

# Don't preempt local water protections

January 20, 2020



Founding SAFEBOR members, Merrillee Malwitz-Jipson, Mike Roth, John Moran, David Moritz (front). Not shown is Lu Merritt. Photo by Jim Tatum.

It's a continual enigma to us why in Florida we elect so many people to Tallahassee who are so small and petty they cannot see a good greater than their own special interest. It is all about making themselves richer at the expense of someone or something else. We understand that sometimes they will be pushing the interests of those who elected them but more often they pursue what most benefits them personally. Making a profit by using public power entrusted to one is called "corruption." And we have more than the average amount in Florida, which is specifically [third in the nation](#) in number of corruption convictions.

Which is one reason we need a strong and protected bill of rights for nature. The Santa Fe River Bill of Rights (SAFEBOR) may make it into existence because of the large number of intelligent voters in Alachua County, but its greater test will be to see if our lobbyist-owned legislators will let it remain. One only has to remember the ill fated Amendment 1 of 2014, torn apart in direct defiance of the voters by independent legislators who think they can flout the will of the people and do what they whatever they want.

Preemption of local governments is a power grab by lobbyists who want all the pie for themselves and to hell with the environment.

Can't we find more legislators who don't give in to corruption?

Two of the five founding members of the original SAFEBOR team are board members of OSFR.

Thanks to the editors of the Gainesville Sun, who truly are leaders of the community by setting an admirable example.

Read the complete editorial in [the Gainesville Sun here at this link](#).

*Comments by OSFR historian Jim Tatum.  
jim.tatum@oursantaferiver.org  
– A river is like a life: once taken,  
it cannot be brought back © Jim Tatum*

---

EDITORIAL

## **Don't preempt local water protections**

The Gainesville Sun editorial board

With state lawmakers failing to protect rivers, springs and other parts of Florida's environment, communities across the state are considering laws to recognize the rights of nature.

In Alachua County, signatures are being collected to put an initiative called the Santa Fe River Bill of Rights (SAFEBOR) on the November ballot. The charter amendment would recognize the legal rights of the Santa Fe River, its springs and tributaries, and the Floridan Aquifer within the county...

House Bill 1199 – sponsored by Rep. Blaise Ingoglia, R-Spring Hill, and ironically named the Environmental Protection Act – would prohibit local laws that grant legal rights to any part of the natural environment.

A similar measure is contained in Senate Bill 1382 – sponsored by Sen. Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula. But the legislation goes further in adding more programs that make taxpayers continue footing the bill for cleaning up agricultural pollution.

State laws that preempt local governments and citizens from

protecting their communities are nothing new for the Legislature. A total of 119 bills that contain some form of state preemption of local governments were filed from 2017 to 2019, according to a recent report from the nonpartisan group Integrity Florida. While Gov. Ron DeSantis vetoed legislation last year that would have preempted local governments from banning plastic straws, he signed other preemption measures including one that prohibits local governments from regulating sewage sludge being spread over land.

In his State of the State speech Tuesday, DeSantis said he would continue a “bold approach to protecting our natural resources.” DeSantis deserves credit for doing more to protect the environment than his predecessor, Rick Scott, but Scott was completely negligent in the job.

DeSantis could do much better. The Sierra Club gave the governor a “D” grade for 2019 in an environmental report card released this week, giving him the lowest marks for decisions such as signing legislation authorizing three new toll roads in rural Florida and having ineffective water quality plans for the state’s rivers and springs.

Initiatives such as SAFEBOR are simply a reaction to the state’s failure to fulfill such basic duties as preventing the groundwater that provides our drinking water supply and flows through springs from being pumped beyond a sustainable level and polluted.

If DeSantis and the Legislature won’t do their job in protecting Florida’s natural environment, they shouldn’t stand in the way of local citizens seeking to do it for them.

Restricted use only. 1/17/2020

[Privacy Policy](#) • [Terms of Service](#)

Powered by TECNAVIA

0