



## No-Bid Florida COVID Contracts Flow To DeSantis Donors

Millions of dollars in no-bid state contracts issued as part of Florida's COVID-19 response have gone to a trio of firms tied to men who've contributed hefty sums to support Gov. Ron DeSantis' political ambitions.

By DeSantis' emergency decree on March 9, state agencies are allowed to suspend normal purchasing regulations and dole out millions of taxpayer dollars to companies without going through formal bidding processes that are typically required.

Among those contracts are \$2.5 million in testing agreements with BioReference Laboratories. OPKO Health, chaired by South Florida billionaire and philanthropist Phillip Frost, acquired BioReference in 2015 for nearly \$1.5 billion.

Frost is also a major DeSantis donor, contributing \$75,000 to Friends of Ron DeSantis in 2018, along with

another \$2,700 to the governor's election campaign itself. He has also given heavily to Republican causes in the last 10 years including \$200,000 in 2012 to the conservative Super PAC American Crossroads, and more than \$120,000 to the Republican National Committee.

Frost last year agreed to pay a \$5.5-million fine to settle SEC charges that he engaged in a "pump-and-dump" market manipulation scheme.

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