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## Ron DeSantis

46th Governor of Florida

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## [New Report Ends Corporate Media's Favorite False Narrative About Florida's Successful COVID-19 Response](#)

On May 14, 2021, in [News Releases](#), by Staff

The "Florida COVID-19 Whistleblower" Story: Media Myths vs. Facts

**Tallahassee, Fla.** — Florida's COVID-19 death rate is lower than the national average — without draconian lockdowns, unscientific mask mandates, or invasive vaccine passports. To discredit Governor Ron DeSantis' successful response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the corporate media has embraced an absurd narrative for the past year, claiming that "Florida is manipulating COVID-19 data to hide the real numbers."

The single source for this conspiracy theory was a disgruntled former employee of the Florida Department of Health. Though there was zero evidence of data manipulation, partisan media activists did not let the facts derail their false narrative. But yesterday, after reviewing hundreds of pages of public records, [National Review published a comprehensive exposé](#) that destroyed this year-long corporate media smear campaign against Governor DeSantis and Florida's hardworking public health leaders.

Journalists have one job: to report the truth. That so many amplified an obvious lie, solely to score political points, is an indictment of modern journalism.

### **MEDIA MYTH:**

- ["Florida Dismisses A Scientist For Her Refusal To Manipulate State's Coronavirus Data."](#) Greg Allen, *NPR*
- ["As Florida re-opens, COVID-19 data chief gets sidelined and researchers cry foul."](#) Alessandro Marazzi Sassoon, *Florida Today*
- ["Florida fired its coronavirus data scientist. Now she's publishing the statistics on her own."](#) Marisa Iati, *The Washington Post*
- Other corporate media personalities who parroted this myth: CNN's [Chris Cuomo](#), MSNBC's [Lawrence O'Donnell](#), CBS News' [Elaine Quijano](#)

**THE FACTS:** Rebekah Jones was not Florida's "COVID-19 data chief," nor was she a "data scientist." Jones couldn't have manipulated data — even if she had been asked to — because, according to *National Review*, "Jones did not have the ability to edit the raw data. Only a handful of people in Florida are permitted to touch that information, and Jones was not among them. Instead, each day she was given a copy of the data and charged with uploading it into the system in a manner determined by the epidemiological team."

**MEDIA MYTH:** ["A public health employee predicted Florida's coronavirus catastrophe — then she was fired."](#) Alexander Nazaryan, *Yahoo News*

**THE FACTS:** There was never a "coronavirus catastrophe" in Florida. The numbers are in: Governor DeSantis' policies, protecting high-risk groups while letting Floridians freely live their lives, have proven to be the right approach. If the national COVID-19 death rate was as low as Florida's, more than 50,000 Americans would still be alive today. The real "coronavirus catastrophe" was in New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, where governors sent COVID-positive patients back to long-term care facilities, resulting in thousands of deaths. California also had a "coronavirus catastrophe": Six months into the state's tyrannical lockdown, more than 40,000 small businesses had closed. Today, California's unemployment rate is nearly twice as high as Florida's.

Corporate media failed to scrutinize negligent pandemic policies in these states, instead elevating outlandish conspiracy theories to attack Governor DeSantis. Sadly, many fell for this deception. According to *National Review*, "by pointing to her own, privately run dashboard, which shows numbers that make Florida's COVID response look worse than it has been, [Jones] has caused millions of people to believe quite sincerely that the state's many successes during the pandemic have been built atop fraud."

### **MEDIA MYTH:**

- [“Rebekah Jones, the data official behind Florida’s Covid-19 dashboard, was removed after she questioned the data’s transparency, according to Florida Today. Now she has launched her own dashboard, which reports different numbers.” CNN New Day](#)
- [“Florida’s COVID death count under new scrutiny...Impact of COVID-19 on mortality ‘significantly greater’ than data suggest.” Scott Sutton, WPTV](#)

**THE FACTS:** *National Review* reported, “As Jones herself confirmed on Twitter: ‘I use DOH’s data. If you access the data from both sources, you’ll see that it is identical.’ She just... displays them badly. In order to increase the numbers in Florida’s case count, Jones counts positive antibody tests as cases.” Per the Federal Drug Administration (FDA), antibody tests are not used for a diagnostic test. Likewise, Jones claims that Florida is hiding deaths because it does not include non-residents in its headline numbers. In fact, Florida reports non-residents pursuant to CDC guidelines, which say that individuals should be counted according to their state of residency. To be clear, the data that she claims is “wrong” is the exact same data that she herself uses on her dashboard. The difference? Jones includes presumed deaths and out of state cases that are not, according to the CDC, to be attributed to Florida.

#### MEDIA MYTH:

- [“The Forbes Technology Person Of The Year: Rebekah Jones. The data scientist responsible for Florida’s highly praised Covid-19 tracking dashboard came to national attention in December after the police raided her home, guns drawn ...\[Jones\] is the latest technologist who stepped up to fill the vacuum left by governments during Covid-19.” Helen A. S. Popkin, Forbes](#)
- [“FDLE raid dramatizes Florida’s COVID-19 coverup” South Florida Sun Sentinel Editorial Board](#)
- [“Rebekah Jones Tried to Warn Us About COVID-19. Now Her Freedom Is on the Line.” Emily Bloch, Cosmopolitan](#)
- [“Was raid on COVID data analyst intended to send a message to Florida whistle-blowers?” Mary Ellen Klas, Miami Herald](#)
- [“Florida COVID-19 whistleblower: ‘Nothing’ Gov. Ron DeSantis has done with the virus has been honest.” Joy Reid, MSNBC](#)

**THE FACTS:** *National Review* reported, “The national attention that Jones has received is the result of her insisting that, having learned about her ‘whistleblowing,’ Governor DeSantis used his ‘Gestapo’ and ‘raided’ her house, putting her children in danger. But this, too, is a ridiculous lie... Police did indeed execute a search warrant on Jones. But they did so because a data breach at the FDOH — in which the personal information of 19,000 employees was stolen — was traced back to the IPv6 address that Comcast had assigned to Jones’s house. Governor DeSantis had nothing to do with it.”

Bodycam video of Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) agents proves that they patiently waited on Jones for just under 23 minutes, after repeated calls and knocks, until she opened her front door to a non-confrontational encounter. The video “does not appear to show police pointing their guns at anyone in the house.” See the full FDLE release [here](#).

Ultimately, the *National Review* report concluded that Governor DeSantis and FDOH leadership have been right all along: “There are no ‘whistleblowers’ anywhere in this story. There is no scandal. There is no grand fight for truth or justice.” There is only a corporate media narrative that elevates disinformation at the expense of the truth. That narrative has imploded.

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