

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lawmakers Visit the ‘Gator Grift’ Detention Camp in the Everglades

OCHOPEE, Fla. - Today, around 20 Democratic members of the Florida Legislature and the Florida Congressional Delegation toured the makeshift prison camp set up in the Everglades. These [carefully curated tours](#) for lawmakers follow [troubling stories](#) about the camp, [rising opposition](#) to the facility, and [polling showing Americans disagree](#) with the extreme persecution of immigrants pushed by Republican politicians.

While the July heat beats down on the staff and detainees at the Gator Grift detention camp, it's been Christmas for no-bid contractors and DeSantis donors — who are [getting a piece](#) of the \$450 million price tag for this temporary camp paid for by Florida taxpayers.

On behalf of the Democratic Caucuses of the Florida House and Florida Senate, **Senate Democratic Leader Lori Berman (D- Boynton Beach)** and **House Democratic Leader Fentrice Driskell (D-Tampa)** issued the following statements:

Leader Berman said,

“Today’s visit was political theater on the part of the DeSantis administration. After legislators were turned away while exercising their constitutionally-mandated oversight powers at the makeshift Everglades prison camp last week, the administration offered us this highly sanitized and staged look into the conditions on the ground.

“Legislators were taken on a dog-and-pony show that confirmed our concerns about human rights violations and inhumane treatment and answered none of the questions our caucus posed in the [letter](#) we sent two weeks ago. We certainly saw nothing that justifies the half a billion dollars that this camp is going to cost Floridians.

“This pre-scheduled farce of a visit made it clear the DeSantis administration is afraid to let us know what’s really going on at that prison camp. We will be returning for unannounced visits, as is our constitutional right as members of a co-equal branch of government.”

Leader Driskell added,

“I left the camp with more questions than when I went in. How is a collection of tents and fences costing us \$450 million dollars? Who could possibly think this is a good use of our money? Why are DeSantis’ attention-seeking stunts so expensive?

Floridians want us to focus on the affordability crisis that is making this state too expensive for many families and seniors. This camp does nothing to make sure Floridians can afford a safe home, health care, or improve our kids’ schools.

The people are souring on this kind of cruel immigration policy, and they know that it’s a distraction from the fact that the system isn’t working for them.

My Democratic colleagues and I are focused on making sure every Floridian has the freedom to be healthy, prosperous, and safe. Anything else, like this camp, is a distraction.”

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