



CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
JIMMY PATRONIS
STATE OF FLORIDA

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Florida Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Jimmy Patronis oversees the Florida Department of Financial Services, and the Department serves millions of state consumers and taxpayers through over 10 divisions and additional initiatives set forth by the CFO; and

WHEREAS, CFO Patronis has established rigorous priorities to assist Floridians, including fighting fraud, consumer protection, fiscal transparency, and return on investment of public funds; and

WHEREAS, CFO Patronis recognizes that First Amendment protections such as freedom of speech and freedom of the press are foundational American rights, critical to democracy, and must be safeguarded against illegitimate infringement; and

WHEREAS, organizations like NewsGuard Technologies, Inc., the Global Disinformation Index, Graphika Technologies, Inc., and other similar organizations are attaching largely subjective "credibility ratings" and "misinformation" labels to news sources; and

WHEREAS, such ratings, labels and misinformation branding are often rooted in political disagreements, subjective biases, and viewpoint discrimination, rather than factual inaccuracies, thereby amounting to censorship and blacklisting; and

WHEREAS, news source blacklisting means placing a news source on a list, or creating ratings systems and scores, indicating a news source is not considered credible or reliable; and

WHEREAS, such censorship and blacklisting activities also occur under the stated function of "fact checking" and removing misinformation; and

WHEREAS, targeted news sources may suffer diminished advertising revenues, often intentionally, as a result of NewsGuard and other similar organizations' censorship and blacklisting activities; and

WHEREAS, censorship-oriented credibility ratings are similar to Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) ratings, which are deeply undemocratic and have resulted in the "debanking" and "deplatforming" of legitimate private entities; and

WHEREAS, a federal lawsuit by the Consortium for Independent Journalism cited a \$750,000 NewsGuard contract with the U.S. Department of Defense and subsequent adverse credibility ratings for news sources that accurately reported on the Biden administration agency; and

WHEREAS, NewsGuard was investigated by the U.S. House Oversight Committee for its relationships with federal agencies, and its apparent failure to maintain a professed nonpartisan approach in light of "highly partisan social media activities by NewsGuard employees;" and

WHEREAS, CFO Patronis supported a provision in House Bill 939 during Florida's 2024 Legislative Session, a Consumer Protection measure that would have barred the State of Florida from contracting with, or utilizing, any censorship organization for promotional activities; and

WHEREAS, under CFO Patronis' leadership, the Department of Financial Services secured \$3 million for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 for marketing and educational campaigns to support consumers and insurance policyholders in Florida; and

WHEREAS, CFO Patronis and the Florida Department of Financial Services are committed to protecting First Amendment rights, promoting transparency, protecting consumers and small businesses, and ensuring taxpayer resources are not weaponized to effectively blacklist any Florida businesses or news services.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Chief Financial Officer and State Fire Marshal of the State of Florida does hereby direct:

1. All divisions within the Department of Financial Services that utilize promotional contracts for marketing and/or public education campaigns may not enter into or renew a contract or agreement with an entity for the purpose of developing, providing or using news source censorship or blacklisting services.
2. All divisions within the Department of Financial Services that utilize promotional contracts for marketing and/or public education campaigns may not use, or allow a contractor to use, censorship or blacklisting services for ad-buys and/or marketing placements.
3. That the Chief Financial Officer and the Department's Division of Accounting and Auditing may issue statements and memos to state agencies pertaining to claims for payments, without rulemaking, pursuant to Florida Statutes, 120.52(16)(c).

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF the Chief Financial Officer of the State of Florida has hereunto subscribed his name on the 31st day of July 2024.




JIMMY PATRONIS
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
STATE FIRE MARSHAL