

## Florida Dem Senate Candidate Ferre Questions Nomination Vetting Process

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Washington, DC - Florida Democratic senatorial candidate Maurice Ferre doesn't feel included in the democratic process. The former mayor of Miami said he has not been getting enough attention from the mainstream press or the Democratic establishment in the party's 2010 senate race.

In an email to CapitalWirePR, Ferre, 75, said that top Democratic officials endorsed Congressman Kendrick Meek, one of Ferre's primary opponents in the race, over the former mayor. "The exclusion began with pressure from (former president) Bill Clinton to preclude me from funding," Ferre wrote in the email. Ferre said that "the whole Democratic establishment" eventually endorsed Meek, including President Barack Obama, Vice-President Joe Biden, the Democratic National Committee, the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and New Jersey Sen. Bob Menendez.

In doing so, Ferre said, these top Democratic officials skirted Democratic Party rules. In a phone interview with CapitalWirePR, Ferre said, "The official Democratic Party rules (state) . . . if there is more than one Democrat, the party (does not endorse a candidate)."

Much like his Democratic peers, Ferre said the press has also joined in the exclusion process. The former mayor was not allowed to participate in the June 22<sup>nd</sup> Democratic candidate debate monitored by the *Palm Beach Post* between Meek and Jeff Greene. Why? Because Ferre only garnered 3 percent favorability amongst Democratic voters in a poll by Quinnipiac University released earlier in the month.

According to the poll, when asked about their opinion of Ferre, more than 80 percent of Florida Democrats polled had never heard of him. But Ferre contends that such lack of name recognition should not prevent him from participating in debates.

"There are four Democratic candidates (in the senatorial race)," he wrote in his email to CapitalWirePR. "I see no reason why anyone should be excluded. In a democracy, well informed citizens should decide for themselves."

Paul Blythe, the *Palm Beach Post's* Watchdog editor, said that the paper's decision to exclude Ferre was not an irrational one. "The *Post* arranged the (June 22) debate at the request of both Greene and Meek," Blythe said. "(Ferre's) 3 percent fell well below the threshold of the other two."

Blythe said that it is not uncommon for debates to rely on poll results as well as campaign financing to determine their front runners. He also said that newspapers typically make judgments on how much attention they give to various candidates.

"(T)o say that the *Post* has not covered Ferre is simply not true," he said. "It's just a matter of how many resources you can dedicate to the person."

But Ferre is not the only one who believes he has been excluded from the Democratic debates. In a July 8 opinion article for Uncovered Politics, an election politics website that claims it covers, "longshots, insurgents and underdogs," Darcy G. Richardson acknowledged the *Post's* exclusion of Ferre from the June 22 debate between Meek and Greene. Calling the debate "a particularly nasty exchange that left viewers wondering which of the two candidates was more ethically challenged," Richardson claimed that neither of the two major contenders for the Democratic primary is as qualified as Ferre.

"(It is) really a shame (that Ferre was excluded) since neither candidate possesses Ferre's unique understanding of history or his almost encyclopedic grasp of the issues," Richardson said.

Richardson's comments were echoed in an email Ferre forwarded to CapitalWirePR. A supporter responded to Michael Putney's June 16 opinion article in the *Miami Herald*, "The Summer of Our Discontent," where Putney addresses the ability of Florida public office candidates to deal with pressing state issues.

The supporter wrote that Ferre "is not an incumbent and has a scandal-free proven success record as (a) six-term mayor of Miami, and as a businessman. Why don't we hear more about his record in the media?"

In Putney's response, also provided to CapitalWirePR by Ferre, the reporter said that he would take Ferre more seriously as a candidate if he was able to "raise a fair modest amount of money from his supporters. He has not and thus his campaign has languished."

But Ferre counters that unlike his more well-known competitors, he is not beholden to special interests. "Look at Kendrick Meek's donor lists," he said. "Every special interest group, and their lobbyists on K Street, are strongly present on his donor list: trial lawyers, energy companies, hospitals, HMO's and insurance companies, (the rum manufacturing company) Diageo."

Diageo's Caribbean business activities and related Federal tax breaks have become a hot button issue among many in the Sunshine State's substantial Puerto Rican community.

Besides pointing out his rivals' list of campaign contributors, Ferre also points out their alleged political inexperience. In the phone interview with CapitalWirePR, Ferre said that Jeff Greene, 55, has only voted 5 times in his life.

"I think I've only missed one election in my lifetime, and that includes local elections," Ferre said. "I've been involved in the public life for 25 years." In that time, Ferre points out, he has had "not one single scandal."

But Ferre will need a lot more than just the attention of top Democrats and the mainstream press to help him in the race. He will also have to garner most of the 60 percent of Florida Democrats who are still undecided in order to win the August 24 primary. Then, he will face Republican candidate Marco Rubio and Gov. Charlie Crist, who is running as an Independent.

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