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ELECTIONS

DeSantis unveils economic plan, aim to ease process for discharging student loans through bankruptcy

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By **KIERRA FRAZIER**
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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis unveiled a new economic plan Monday as part of his 2024 presidential bid that includes a goal of easing the path for student

loans to be discharged through bankruptcy.

DeSantis' "declaration of economic independence" includes 10 pillars that he says will "reverse the decline of our nation's struggling economy and fight for the middle class."

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One of the pillars includes "reforming" the education system to "make universities, not taxpayers, responsible for the loans their students accrue" and to allow those loans to be discharged through bankruptcy "like any other loan."

It is currently possible to get student loans discharged through bankruptcy, according to the Department of Education's website, but the process has proven to be difficult. Under current department guidelines, student loan borrowers must, in addition to filing for bankruptcy, demonstrate to a bankruptcy court why repaying their student loan would cause "undue hardship."

"I have sympathy for some of these students because I think they were sold a bill of goods. I think these universities knew that they could take all this federal loan money," DeSantis said Monday at a campaign event in New Hampshire. "So we need to do things to make it better for our students to be able to have pathways for success, but it starts with holding these universities accountable."

President Joe Biden has made sweeping efforts to forgive some student loan debt for borrowers, though the Supreme Court struck down his proposed

program last month. Millions of borrowers are set to resume student loan payments this fall after a hiatus that has been in effect since 2020.

DeSantis' plans come as the governor is under fire for new teaching standards that require middle schoolers to be instructed that "slaves developed skills which, in some instances, could be applied for their personal benefit." Many Black Republican lawmakers, such as Rep. Byron Donalds (R-Fla.), have taken issue with the new standards.

The economic plan is the third major policy announcement DeSantis has made since launching his campaign — following his plan to secure the border and a plan for a "mission first military" — and comes as he continues to lag in polls. In a new New York Times/Siena College poll released Monday, former President Donald Trump held a 37-percentage point lead over DeSantis in the GOP presidential field.

The same morning as DeSantis' unveiling event in New Hampshire, the state's governor, Chris Sununu, told conservative talk radio host Hugh Hewitt that DeSantis "shouldn't worry about policy stuff."

"You are the leader, you are the winner, you're the person that is going to inspire the rest of the party to get bigger and more excited," said Sununu, who recently announced he will not run for reelection in the Granite State. "So it's really about, kind of, a little bit of that charisma and leadership that they've got to show to folks one-on-one."

DeSantis said Monday that he rolled out his economic plan to declare "economic independence from the failed elites and policies that have harmed this nation's middle class."

"We are not cogs in a global economic empire," DeSantis said, adding: "The goal of our Declaration of Independence is simple. We the American people

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