

Eight Verifiably False Statements about SB 1078

Please read the following verbatim, videotaped statements and view them online to verify.

Senator Travis Hutson at Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, 1/24/22,

https://www.flsenate.gov/media/videoplayer?EventID=1_zc8d1g0v-202201241500&Redirect=true

Two False statements (Hutson, starting at 19:05): **1** “Let me get back to the purpose of why I filed the bill. In my district, we’ve got individuals, throughout time, the agricultural community had always served on these boards....” **2** “Over time, the ag community has not been able to win some of these elections.”
”

Fact 1: From 2002 up until the 2020 election, **only ONE** member of the agricultural community served on a SWCD board in Senator Hutson’s district. None were known to be in the ag community in Volusia and only one was in the ag community in St. Johns County. (John Sykes). Those are the only two counties with SWCDs in his district.

Fact2: The first *and only* election lost by a member of the ag community was in 2020, (farmer John Sykes) and that *same year and in the same district*, another member of the ag community won his race. (farmer Chuck Owen.) Therefore, no fewer members of the ag community won races in 2020 than at any time in the previous 20 years. “Some of these elections” is a fabrication since only one election was lost: Sykes in 2022. And that loss was made up for by Owen’s victory. These falsehoods surrounding the Sykes election clearly point to Senator Hutson’s reason for filing SB 1078 directly at my 2020 defeat of his candidate. There is no other election he could have been referring to.

It should also be noted that Mr. Sykes only attended three (out of what is normally 12) monthly SWCD meetings in his last term *prior* to Covid. Senator Hutson and his fellow developers who mounted a \$43,000 campaign against me were made aware of Mr. Sykes’ poor attendance record. But the senator still

uses Sykes' election loss as the basis for disenfranchising millions of voters, removing hundreds of SWCD supervisors from their positions and disqualifying future scientists, naturalists, and other conservationists from the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Fact 3: The only SWCD supervisor in Senator Hutson's district who is a member of the ag community, Chuck Owen, **opposes** SB 1078. He can be viewed saying so in this brief

video: <https://www.facebook.com/sjcsoilandwater/videos/287029116716923/>

https://www.flsenate.gov/media/videoplayer?EventID=1_zc8d1g0v-202201241500&Redirect=true

False Statement (Hutson continued): "And the board's focus has shifted and not willing to help the ag community so much as they had in the past."

Fact: Senator Hutson provided no evidence of a decline in help to the ag community. SWCD members drove to Tallahassee and wrote editorials providing copious evidence to refute this claim, including how they help farmers receive millions of dollars in funding.

Senate Ethics and Elections Committee, 2/8/22

https://www.flsenate.gov/media/videoplayer?EventID=1_4xqnljda-202202081230&Redirect=true

False Statement (Hutson) 5:55 on video: "Their [SWCD] statewide board met without the farmers... most of the farmers present. And they did a policy initiative and I just spoke to the president about this – a policy decision against his better judgement and advisement to make their one policy decision that they asked the Florida legislature to do which is ban balloons from being released in the state."

Fact: President Moore voted in favor of the balloon release statute which passed unanimously at the state meeting which included farmers – two of whom thanked me (the presenter of the resolution) afterwards because balloons kill livestock. President Moore congratulated me after the vote and never advised against the

resolution, either publicly or to me privately. Covid reduced attendance of ALL supervisors at the state meeting, not just farmers.

Senator Hutson was made aware of the lethality of released balloons to livestock when they land on hayfields, are sucked into hay balers and ingested by livestock, because I stated that fact directly to him at St. Johns County's Legislative Delegation, Oct. 1, 2021. He can be seen introducing me and questioning me after my statement, therefore he heard me describe the danger of balloons to livestock – contrary to his implication that farmers would have voted it down if more of them were present at the state meeting **Legislative Delegation video:** <https://stjohnscountyfl.new.swagit.com/videos/141004> Go to 1:02:00 on video.

False Statement (Hutson): “That [balloon release resolution] is clearly outside the purview of the Soil and Water Commission.”

Fact: The balloon release resolution satisfies four criteria in the very first purpose statement in State Statute 582.02, Purpose of Districts: 1. “protect water quality” (balloons break down into microplastics in waterways.) 2. “preserve wildlife” (balloons and their strings kill animals.) 3. “protect public lands” (thousands of balloons litter our beaches every year, according to the Ocean Conservancy.) 4. “protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.” (Deflated balloons are the #1 cause of suffocation death of children according to the Consumer Products Safety Commission.)

Please see State Statute 582.02

Purpose: http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0500-0599/0582/Sections/0582.02.html

None of the four purposes of districts was ever read into the record by the Senate or House bill sponsors. Perhaps that's because farming is not the central purpose of the SWCDs according to state statute.

The following statement was made by Senator Hutson as an example of activities that the Soil and Water Boards should not be engaged in.

https://www.flsenate.gov/media/videoplayer?EventID=1_4xqnljda-202202081230&Redirect=true

Travis Hutson 5:45 on video:

“An individual came up and spoke in the last committee and said they use their position to do air pollution and air quality to the public.”

Fact: Air quality testing is an acceptable activity according to the SWCD’s partner, the USDA, NRCS which requires all SWCD chairs sign a *Memorandum of Agreement* that includes “air” as a natural resource that must be conserved, protected and enhanced. Furthermore, the USDA’s *Statement of Work* cites “clean air” as a mutual objective.

https://www.flsenate.gov/media/videoplayer?EventID=1_4xqnljda-202202081230&Redirect=true

False Statement (Hutson) 6:37: “The intent of the legislation is to have the farmer’s best interest at heart which is what they were designed to do.”

Fact: Making a priority of helping farmers is neither stated nor implied in state statute

582.02. http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0500-0599/0582/Sections/0582.02.html

Feb. 14, 2022 HB 783 bill to abolish all SWCDs

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/VideoPlayer.aspx?eventID=7904>

False Statement (Representative Truenow) (55:55): “Currently, we have five water management districts and they perform the same function. [as SWCDs].”

Fact: SWCDs do not overlap in functions with water management districts. SWCDs do not have the authority to perform any of the water management district’s four core missions: <https://floridadep.gov/water-policy/water-policy/content/water-management-districts> Likewise, the activities of the SWCD’s are not duplicated by the Water Management Districts. The Water Management District’s job in relation to the SWCDs is advisory. The SWCD’s support the WMD’s conservation

initiatives at a local level such as promoting FFL (Florida Friendly Landscaping) principles in HOA's.

2/28/22 Senate

Appropriations https://www.flsenate.gov/media/videoplayer?EventID=1_zc8d1g0v-202202281030&Redirect=true

False Statement (Hutson): 4:19:14 [Regarding SWCDs] **“In 2019, WFSU did an article that said these things do nothing, they serve no purpose and should be abolished.”**

Fact: WFSU has made no such statement about SWCDs, and WFSU ran no articles in 2019 about SWCDs. WFSU did run an article in 2016 about SWCDs – both pro and con on the districts. In March of 2022, WFSU ran an article which was highly critical of SB 1078: <https://news.wfsu.org/state-news/2022-03-09/tallahassee-rep-says-water-experts-should-have-been-included-in-a-bill-now-heading-to-the-governor>