

NBC's *Today*

04/27/23

7:00:53 a.m. [TEASE]

22 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Disney vs. DeSantis]

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ready to Run?]

HODA KOTB: Disney versus DeSantis. The theme park giant filing a major lawsuit against Florida's governor. The latest in their ongoing culture battle. And this morning, NBC News reporting DeSantis is poised to enter the Republican presidential race. What we're learning about the timing, the impact, and his high-profile meeting happening overseas right now.

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7:07:51 a.m.

2 minutes and 42 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: New Details on DeSantis Announcement]

KOTB: Also this morning, a potential major shakeup in the 2024 presidential election after months of speculation, NBC News has exclusive reporting on when Florida Governor DeSantis could jump in the race. This comes as he faces a new lawsuit from Disney over what it calls government retaliation. NBC's Gabe Gutierrez is in Jerusalem where the governor is on a foreign trip. Hey, Gabe, good morning.

GABE GUTIERREZ: Good morning. Four GOP operatives familiar with the conversations tell NBC News that Governor DeSantis is poised to enter the presidential race as soon as mid-May. He's in this historic city to talk trade, but it's a major business back home that could be overshadowing this trip. This morning, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis is in Jerusalem, a potential presidential candidate on the world stage.

GOVERNOR RON DESANTIS (R-FL): The United States should be a strong ally to Israel.

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: DeSantis in Israel Amid Disney Dispute]

GUTIERREZ: Four GOP operatives tell NBC news DeSantis could enter the race by mid-next month. But even while he crisscrosses the globe on a trade mission to Japan, South Korea, Israel and the U.K. aiming to attract jobs to Florida, his state's largest single site employer, Disney, is accusing him in a lawsuit of degree being "anti-business" and orchestrating a "targeted campaign of government retaliation." The federal suit announced just moments after a panel of DeSantis allies voted to invalidate Disney's decades old deal with Florida that gives it self-governance as part of a tax district. DeSantis's feud with Disney has dramatically escalated since the entertainment giant opposed Parental Rights in Education Act which critics dubbed the Don't

Say Gay bill last year. [PROTESTERS CHANTING] It banned classroom instruction of sexual orientation and gender identity. This morning, DeSantis responding to the lawsuit. [TO DESANTIS] You touted your record, of course, bringing jobs to Florida. Main employer in your state now is coming back and saying that you are anti-business in this new lawsuit. What's your response to that?

DESANTIS: I don't think the suit has merit. I think it's political.

GUTIERREZ: But some prominent Republicans are slamming DeSantis with picking a fight with Mickey Mouse.

NIKKI HALEY [on FNC's *America Reports*]: If Disney would like to move their hundreds of thousands of jobs to South Carolina and bring the billions of dollars with them, I'll let them know I'd be happy to meet them in South Carolina.

GUTIERREZ: Former President Trump's campaign also blasting the governor's overseas trip, releasing this calendar graphic showing the days DeSantis has been away from Florida.

DESANTIS [on 04/24/23]: I always had a good relationship with him. And then, once the midterm election happened, he started taking shots at me.

GUTIERREZ: Governor DeSantis is expected to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu here today before wrapping up his global trip by visiting the U.K. Back to you.

KOTB: Alright, Gabe Gutierrez for us there in Jerusalem. Gabe, thank you.