



Written by [David Kelly](#) on August 11, 2022

Florida's "Don't Tread on Me" License Plate Irks Leftists

Florida residents can now order "Don't Tread on Me" license plates complete with the yellow-and-black-rattlesnake image of the Gadsden flag, which dates back to the Revolutionary War.

"The free state of Florida has a new license plate for pre-order that benefits the Florida Veterans Foundation and sends a clear message to out-of-state cars, 'Don't Tread on Me' or Florida," [tweeted](#) Florida Governor Ron DeSantis.

MSN [related](#):

The governor's office added that the freedom-fighting spirit the flag originally symbolized "has guided America to this day, and Governor DeSantis likewise believes that freedom is a worthy pursuit and viable alternative to heavy-handed government. Many Floridians celebrate Florida as the vanguard of freedom, and countless others have moved here from across the country to live under a state government that enshrines freedom in its decision-making."



BruceStanfield/iStock/Getty Images Plus

The imagery of the Revolutionary War-era Gadsden flag dates to back to a 1751 article in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* bitterly protesting the British practice of sending convicts to America, in which the author suggested that the Colonists should return the favor by shipping them "a cargo of rattlesnakes." A few years later, in a political cartoon, the image returned as a snake cut into eight sections appearing above the words "Join, or Die." Each section represented a Colony, and the image was a warning of the dangers of disunity.

Then, in 1775, the rattlesnake symbol caught on and became a part of several other Revolutionary War flags. The one that is most used today, with the "Don't Tread on Me" motto, was designed by Colonel Christopher Gadsden in 1776. This flag has recently been associated with and embraced by a variety of political groups, from Libertarians and Tea Party groups to gun-rights advocates and far-right groups.

Florida's new plate has brought out mixed reactions. "'Love, love, love' Florida Gov. DeSantis new license plate; 'Don't Tread on Me!'" one Twitter user said. "This is how we feel about our great country that is right now being systematically destroyed by the radical Left."



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One who opposed the new plate tweeted: “Thank you for creating a plate that makes it easier to spot your MAGA/American first white supremacist residents.” And another stated, “Nothing says “I support Domestic Terrorists and Traitors” like the Proud Boy version of FL license plates.”

Then you have one who actually understands what DeSantis is doing by using the Gadsden flag image, with this response to the tweet, “Everyone needs to read their history books. This flag is for all Americans.”

The new license plate design even received the attention of the far-left Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC). “The state can’t claim a lack of knowledge about what this image represents to most of the public,” [said](#) Rachel Carroll Rivas, deputy director of research and analysis for the Intelligence Project at the SPLC.

Per NPR, Rivas said

it’s become clear that the flag has been used for some “really awful” causes, most notably the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, where violent protesters attacked police as part of an effort to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

The Gadsden flag license plates are not unique to Florida. The “Don’t Tread on Me” motto is already offered on specialty plates in 11 states — Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Arizona, Montana, Missouri, Tennessee, Alabama, South Carolina, Maryland, and Virginia.

Controversial specialty plates have led to lawsuits in the past, one of which ended up in the Supreme Court. In 2009, the [Sons of Confederate Veterans](#), Texas Division, requested the Confederate flag on a specialty license plate, but Texas refused.

NPR relates:

The veterans group sued, and the case ultimately went to the [Supreme Court](#). In 2015, in a 5-4 [decision](#), the court held that such specialty plates (not to be confused with “vanity plates”) were government speech and therefore states have the right to pick and choose what goes on them.

But before the controversy over Florida’s Gadsden flag license plate can truly heat up, 3,000 drivers need to purchase a pre-sale voucher for \$33 at their local tax collector’s office. Then the “Don’t Tread on Me” plate will go into production.

What is needed by the leftists in Florida and elsewhere who despise any motto or image that symbolizes liberty and freedom, such as the Gadsden flag, is a history lesson, and a gentle reminder of our nation’s founding and our unalienable rights provided by our Creator and protected by our Constitution.



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