

## THE EPOCH TIMES



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis speaks during a press conference at the Shul of Bal Harbour in Surfside, Fla., on June 14, 2021. (Joe Raedle/Getty Images)

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## FLORIDA

# Florida Fines County \$3.5 Million for Alleged Violation of Law Against COVID-19 Vaccine Passports

By [Zachary Stieber](#) | October 13, 2021 Updated: October 13, 2021

**A** Print

The state of [Florida](#) has fined a county over \$3 million for allegedly violating a law that bans entities from requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination.

Leon County was fined for 714 instances of violating [the law](#), the Florida Department of Health announced Tuesday.

The law in question, passed earlier this year, forbids any business, government entity, or educational institution from requiring so-called vaccine passports, or proof of vaccination.

Violators face a fine of up to \$5,000 for each violation.

Florida officials [warned last month](#) that they would fine violators. Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, said the fines could total millions of dollars.

According to a notice ([pdf](#)) sent to Leon County Administrator Vincent Long on Oct. 6 and released Tuesday, the government required 714 former or current employees to provide vaccination documentation to gain access to, entry upon, or service from the county government.

The county was ordered to pay \$3.57 million within 30 days by check or money order.

Leon County terminated 14 workers for refusing or failing to submit documentation, Florida officials found.

“These are people that presumably have been serving throughout this whole time. And now all of a sudden, they’re basically getting kicked to the curb. And so that violates state law,” DeSantis told reporters in Pinellas County.

“They’re creating a system where just your operation in normal society is constantly requiring you to have to show different types of papers just to go in. And I object to that, period,” he also said.

Florida Surgeon General Dr. Joseph Ladapo in a statement said that firing workers over COVID-19 vaccine passports “leads to resentment in the workplace, and loss of employment impacts individual and public health.”

“Individuals have every right to choose how to best protect themselves and their families, and the Department will continue to enforce this law,” he added.

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the [CCP \(Chinese Communist Party\) virus](#).

Leon County is the 22nd most populous in Florida. It has roughly 279,000 residents and includes the state capitol, Tallahassee.

Long, the county’s administrator, said in a statement that the county was made aware of the notice.

“The county strongly contends that our employee vaccination requirement was not only completely legally justifiable, but it was a necessary and responsible action to take to keep our employees safe, protect the public, and ensure our readiness as a frontline response organization,” he said, adding that the county “fully intends to enforce its rights using any remedies available to settle all arguments about the applicability of the statute at issue so that we can continue to direct our full and undivided attention on combating the virus, protecting our employees and citizens, and fulfilling our obligations to our community.”

The fine appears to be the first imposed under the law. Other potential violations are being investigated, according to state officials. Some local governments planning to impose vaccine requirements backed off in recent weeks, including the city of Gainesville.



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