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The Activist Who Forced DeSantis to Rewrite the Book Ban Law Is Now Coming for His DEI Law

Broward County's own grant guidelines use the exact language SB 1134 prohibits — and the Governor's office already named Stevens as the reason they had to fix the last law he broke

*"Florida has, in its limited finite wisdom, passed a law banning the Greek Festival.
I am not the problem here. I am the consequence."
- Chaz Stevens*

DEERFIELD BEACH, FL — Chaz Stevens, the Florida constitutional stress tester whose Bible ban challenge forced Governor DeSantis to scale back the state's own book-restriction law in 2024 — with DeSantis's office naming Stevens as the sole example of why the change was needed — today announced he has filed public records requests against Broward County to build what he says will be the first enforcement action under SB 1134, the sweeping anti-DEI law now headed to the Governor's desk.

"Last time, the Governor called my work 'performative' and 'political' — then signed a bill rewriting the law I broke," Stevens said. "This time the problem is the same: they wrote a law so broad it eats the things they love. I didn't write this law. I'm just reading it. Malicious compliance, here we come again! All aboard the stupid train."

His target is not a Pride parade or a diversity training program. It is Broward County's own Cultural Division — the same county Senator Clay Yarborough cited on the Senate

floor as a poster child for wasteful DEI spending — and its multimillion-dollar grants pipeline that funds heritage festivals organized around specific ethnic identities.

"Look, I'd much rather be targeting ruby-red Pensacola and their Greek Festival — that's the cleaner headline. But the statute requires county residency for standing, and I live in once-blue Broward. Sorry Stacy Ritter and Michael Udine — I think the world of you both — but the law doesn't have a carveout for people I appreciate."

The county's Cultural Festival Program guidelines describe funded events as "designed to showcase various aspects of a given ethnic culture found in Broward." SB 1134 defines prohibited DEI activity to include "programming or activities designed or implemented with reference to ethnicity." The county's eligibility criteria and the state's prohibition use functionally identical language.

Stevens emphasized that the statute doesn't require a showing of preferential treatment — a defense the county is likely to raise.

"Oh, I love this, one wonders what's in the Tallahassee water, bong water I surmise — this is why we have Courts, both Federal and the Court of Public Opinion," Stevens said.

"They'll say heritage festivals are open to everyone, so it's not DEI. But that argument ignores how the law is written. The statute has three separate triggers. Subsection 2 covers preferential treatment. Subsection 3 — the one that matters here — independently prohibits any programming 'designed with reference to ethnicity.' No preferential treatment required. No restricted access required. Just programming designed with reference to ethnicity. That's what the county's own grant guidelines say they fund. If subsection 3 doesn't mean what it says, it has no reason to exist — and courts don't read statutes to make provisions disappear."

SB 1134, which takes effect January 1, 2027, bans counties and municipalities from funding or promoting such activities, voids existing policies, and authorizes any county resident to sue in circuit court for declaratory and injunctive relief plus damages. Violations by officials constitute misfeasance or malfeasance in office.

Stevens's records requests target three areas:

First, whether the Broward County Attorney's Office has conducted any compliance review of the Cultural Division's FY 2027 grant guidelines against SB 1134. "If the county is proceeding with a grants pipeline whose eligibility criteria are facially prohibited by state law, and no one has reviewed that inconsistency, that's the admission," Stevens said.

Second, the Cultural Division's grant award records for ethnicity-referenced programming, which in FY 2024 included nearly \$6 million in cultural grants. The division's own guidelines explicitly fund projects that "demonstrate historical and diverse cultural heritage."

Third, the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention & Visitors Bureau's tourism expenditures for heritage-specific events, including the Latin Festival in Miramar, to establish the concrete taxpayer expenditures at issue.

Stevens also flagged the Section 287.139 certification requirement, which starting January 1, 2027 will require every county grant recipient to certify that it does not use county funds for DEI-related materials. "Organizations whose entire purpose is ethnic heritage programming will have to sign a form saying their programming doesn't reference ethnicity," Stevens said. "That's either perjury or defunding. Those are the only two options the statute provides."

Stevens noted that SB 1134's carveout provisions protect only federal holidays listed in 5 U.S.C. § 6103, state holidays under Florida Chapter 683, and patriotic observances in 36 U.S.C. §§ 101–148. Greek heritage festivals, Italian heritage celebrations, Caribbean cultural events, and most ethnicity-based programming are not listed in any of those provisions.

"This law was sold as a tool to eliminate progressive identity politics from local government," Stevens said. "But the text doesn't distinguish between a Pride parade and a Greek heritage festival. It doesn't carve out Italian-American Heritage Month or Caribbean cultural celebrations. Wait until someone applies this to military appreciation events, church-funded community programs, or Blue Lives Matter proclamations — Blue Lives used to matter, I guess. Either the law applies to everyone equally, or it's viewpoint discrimination. Using stress testing, the Constitution and I intend to find out which. Not my first rodeo, by a long shot."

Stevens, who previously sued the Broward County School Board pro se in the Southern District of Florida, noted that while that case was mooted after the district changed its policies, he does not expect the same outcome here. "Citing *Uzuegbunam v. Preczewski*, 592 U.S. 279 (2021), I don't expect mootness to be available moving forward should this file move to the Courts," he said.

In addition to the records requests, Stevens has served a formal demand letter on the Broward County Attorney identifying the facial inconsistency between the FY 2027 grant guidelines and SB 1134, and demanding a compliance review and written response within thirty days.

“Governor Ronrico should have me over for lunch and drinks,” he added. “I’m the only person in Florida taking his silly law seriously. Like Janet Reno, I’ll be hitting the Sunshine State roadways, teaching municipalities how to batten down the hatches when an adversary arrives.”

“Like my successful Bible Ban effort, here again I seek the extraordinary precise application of State law, be it silly or not,” Stevens said. “As I like to think, when the going gets stupid, I’m usually the first to go in.”

Notes Stevens, “For the record, I am pro-DEI, but like Nana says, when you gotta go, you gotta go.”

About Chaz Stevens

Chaz Stevens is a Deerfield Beach-based civic activist, municipal governance consultant, and IMLA CLE Faculty member with a 30-year track record of pro se federal First Amendment litigation and constitutional stress-testing of public forum neutrality. In 2024, DeSantis's office named Stevens as the sole example cited when the Governor signed legislation scaling back the state's book-restriction law — a law Stevens had broken by filing Bible ban challenges in dozens of school districts. His work has generated national media coverage including The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, NPR, Fortune, and the Associated Press. He is the founder of REVOLT Insights (revolt.training), which provides Lindke v. Freed social media liability audits and First Amendment compliance consulting to municipalities nationwide.

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