempts to convince his audience to not support climate change efforts by associating it with “left-wing things”, and proceeds to say “we are not doing any left-wing stuff”, which appeals to emotions by reminding his audience of their identities, which would be threatened if they were to support climate change efforts. He then goes on to</p>

				<p>discuss climate resilience which likely did not have a significant impact on increasing support, since his audience could have interpreted climate resilience as a left-wing agenda, which would have decreased DeSantis's support.</p>
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Analysis of Marco Rubio's Experimental Data

Based on the analysis done on Marco Rubio, his most common tactics involve trivializing climate change as an issue and proclaiming that climate change endangers the American economy and current lifestyle. However, the two techniques do not yield the same results. The most effective technique for Rubio appears to be framing climate change as an issue that will endanger the American economy and lifestyle—which is predominantly executed using logos—followed by trivializing climate change relative to other issues—which is mostly achieved using pathos.

Based on this paper's research, people are most likely to become victims of climate denialism when their current lifestyles are threatened, suggesting that people strongly value their current security. This is likely because when people's sense of normalcy is threatened, they will likely choose to protect themselves from the threat by denying the existence of the danger. In comparison, trivializing the importance of climate change presents a less effective strategy, but

its effectiveness illustrates that people are mostly capable of thinking and acting in the short-term, rather than the long term, which is likely why trivializing climate change seems to be more effective. When people think in the short-term, the long-run consequences are intangible. Because the impacts of climate change are gradual and more difficult to notice daily, even when the future becomes the present, people may still believe that climate change is not happening. Given this tendency of disbelief when one's daily observations seem to conflict with climate data, Rubio's tactics of suggesting climate intervention poses a lifestyle threat may only reinforce their false beliefs, potentially amplifying their climate denialism. Surprisingly, people can comprehend the possible adverse effects of their lifestyle by endorsing climate change but cannot acknowledge the negative impact of disbelieving in climate change. Lastly, it is worth noticing that Rubio relies solely on trivializing the significance of climate change on Twitter, and exclusively on appealing to people's fear.

It is important to note that while trivializing the significance of climate change yielded, on average, 3.3% of support, but when Rubio compared climate change to Putin, who was framed as a national security threat, the amount of support was 4.7% —1.3% higher than the average. This implies when attempting to minimize the matter of climate change, comparing it to national security proves much more effective than comparing it to issues such as inflation, crime, and border issues. On a different note, it appears that specific issue comparisons are more effective than generalized comparisons because when Rubio simply compared the “real concerns of working Americans” to climate change his approval rating was 1.9%, whereas when he used direct comparisons of specific issues to climate change, his approval rating was 2.5% (ratio of likes to views when comparing climate change to inflation, immigration, and terrorism) and

4.7% (ratio of likes to views when comparing climate change to Russia's threat to national security).

Analysis of Ron DeSantis's Experimental Data

Unlike Marco Rubio who depends heavily on trivializing climate change, DeSantis relies on championing climate resilience—employing this tactic whenever climate change is mentioned from January to December 2021. The other technique he utilizes—only 33% of the time observed—involves framing climate change as a left-wing agenda, which is, on average, ten times more effective at garnering support from his listeners than solely relying on the idea of climate resilience. Unlike Rubio, who has the highest approval rating when he uses logos, DeSantis appears to attain the most support when he utilizes pathos.

The experimental results reveal two striking conclusions. The first is that people appear more likely to support a belief when it goes against the idea of an opposing faction. In this instance, DeSantis's audience, which consists mainly of conservatives, is more likely to support climate denialism when their belief undermines the goals of the liberals. Also, this behavior reveals that individuals may support an idea *not* because they *actually* believe it, but because it goes *against* the view of an entity that the individuals dislike. As previously mentioned, most of those who support DeSantis consider themselves conservatives, and because of that, backing something that is deemed liberal, would be akin to abandoning their identity, which illustrates the second and related conclusion that people are likely to go against a belief (in this case, climate change) when it threatens their existing personal identity. The lack of support—a mere 0.63%—when only climate resilience is used, could also be of the same root because climate change has historically been an issue championed by liberals, so for DeSantis's audience to embrace climate resilience would, again, be compromising their identities. Therefore, the high

discrepancy between employing only climate resilience, as opposed to both techniques demonstrates that individuals hold their identities in high regard because if this were not the case, using two techniques would have yielded a similar percentage, but a significant increase in the percentage of support would not have been observed.

Cumulative Analysis of Both Sets of Experimental Data

A fascinating revelation of both studies is that DeSantis and Rubio seem to be ignorant about the most effective ways to convince their constituents of climate denialism. Had they been aware, each would have used the tactic that gained the most support most often. This observation means that while Rubio and DeSantis have a general understanding of what moves people to believe in climate denialism, they do not know which techniques seem to be the best for that purpose. Cumulatively, this experiment reveals that the most to least effective ways to convince people of climate denialism are as follows: threatening their security in life (6.65%), threatening their identities (6.5%), trivializing the importance of climate change relative to other issues (3.3%), and promoting climate resilience (0.63%). Regarding the rhetorical appeals, cumulatively logos appears to be the most effective, especially when combined with faulty causality and followed by pathos.

Discussion

Significance and Implications

Investigating climate denialism from a political perspective is meaningful because it reveals strategies that can be mimicked to make it easier for people to believe in climate change. Additionally, knowing how people are most effectively convinced of climate denialism is a development toward a better understanding of what might most effectively deter denialist

influence. This knowledge could help steer efforts away from simply fact-checking, which could push the development of effective countering strategies, such as pre-bunking. Doing so would not only stall the spread of climate denialism by rendering such rhetoric useless, but it could potentially discourage politicians from spreading misinformation because they would know the techniques are ineffective. Unfortunately, the research aiming to prove the existence of climate change and humans' contribution appears to not work in shifting the denialists' perspectives. The existing approach involves focusing on reversing the effects of climate change denialism. However, the denialists' rejection of the truth requires prioritizing the root of the problem: the *attractiveness* of climate change denialism. This research sought to explore that attractiveness by examining the psychological appeal of climate denialism and suggests further research in this direction may be fruitful.

Potential for Further Research

As mentioned before, Marco Rubio uses fundamentally different strategies when he addresses his audience on Twitter and when he addresses them orally. A potential reason for this difference could be due to the mixed nature of the audience in a speech, as opposed to the more aligned nature of the audience on Twitter. In general, when faced with an aligned audience, pathos is most appealing, whereas, when faced with a mixed audience, logos are more appealing. However, the exact reason for the difference in technique is not clear and should be a focus of future research because it could mean that certain psychological appeals are more effective in specific situations. Further, because this observational study relied on limited data, this trend may not be present if a larger dataset was used, warranting further study. In future studies, it would be critical to use a larger dataset to determine whether the conclusions can be generalized to the larger population. Furthermore, because each politician's chosen rhetorical techniques

exploit people's desire to protect their identity and security and their inability to grasp the future, it is essential to comprehend how these feelings can be properly assuaged. Likewise, it is critical to understand that climate denialism is compelling, not because it is logical, but because it appeals to people's emotions, which are rooted in people's psychological responses to stimuli. Therefore, prospective studies should investigate how psychological mechanisms and responses are activated, weakened, and deactivated. Doing so will mean that people's sensitivity to denialist rhetoric can be moderated, thus decreasing the effectiveness of misinformation and slowing the spread of climate denialism.

Appendix A: Speech Transcripts

Title of YouTube Video: “Sen. Marco Rubio Addresses America Returning to the United Nations Climate Change Conference”

Rubio: At this new summit on climate change, look, I think we need to do something to mitigate against sea level rise, but here's the bottom line: Who's going to talk to China? Because they're the largest emitters in the world. They walk around acting like they are, you know, a developing country when it comes to climate change, but they want to be treated like the world power on everything else. What about Russia that is exporting coal all over the world, including to China? Who's going to talk to them? They should move first because they're the biggest polluters on the planet, especially China. So let them destroy their economy first before you ask America to destroy its economy.

Title of YouTube Video: “Marco Rubio Slams Radical Climate Activists: ‘I Don't Understand It’”

Rubio: These heating oil costs are going to eviscerate the northeast, about 500% increases. Again because we're gonna have it. But here's what will affect us—diesel. No one thinks about diesel. Diesel fuel is what goes in the trucks that bring all the products. So if it costs more money for that truck to bring the product, the price of that product is gonna go up, but all of this is a result of this lunacy of we're not going to drill for American oil. And so they'll argue ‘oh, you got all these leases’; what they don't tell you is these radical groups—these crazies. They're crazies. These are the people that block traffic. They do that. These are the people that are now going to like art museums, and throwing, like I don't know, spaghetti sauce on these works of art. Look I'm not anti-art. I don't understand it. What I know about art is that the weirder it is, and the

deader the artist is, the more it costs. That's what I know. But they've defaced these things. Some of these people, they tried during the NBA playoffs last year to glue themselves onto the court. I'm going to be honest. I'm going to confess something. I was hopeful they would succeed because I just wanted to see what would happen. Like, do they play around them? Do they sweep them off? Like how do you get a guy off the floor? He's glued himself. One guy ran out with some smoke bomb a couple weeks ago and got, you know, knocked out by one of the players. People 'oh, we should press charges!' What are you doing on the field with a smoke bomb? How does he know what that is? These people are crazy, and they set the agenda. They set the agenda, and the agenda says you can't. You can't. We're gonna take you to court. We're gonna sue you, and we're gonna tell banks not to lend you money. That's another thing---debanking. They want all these people to not even have bank accounts, so the result is we're not producing energy, and the cost of everything going up, and that's fueling inflation. The other thing fueling inflation is supply chain. Listen, it was stupid. It was a dumb decision to decide 'look, we don't need to make anything in America anymore, let's make it in China. It's cheaper.' It's cheaper until no one else can make it and then they can charge you whatever they want, or they can cut you off and that's what they do. Today 88% of the medicines that we rely on--the active ingredients--come from China, and the list goes on and on and on. We've got to bring American manufacturing back because we can't ever be a country that depends on other countries. And so the supply is limited because of oil because of lack of manufacturing. The demand went up because they lost their minds--poured \$1.9 trillion into the economy, of borrowed money, juiced up demand. Even Obama's economists said 'don't do it. It's gonna cause inflation,' but Joe Biden and those 'ah, no. Inflation? You're lying, it's transitory.' First they said that's not going to happen. Then they said it was transitory. Now you know who he blames it on, probably MAGA Republicans. Whatever

that is. You know that's his latest catchphrase. Somebody, I think somebody sat him down, says this is the trick. Go around and convince everyone that there's this evil group of people called MAGA Republicans, and they're responsible for everything. So anyway, they do all this, and the result is inflation. Disaster. And that's just part one.

Title of YouTube Video: “Gov. DeSantis pledges \$1B to protect Florida against effects of climate change”:

Desk Anchor: Governor Ron DeSantis says that he wants a billion dollars put toward efforts to brace the state of Florida for the impacts of climate change. It's more than twice what has been spent on resilience this year. News 4 Jax Reporter Joe McLean gives us a closer look at where that money would go.

Joe McLean: Protecting Florida against climate change...

DeSantis: I think that that will make us more able to handle some extreme weather events, helps handle flooding, all these other things that I think are really, really important.

McLean: Here's the breakdown of that billion dollars: 660 million would be earmarked for Everglades restoration projects, 50 million to restore Florida Springs, 35 million to combat harmful algal blooms, and other funding would be directed towards water quality improvements, alternative water supplies, and other projects. But what about northeast Florida's main waterway well organizations? Like the Saint John's riverkeeper say, they want this area to get its share of investment starting with one specific project. One of the most important things to the resiliency of the St. John's River, and the communities that depend on our river is a restoration of the Ocklawaha River which will store the freshwater flow to the St. John's, which will help make it more resilient. Rinaman said that breaching this dam is the most important thing that can be done

to help the St. John's River. More freshwater into the river helps offset the 42 million gallons of salt water that flow into it from the ocean every single day, but that's far from the only urgent issue. The Saint John's River, as well as all the communities that pinned on the St. John's, has a growing risk of flooding, water quality issues, and we're seeing our grass is disappearing, manatees not having enough food, and unfortunately, we're not seeing that this investment on the surface will to address these growing concerns. We'll make our river more vulnerable. Rinaman says it's encouraging to see the state government show a more robust focus on climate resilience, and says she hopes that effort does not slow down now. Rinaman said part of the governor's investment that would apply here is the half billion dollars that the governor wants to add to the Resilient Florida Grant Program, but again it's the legislature that ultimately decides the budget, and then the governor signs it. So, it will be up to the legislature whether or not that money stays in Florida's budget. Reporting live, I'm Joe McLean Channel 4, the local station.

Title of YouTube Video: “We're Not Doing Any Left-Wing Stuff: DeSantis Asked about Infrastructure and Global Warming”

DeSantis: Ok, with that I can take a question or two.

[Question from audience off camera & inaudible in the video.]

DeSantis: Well, what I found is people when they start talking about things like global warming, they typically use that as a pretext to do a bunch of left-wing things that they would want to do anyways, and so we're not doing any left-wing stuff. What we're doing though, is just reacting to the fact that, OK, we're a flood-prone state. We do have storms. I don't know—we really haven't had more storms in the last 10, 15 years than we had in other portions of—you could pick

different periods where we've had a lot—but the bottom line is this is something that has a huge impact. As our state becomes more populated of course there's more property that can be damaged, there's more human lives that would be at stake, so rather than just simply reacting every time something like that happens you know let's be more proactive and let's build strong infrastructure going forward, and so I think that's just the right thing to do regardless. But be very careful of people trying to smuggle in their ideology; they say they support our coastline, or they say they support you know some you know difference our water environment, and maybe they do. But they're also trying to do a lot of other things, and if you look at the price of gas now? Just imagine if they had their way—gas would be 6 or 7 bucks a gallon, and we need to make sure people are able to have an affordable energy, and we're also you know we just did what will be in the budget too you know we want to do a state gas tax holiday for folks it'll be a billion dollars in savings, and we need to do that you know they did all these barrels out of the strategic reserve which you're not supposed to do just for normal price fluctuations, but they did it, and I think it had the effect of reducing the price of gas by like 2 cents, and it's just going to probably go back up throughout the rest of this. So the root problem of the high gas prices is anti-energy policies, and that's why we're seeing what we're seeing. You know you go back a year ago you know instead of gasping \$3.40 you know gas was like you know \$2.10, \$2.15 and that's that makes a big difference for a lot of Florida families. So we're going to do what we can to relieve the burden of the gas prices of course there's a lot of other inflation throughout the economy they told us that wouldn't happen, that it was just transitory, but in reality, it's real, and it's likely to persist from quite some time unless we see a change of course out of Washington.

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