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DeSantis Culture War With Disney Sees Lawsuit by Florida Trio Thrown Out.

A federal judge threw out a lawsuit by three Florida residents who claim Governor Ron DeSantis trampled on Walt Disney Co.'s freedom of speech, finding numerous holes in their filing and ruling the company can fight its own battle.

The entertainment giant enjoys privileges through a special municipal district that encompasses Walt Disney World and its resorts, including access to the lower-cost municipal debt market for certain projects. The three residents alleged that the governor's move to dissolve the district as punishment in a political fight violated the company's First Amendment rights.

But they failed to show that Disney "faces any hindrance" in making its own case if it chooses to, the judge said Tuesday.

DeSantis, a Republican and potential 2024 presidential candidate, signed a law in April that will dissolve the Reedy Creek Improvement District unless there is further legislative action, after Disney announced its opposition to the state's new parental rights law that restricts classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Because the law's provisions aren't in effect yet, U.S. District Judge Cecilia Altonaga added that the claims aren't ready for litigation and adjudication. And she found the law wouldn't affect the plaintiffs anyway, who therefore lack standing to sue.

"They do not allege direct harm as a result of the challenged law, and they do not plausibly allege any credible threat of direct harm in the future," she wrote.

While they said in their suit that they feared they would have to assume the tax burden that Disney shoulders under its special tax status, the judge shrugged off the claim.

"That indirect and highly speculative alleged injury cannot support federal jurisdiction," she wrote.

The case is Michael Foronda v. Ron DeSantis, 22-cv-21376, U.S. District Court, Southern District of Florida (Miami).

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