

Antonia Hover

From: Ellen Plendl
Sent: Thursday, August 26, 2021 12:42 PM
To: Consumer Correspondence
Subject: Docket No. 20210015
Attachments: egregious outage; Consumer Inquiry - Florida Power & Light Company

See attached customer correspondence and FPSC reply for Docket No. 20210015

Antonia Hover

From: Beatrice Balboa <beatricebalboa@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, August 26, 2021 11:06 AM
To: Ellen Plendl
Subject: egregious outrage
Attachments: Dark money behind Florida 'ghost' candidates has ties to Alabama political players, records suggest _ News _ bakersfield.com.pdf

26 August 2021 1100 hours

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
1-800-342-3552 (phone)
1-800-511-0809 (fax)

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my deepest disappointment and outrage that FPL and NextEra Energy, the parent company of FPL Corporation, are allegedly possibly engaging in political machinations of the most egregious and unethical sort in the State of Florida government system of the rule of law (attached article for review and consideration).

Residential rate-payers may be possibly unwittingly and unwillingly complicit in these political shenanigans via the additional outrageous proposed rate increase currently submitted for the State of Florida Public Service Commission review and consideration.

"Throwing good money after bad money" to an energy industrial sector that only seeks immediate private financial and political power largess at the expense of the public common good (reliable and robust electrical delivery infrastructure at reasonable rates) speaks volume of the ongoing dialogue between corporate behemoths like FPL/NextEra Energy and the small people (salt of the earth)

Thank you for your time in these matters and hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,
Beatrice Balboa
1010 South Ocean Boulevard, Unit 1008
Pompano Beach, Fl 33062-6631
USA

Dark money behind Florida 'ghost' candidates has ties to Alabama political players, records suggest

Jason Garcia and Annie Martin Orlando Sentinel (TNS)

Aug 5, 2021

ORLANDO, Fla. — The source of more than half a million dollars spent last year promoting “ghost” candidates in key state Senate races remained a mystery even as the scandal rocked Florida politics, but newly public records suggest the money is tied to political players in Alabama.

At issue is \$550,000 donated last year by a dark-money nonprofit to a pair of political committees that promoted little-known independent candidates in three key Senate races: Senate District 9 in Central Florida and Senate Districts 37 and 39 in South Florida. The money paid for nearly identical mailers apparently tailored to persuade Democratic-leaning voters to support the independent candidates in each of the three races, all of which were ultimately won by Republicans.

Authorities in Miami-Dade County have since charged two people in connection with one of those races, including former Republican state Sen. Frank Artiles, who is accused of bribing one of the independent candidates to run. Prosecutors say it was part of a plot to siphon support away from the Democratic candidate in District 37 and tilt the election to the Republican, Sen. Ileana Garcia of Miami.

During the election, the two political committees filed campaign finance reports showing they got all of their money from the same donor. They initially identified that donor as Proclivity Inc., a nonprofit set up in Delaware and based out of a UPS store in Atlanta. But they later changed their reports to say the donor was Grow United Inc., a nonprofit set up in Delaware but based out of a UPS store in Denver.

But investigators in the Artiles case have obtained records that suggest the nonprofits had ties to consultants working at the time for Matrix LLC, an Alabama-based communication and political consulting business.

According to records from a separate civil lawsuit, those consultants all left Matrix at the end of last year amid a falling out with the company's founder, Joe Perkins, a Democratic strategist and behind-the-scenes power broker. Matrix recently sued its ex-employees — who now work together at a new consulting shop in Florida — accusing them of diverting fees from clients to businesses and nonprofits they set up for themselves.

Based in Montgomery, Alabama's state capital, Matrix says it specializes in "assisting clients with highly sensitive and crisis situations." There's no indication the company or Perkins are targets of investigators.

Perkins said he didn't know anything about Proclivity or Grow United. He also said he had "no direct knowledge" of whether his former employees were involved in the campaigns. He declined to elaborate further, citing his lawsuit against them, to which they have not yet responded.

"The extent of any involvement that these other folks may or may not have had starts to get into the substance of my lawsuit," Perkins said.

The Florida Center for Government Accountability, a government watchdog group, helped the Orlando Sentinel obtain and review documents to trace the dark money's path to Florida.

"It was extremely difficult to unmask this trail of records, which does not appear to be unintentional," said Michael Barfield, the center's director of public access.

At the time of last year's elections, little was publicly known about Proclivity or Grow United except they were both set up in 2019 by Richard Alexander, according to Delaware corporate records, and they were 501c4 "social welfare" organizations, according to campaign finance records.

But investigators in the Artiles case obtained a copy of an \$80,000 check from Grow United to one of the political committees used to promote the independent Senate candidates in Florida. The check, which Alexander signed, was issued by a bank in Alabama.

And separate tax and campaign finance records show that there is a Richard Alexander in Alabama associated with other nonprofits that have made significant campaign contributions in Florida.

For instance, a nonprofit called "Mothers for Moderation" donated \$230,000 in August 2018 to the Florida Democratic Party. On its campaign finance reports, the party listed Mothers for Moderation's address as Richard Alexander's home address in Cullman, Alabama.

In addition, Mothers for Moderation's principal officer is Stephane Egan, according to a tax return. She is Richard Alexander's sister.

Alexander and Egan have another sister: April Odom, the former chief spokesperson for Birmingham's mayor who was working last year for Matrix LLC. According to litigation records, one of Odom's colleagues at Matrix at the time was a Tallahassee-based consultant named Abigail Maclver.

And investigators in the Artiles case also obtained messages that appear to show that Alex Alvarado, the Republican political operative in Tallahassee who ran the two political committees that promoted the independent candidates, was working with both Alexander and someone identified in his phone as "Abbie M."

The person communicating with Abbie M isn't identified in the records. But the messages were released as part of a larger batch of records that also include dozens of text messages from Alvarado to two other women involved in his political committees.

The texts with Abbie M began Oct. 6, a few days after Alvarado's political committees received the \$550,000 and a few days before they had to file campaign finance reports with the state.

"Get me C4 info when possible please," an outgoing message said.

"Jeff was supposed to send to you. Let me follow up," Abbie M responded.

A short time later, Abbie M sent the name, address and tax forms for Proclivity Inc., the organization Alvarado's political committees initially claimed as their donor. Those details were included in the public campaign finance reports Alvarado's political committees filed later that week.

In December, the records show Alexander emailed Alvarado to ask for a "correction," writing that the source of the committees' funding should have been listed in elections records as Grow United, not Proclivity. Alvarado responded he would make the switch "immediately."

The Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office refused to confirm whether Abbie M is Abigail Maclver or answer questions about the evidence made public so far. But Abigail Maclver's boss at the time was then-Matrix CEO Jeff Pitts.

Pitts declined to answer questions about his involvement in last year's Florida Senate races. Maclver, Odom and Alexander could not be reached for comment. Pitts, Maclver and Odom are now working for Canopy Partners, a Florida-based consulting firm that Pitts co-owns, according to litigation records — and all three are among the ex-Matrix employees named in Matrix's civil lawsuit.

"The firm has always followed the letter and spirit of the law and any insinuation to the contrary is absolutely false," Al Vreeland, a lawyer representing Canopy Partners, said in a statement provided by a spokesperson.

One of Matrix's biggest clients has been Alabama Power, a subsidiary of Atlanta-based utility company Southern Co. Records show it also represented the Alabama teachers union and oil-drilling giant BP America.

In its lawsuit, Matrix accuses Pitts and the other former employees of conspiring with one particular client to cheat Matrix out of fees. The lawsuit doesn't identify that client by name but says it is a publicly traded company based in Juno Beach.

Based on Securities and Exchange Commission records, there is only one publicly traded company headquartered in Juno Beach: NextEra Energy, the parent company of Florida's largest utility, Florida Power & Light, which turned a \$2.9 billion profit last year.

Florida Power & Light is also a major donor to two other organizations with ties to the spoiler candidate scandal: The Florida Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, a fundraising group led during last year's elections by Senate President Wilton Simpson, a Republican from Pasco County; and Associated Industries of Florida, a big-business lobbying group.

Under Simpson's leadership, the Senate Republican campaign committee paid more than \$7 million during the 2020 election cycle to Data Targeting Inc., a political consulting business tapped to oversee state Senate campaigns for Republicans. And Data Targeting gave a \$15,000-a-month consulting contract to Artiles to work on Senate elections in Miami-Dade County. It also reimbursed Artiles for expenses that line up with steps authorities say he took to orchestrate the campaign of the independent candidate in Senate District 37.

Meanwhile, the head of Associated Industries' political council is Ryan Tyson, who is also the executive director of another nonprofit called Let's Preserve the American Dream that operates out of AIF's headquarters in Tallahassee. Records show Alvarado works with Tyson and Let's Preserve

the American Dream, which paid Artiles \$5,000 a month since 2017. Tyson said his nonprofit recently ended its contract with Artiles.

A spokesperson for NextEra declined to answer questions about whether the company had any role in promoting spoiler candidates in last year's Senate races.

"All of Florida Power & Light Company's corporate political and charitable contributions, which are funded by shareholders or employees, not customers, comply with all applicable laws and are properly disclosed," spokesperson Bill Orlove said. "The company does not discuss its individual political contributions.

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Antonia Hover

From: Ellen Plendl
Sent: Thursday, August 26, 2021 12:41 PM
To: 'Beatrice Balboa'
Subject: Consumer Inquiry - Florida Power & Light Company

Ms. Beatrice Balboa
beatricebalboa@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Balboa:

Thank you for your August 26 email and the article you attached regarding Florida Power & Light Company (FPL).

We will add your comments and the article you shared to Docket No. 20210015, with respect to FPL's petition for a rate increase.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at 1-800-342-3552 or by fax at 1-800-511-0809.

Sincerely,

Ellen Plendl
Regulatory Consultant
Florida Public Service Commission
Office of Consumer Assistance & Outreach
1-800-342-3552 (phone)
1-800-511-0809 (fax)