



CITIZENS FOR  
RESPONSIBILITY &  
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON



Institute for the Elimination of Poverty & Genocide

**BY EMAIL:** [desantis.opengov@eog.myflorida.com](mailto:desantis.opengov@eog.myflorida.com)

Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis  
400 S. Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Public Information Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) and Project South make this request for records from the Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis (“Executive Office”) pursuant to the Public Records Act, Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes. This request is for public records in the possession of the Executive Office, which includes its employees, agents, representatives, and any individual or entity acting on behalf of the Executive Office, regardless of the location of those records.

Specifically, CREW and Project South request all records from January 1st, 2023 to the date this request is processed relating to the following:

1. The passage and implementation, including but not limited to the processes, methods, or procedures for enacting the restrictions, of Senate Bill 264 and House Bill 1355.
2. Limits to the amount of land and location of land Chinese citizens with non-tourist visas can purchase.
3. The creation or modification of any form intended to be filled out by “foreign principals” relating to the past, present, or future owning/purchase of land in Florida.
4. All communications relating to items 1-3 above between the Office of Governor DeSantis, non-governmental groups and individuals, and state agencies, including but not limited to the Department of Management Services, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Department of Economic Opportunity.
5. All communications from the Office of Governor DeSantis that reference:
  - a. Senate Bill 264;
  - b. House Bill 1355;
  - c. “Chinese Communist Party” AND Property; or
  - d. “Chinese spies” AND Property

The above request excludes agency records consisting solely of news articles, press clippings, and other publicly available material, so long as the records include no accompanying discussion by agency officials.

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. This request includes any responsive records sent or received by the

[CITIZENSFORETHICS.ORG](http://CITIZENSFORETHICS.ORG)

[info@citizensforethics.org](mailto:info@citizensforethics.org) 202.408.5565

Executive Office via any private, nongovernmental account, as well as those records maintained, stored or archived in the cloud, on a shared drive, on the internet, via any electronic portal, via social media accounts, by screenshot or any other electronic system or device such as a cell phone, tablet, flash drive, computer or server that is capable of sending, receiving or storing digital information. We seek records of any kind, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical material. Our request includes without limitation all correspondence, letters, emails, text messages, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions. Our request also includes any attachments to emails and other records, as well as emails to which the subjects of this request were cc'ed or bcc'ed.

By way of background, on May 8th, 2023, Governor Ron DeSantis signed SB 264 into law, banning some individuals from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia, Syria, and Venezuela from buying or owning agricultural land or any property within 10 miles of a critical infrastructure facility or military installation in Florida.<sup>1</sup> The bill also bans individuals domiciled in China who are not American citizens or permanent U.S. residents from buying any land in Florida.<sup>2</sup> It contains a narrow exception to allow Chinese nationals with non-tourist visas to buy residential property up to two acres in size, as long as it is not within five miles of a "military installation".<sup>3</sup>

In a "statement of interest," the Department of Justice said that the bill violates the Fair Housing Act and the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment, making it unconstitutional.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, the law went into effect on July 1st, 2023. The requested records will provide transparency into the signing and implementation of Senate Bill 264, and the degree of involvement of Governor DeSantis in restricting Chinese citizens from buying land in Florida.

If it is your position that any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, Chapter 119 requires you to state the basis of the exemption you contend is applicable. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(e). We further request that you state in writing and with particularity the reasons for any conclusion that a record is exempt or confidential. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(f). If some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, Chapter 119 requires you to redact those portions and produce the remainder of the requested records. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(d).

We agree to pay up to \$100 for copies of the requested records. If copying fees are

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<sup>1</sup> Gloria Oladipo, *DeSantis signs bills banning Chinese citizens from buying land in Florida*, The Guardian (May 9, 2023), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/09/ron-desantis-bills-ban-chinese-citizens-buying-land-florida>.

<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Toomey And Clay Zhu, *Florida Really Just Banned Chinese Immigrants from Owning Property*. We're Suing, Time (June 21, 2023), <https://time.com/6288638/florida-ban-chinese-immigrants-owning-property-suing/>.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce Ritchie, *Justice Department says new Florida law restricting Chinese land ownership is unconstitutional*, Politico (June 28, 2023), <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/06/28/justice-department-florida-law-unconstitutional-00104091>.

expected to exceed this amount, or if you anticipate that “extensive use” of information technology resources or extensive clerical or supervisory assistance as defined in section 119.07(4)(d) will be needed to fulfill this request, please call me at (202) 408-5565 or email me at [gcantor@citizensforethics.org](mailto:gcantor@citizensforethics.org) and [foia@citizensforethics.org](mailto:foia@citizensforethics.org).

Where possible, please produce records in electronic format. Please send the requested records electronically to [gcantor@citizensforethics.org](mailto:gcantor@citizensforethics.org) and [foia@citizensforethics.org](mailto:foia@citizensforethics.org) or by mail to Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, 1331 F Street, NW, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20004.

Please contact me if you have any questions about this request or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records. We anticipate you will fulfill your obligations under Chapter 119. If it is necessary to file an action to enforce the Public Records Act, the court may award reasonable costs of enforcement, including attorneys’ fees. Fla. Stat. § 119.12. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Gabriella Cantor  
Policy Associate  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in  
Washington

Azadeh Shahshahani  
Legal & Advocacy Director  
Project South