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## Gov. Ron DeSantis ranted about Biden's potential plan to forgive student debt for degrees such as gender and 'zombie studies'

Kimberly Leonard Apr 29, 2022, 1:56 PM



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, said Friday that he opposes the Biden administration's forthcoming plan to cancel student loans. Photo by Joe Raedle/Getty Images

■ DeSantis railed against Biden's yet-to-be announced plan on student-debt forgiveness.

- **The governor argued taxpayers shouldn't have to subsidize degrees in gender and 'zombie studies.'**
- **Biden said he'd make a decision about the issue in the coming weeks.**

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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis staunchly opposes President Joe Biden's still-to-be released, yet much-talked about plan to forgive some student loan debt.

"My view is: Why would you make a truck driver, or a waitress, or a construction worker pay off the debt for somebody that got a PhD in gender studies? That's wrong," DeSantis, a Republican, said Friday during a press conference in Williston, Florida.

DeSantis is among many Republicans who say it's unfair for taxpayers without higher education degrees to shoulder billions of dollars in debt that will result from the federal government writing off loans of those with the degrees.

The Biden administration has not revealed details of its student loan cancelation plan nor said that anyone would be taxed to pay toward the federal debt it would incur.

About 16,600 people received a degree in gender studies in 2019, according to Data USA. The data don't show how many of them also have student debt, but the Education Data Initiative found that people with an undergraduate degree in social sciences have an average debt of almost \$11,000.

Those with curriculum and instruction degrees hold the highest level of debt out of any other undergraduate major, the data show.

At his press conference, DeSantis stressed that government leaders should focus their efforts on helping students receive trade certificates in areas such as welding, electric, and HVAC.

"Going to a four-year brick-and-ivy university is not the only way you can be successful," said DeSantis, who received

an undergraduate degree in history from Yale University and went on to receive a law degree from Harvard University.

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"Honestly for many people it's not the best way," he added. "You look at how much people have gone into debt, and then they end up with degrees in things like Zombie studies, and then what happens? They end up working where they could have worked at a high school anyways."

DeSantis also said, incorrectly, that 60% of student loans are from people who went to graduate school. Data from the Education Data Initiative show that nearly 47% of federal student loan debt belonged to graduate student borrowers.

DeSantis' latest financial disclosures show that as of December 31, 2020, he had a remaining balance of \$22,225 on his student loans to Sallie Mae. His salary as governor is \$134,181.

### **Biden is dangling student loan forgiveness**

DeSantis' star power in the Republican Party has grown following his high-profile battles with the Biden administration, particularly over differences in managing the COVID-19 pandemic. He's up for reelection in Florida this November, though many GOP political insiders believe that he'll run for president in 2024, particularly if Trump decides against a comeback bid.

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A reporter at Friday's press conference asked DeSantis when he was running for president, but he laughed, shook his head, and selected another reporter to ask a question.

At one point during his press conference, DeSantis called the Biden administration the "Brandon administration," a reference to the "Let's go Brandon" chant that's a stand-in for "F--- Joe Biden."

Congressional Republicans have been ramping up criticism regarding the potential for Biden to issue broad student-loan relief. They've argued it's unfair to people who have already paid off their loans and that relief shouldn't go to people with high salaries.

NBC News has reported Biden would likely tie forgiveness to income, citing an anonymous source. Almost a third of all student debt is owed by the wealthiest 20% of households and only 8% is owed by the bottom 20%, according to a study released in January by the Brookings Institution.

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President Donald Trump first suspended student-payments in March 2020 as part of COVID relief, and that suspension has been extended several times, including under Biden, but it's set to expire after August 31.

On the campaign trail, Biden pledged to forgive \$10,000 in in student debt per borrower, but there's a lot of chatter on Capitol Hill over whether he'll go further. Biden's initial pledge would require the government to write off \$321 billion in loans, according to a recent analysis from the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

On Thursday, Biden told reporters he was not considering the \$50,000 in debt reduction that many Democrats in Congress are calling for, but that he was "in the process of taking a hard look at whether there will be additional debt forgiveness" and would announce it in "the next couple of weeks."

Student loan forgiveness doesn't have enough support in Congress, so Biden will have to take action through executive order. Questions remain not only about whether he has the authority to forgive loans but over whether inflation could worsen if he does.

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Yet progressives are urging Biden to make good on his student loan forgiveness plans to improve Democrats' prospects in the midterms, when they're expected to lose the House and as their majority in the Senate is also at risk. A recent Harvard Kennedy Institute of Politics poll found that 85% of 18- to 29-year-olds favor some government help on student loan debt.

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