



## FROM THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

**July 2023**

### **Manatee Dems Must Modify Voter Registration Efforts**

***By Bev Pannee***

The Manatee County Democratic Party (MCDP) is modifying its voter registration operations as a consequence of SB7050, a law that limits the way organizations can collect voter registrations (VRs).

The bill places restrictions on “third-party” voter-registration groups by reducing the time to submit voter registrations that are collected, and requiring that third-party groups give registrants receipts. The third-party groups must document that their collectors are not felons or non-citizens. Most importantly, the new law places severe fines for VR collection violations, up to \$250,000 aggregate annually.

As a direct result of the new law, MCDP will discontinue acting as a third-party voter registration group. MCDP volunteers can no longer collect completed VR forms and submit them to the Supervisor of Elections (SOE).

MCDP can, however, continue VR activities with new procedures that are currently under development. Key aspects are:

- MCDP volunteers can continue to reach out to potential applicants by providing “voter assistance.”
- Volunteers can provide an applicant with a paper VR form and answer questions about completing it, then provide the applicant with a stamped envelope addressed to the Supervisor of Elections. At no time can the volunteer copy the application or retain information from it.
- Volunteers can have an electronic device such as a tablet that an applicant uses to register online. The volunteer can answer questions during the process. MCDP is investigating various options for devices.
- Once developed, MCDP will have new training available for all volunteers and will make it a requirement for VR tabling and canvassing.
- Volunteers can continue to collect Vote-By-Mail (VBM) enrollments with paper forms that are submitted to the SOE. VBM is not affected by the new law, except that a universal VBM enrollment application must be used by October 1.
- Volunteers can continue to collect petition signatures with no procedure changes.

Not surprisingly, the law, which went into effect on July 1, is being challenged in federal lawsuits by organizations such as the League of Women Voters of Florida,

the NAACP, the Hispanic Federation, Disability Rights Florida and Alianza for Progress.

The groups argue the law violates First Amendment rights, due-process and equal-protection rights. The organizations contend efforts to register Black and Hispanic voters will be restricted.

MCDP remains committed to expanded outreach for voter registration assistance, Vote-By-Mail enrollments and petition signatures. Volunteers are needed for tables, events and precinct teams. Contact MCDP at [info@manateecountydemocrats.com](mailto:info@manateecountydemocrats.com) for more information or

[Sign Up Here](#)

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## Vote-By-Mail Sign-Up Process Remains Unchanged



Scott Farrington, right, answers questions at a recent DEC meeting.

### *By Wil Clapper*

The recently enacted SB7050 law that restricts voter registration efforts has little effect on how third-party organizations can help citizens re-enroll in the Vote-By-Mail (VBM) program or collect constitutional amendment petitions.

That means Manatee County Democratic Party volunteers can continue to collect VBM enrollment forms and petitions as usual. Current VBM forms remain valid. The law requires a new universal Vote-By-Mail form be available by Oct. 1.

Scott Farrington, Assistant Supervisor of Elections at the Manatee County Supervisor of Elections (SOE) office, updated Manatee Dems on provisions of SB7050 during a recent Democratic Executive Committee meeting.

“VBM expanded over the years to about 100,000 names,” Farrington said. “But so far, we have about 5,000 people enrolled.” A law that took effect at the end of 2022 ended years of automatic re-enrollment and requires anyone who wants to receive a ballot in the mail to renew their participation in the program.

To bring more people into the program, Farrington said the SOE’s office will start an email and postcard marketing campaign by the end of July. The campaign is targeting voters who were in the VBM program but have not re-enrolled. Farrington mentioned Sarasota sent out 100,000 emails and had 70,000 responses. He expects similar results in Manatee County.

To reinstate your VBM status, go to the:

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## Environmental Caucus to Host Clean Water Petition Event

*By Wil Clapper*

The Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus is organizing a Clean Water Amendment petition signing and volunteer support event, Thursday, July 13, 7 p.m., at the Manatee County Democratic Headquarters, **435 Cortez Road W, Bradenton.**



The purpose of the campaign is to get an amendment on the ballot for the November 2024 elections. The proposed amendment would allow citizens the right to hold government agencies accountable for harming Florida's waters.

Main points to be covered during the event include:

- Review the nonpartisan petition campaign;
- Have petitions available for signing;
- Provide guidance to volunteers to gather petitions;
- Have materials to assist in the petition gathering process.

Manatee County volunteers have turned in more than 1,000 signed petitions from Manatee registered voters. But there is much yet to be done to generate 900,000 petitions statewide in support of the initiative.

The Environmental Caucus urges anyone concerned about clean water to attend the meeting.

For more information, contact [eco.manateedems@gmail.com](mailto:eco.manateedems@gmail.com), or

[FloridaRightToCleanWater.org](https://FloridaRightToCleanWater.org)

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## New Immigration Law a Moral Failure

*By Diana Hines*

It is no secret that many of the people who make Manatee County livable by laying down roofs, spreading asphalt, mowing lawns, washing dishes and picking tomatoes are immigrants. It is also no secret that some are undocumented.

This is back-breaking labor that most Floridians are unwilling to do. Yet, Gov. Ron DeSantis has signed a law that penalizes immigrants who do not have proper documents to work in the United States. After the Florida House approved the measure (CS/SB 1718), in a mostly party line, 83-36 vote, the law took effect on July 1.

There are four key parts to this law:

1. Strengthens employment requirements, such that companies with more than 25 employees must use the federal E-Verify database to confirm an employee's eligibility to work in the U.S.;
2. Bans local governments from contributing money to organizations creating identification cards for undocumented immigrants;
3. Bars driver's licenses issued to non-citizens in other states from use in Florida;
4. Requires hospitals that accept Medicaid to ask patients about their citizenship status.

On the face of it, the law appears to address some of the most pressing concerns that right-wing Republicans have voiced about undocumented workers. But it is not sound immigration policy. Evelyn Almodóvar, president of the Manatee County Democratic Party, calls the law, "a lazy response to immigration which only adds stigma to those undocumented families, but fixes nothing."

The stigma, Almodóvar points out, will be reinforced by the most overt racial profiling. If hospitals that accept Medicaid must collect sensitive information on their patients' immigration status, personnel must decide whom to ask. No doubt this decision will be based on assumptions about name, language and skin color.

And how does this law square with HIPAA guidelines meant to protect a patient's privacy? Patricia DeVilliers, president of the Manatee County Hispanic Democratic Caucus, works for a non-profit health center. She asserts that HIPAA has strict guidelines, and this law clearly violates those guidelines. If so, public health will clearly suffer when families do not seek medical care for fear of being deported. DeVilliers explains that as Protected Health Information (PHI), a patient's immigration status is protected by HIPAA and cannot be released by a Florida hospital to Gov. Desantis' government without a patient's consent. It can only be used by a hospital for purposes of treatment, payment or hospital operations. Therefore, illegal immigrants in Florida have the right to request that their immigration status not be disclosed. Immigration reform advocates have been reaching out to immigrant communities to disseminate this important information.

The law has already instilled a climate of fear among immigrants in Manatee County. Fernando Cevallos-Candau, vice president of the Manatee Hispanic Democratic Caucus, is aware of immigrants who have moved out left for other states to work or sheltered at home for fear of being seen publicly. This retreat of workers from critical Manatee industries such as agriculture, construction and hospitality will have economic repercussions affecting every Manatee resident.

DeSantis has exhibited a flair for grand political stunts, such as rounding up Venezuelan migrants and flying them to Martha's Vineyard. And this new law appears to be another political maneuver to gain the votes of the most far-right elements in his party, at the risk of immigrants' lives and the livelihood of Florida.

As the media stunts continue, sections of the law will hopefully be challenged in the courts and gutted of any real reach. Almodóvar critiques the moral failure at issue here: "Overall the bill is un-Christian and un-American. It represents what happens when harmful political rhetoric turns into policy."

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## Documentary Explores Juneteenth History, Significance



*By Wil Clapper*

The Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus explored the history and significance of Juneteenth by showing the film “Juneteenth: Exploring Freedom's Stories” during a recent meeting at Democratic Headquarters in Bradenton.

The 28-minute video presented the story of Juneteenth and its importance as a federal holiday celebrating America’s most cherished ideal—freedom.

“Growing up in the city of Detroit, I knew of Juneteenth as a day to commemorate the arrival of the news of the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States,” said Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus President Glenn Pearson. “But I didn’t fully understand the history and the significance of the day. It certainly was not taught to me as a K to 12 student. Viewing the documentary furnished me with a more rounded understanding of the events that led up to Juneteenth as well as how and why freedom and citizenship were intertwined.”

“Juneteenth” covers American history from the Dred Scott Decision to the Emancipation Proclamation. It tells the story of the nearly 200,000 Black men who served with distinction as U.S. soldiers, helping to turn the tide of the Civil War.

The film also outlines the importance of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the Constitution and how each expanded the definition of citizenship and the rights of all American citizens.

“Juneteenth” is a free, nonpartisan resource developed by **Annenberg Classroom** and the **Civics Renewal Network**, projects affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania. You can see the film [on YouTube](#) or via the Annenberg Classroom site [here](#).

For more information about the film or the Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus, contact Pearson at [info@manateedemblackcaucus.org](mailto:info@manateedemblackcaucus.org) or visit [manateedemblackcaucus.org](http://manateedemblackcaucus.org).

**Watch on  
YouTube**

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## **Dems Collect Petitions at Juneteenth Celebration**

*By Wil Clapper*

A group of about 15 Manatee Democratic volunteers collected petitions, registered voters and updated their Vote-By-Mail status during the 2023

Juneteenth celebration at the  
13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Dream Center,  
Bradenton, on Saturday, June  
17.



The Manatee County Democratic Party was designated a Justice Sponsor for the Juneteenth celebration. In all, the MCDP Voter Registration Team collected 49 clean water petitions; 40 limit government interference with abortion petitions; 16 Vote-by-Mail requests; and three voter registration applications. MCDP also signed up three new volunteers.

“It is important for us to continue to celebrate Juneteenth by reflecting on how justice is often delayed for Black Americans,” said MCDP Chair Evelyn Almódovar. “In a political climate where our history is still under attack, it is more important than ever for us to continue to advocate for justice and press forward on issues of equity.”

Juneteenth, a Federal holiday (June 19) but not a Florida state holiday, is a celebration of freedom and an opportunity for the community to unite for justice and equity.

Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people in Texas on June 19, 1865, three years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

Dr. Sharon Jefferson, organizer of the Juneteenth Community Festival in Manatee, said in published reports that Juneteenth is an “. . . ongoing movement. We are still in the fight for awareness of African American achievement and of the disparities in wealth, education and health that still exist.” Dr. Jefferson is CEO and president of the nonprofit Roslyn Walton Education and Enrichment Services, Inc. (RECESS Education Inc.).

The Manatee Dems' Voter Registration Team plansto have a presence at the Manatee Technical College's Community Resources Fair, July 29. Additionally, volunteers are expected at the monthly Family Nights presented by the Soar in 4 program ([soarin4.org](http://soarin4.org)), July 5, August 2 and Sept 6. Soar in 4 is a free, children's literacy program.

If you would like to volunteer for these and other voter registration related events, contact Phyllis Myers at [upcc.manateedems@gmail.com](mailto:upcc.manateedems@gmail.com). If you know of other events that would attract Democratic leaning attendees, please also contact Phyllis.



## Manatee Dems Participate in Stay Woke Protest



A contingent of Manatee Democrats joined other activist organizations at the Stay Woke Florida rolling protest in Sarasota, Wednesday, June 21. Freedom Riders from across the country stopped at the Bethlehem Bible Church to fight the assault on democracy and our freedoms. Other groups protesting included the League of Women Voters of Manatee County, the Transformative Justice Coalition, Florida NAACP, American Federation of Teachers and Rainbow Push Coalition.



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## Headquarters Open July 4<sup>th</sup> for Petition Collectors

The Manatee County Democratic Party office will be open on July 4<sup>th</sup> during regular Tuesday hours, noon to 4 p.m. The special holiday opening is an opportunity for abortion and clean water petition gatherers to pick up blank petitions to take to July 4<sup>th</sup> events around Manatee County. If you have questions, contact Edie Williams at [ediewont@gmail.com](mailto:ediewont@gmail.com) or call the office, 941-301-4336.

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## County Democratic Precincts Need Captains, Team Members

Precinct teams are volunteers who help connect the Manatee Democratic Party with voters in the neighborhoods where they live. Precinct teams facilitate voter registration and Vote-By-Mail signups, conduct neighborhood petition drives, and as elections approach, distribute campaign literature and lead Get Out the Vote efforts. They help Democratic candidates become known locally and get elected.

Currently, there are 21 precincts with no captains. Additionally, team members are needed in every precinct. Please consider volunteering for this important work. Send questions or comments to Ken Handelman at: [signups.mcdp@gmail.com](mailto:signups.mcdp@gmail.com).

A precinct team meeting is scheduled for Saturday, July 29, 10:30 a.m. to noon at the Braden River Public Library, Room #205, 4915 53rd Ave E, Bradenton. Precinct organizers will discuss neighborhood networking strategies, goals and action items to prepare for the 2024 election. The meeting is open to everyone. To sign up for the meeting, contact: [manateedems507@gmail.com](mailto:manateedems507@gmail.com).

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## Dems' HQ is Regional Hub for Petitions

Manatee Democrat headquarters at 435 Cortez Road West is a regional petition collection hub for the **Amendment to Limit Government Interference with**



**Abortion.** Ruth Lawler from our Environmental Caucus is authorized to submit petitions for the **Right to Clean and Healthy Waters** initiative. To pick up petitions and signature collection instructions, stop by headquarters Tuesday, Wednesday or Friday noon to 4 p.m. or Saturday 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## Join the Manatee Dems' Virtual Phone Bank

Due to Florida voter suppression laws, those who enrolled in the Vote-By-Mail (VBM) program for the last election, need to re-enroll for the next election in 2024. The Manatee Dems recognize that most voters who used VBM in the past don't know this. To reach VBM voters, the Manatee Dems have built a virtual phone bank. A phone bank works because personal phone calls are the best ways to get the word out, and phone calls can be made from home at your convenience. For more information about the virtual phone bank:

[Click Here](#)

## Manatee Dems Place Ad in Observer Special Edition

*By Wil Clapper*

For the third consecutive year, the Manatee County Democratic Party placed an ad in the Observer newspapers' July 4th, "Spirit of America" special edition. The Spirit advertising supplement can be found in the Thursday, June 29, regular editions of the East County Observer, the Longboat Key Observer and the Sarasota/Siesta Key Observer. The edition can also be viewed online at [www.youobserver.com](http://www.youobserver.com).

This year's Spirit theme highlights why America is the land of opportunity. Local immigrant residents share their stories about how they found their American dream. Also in the special edition is a calendar of July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities.

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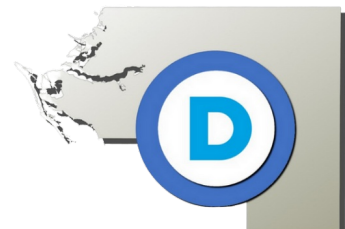
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**Manatee County Board of Commissioners**

## Headquarters Office

435 Cortez Road W, Bradenton, Florida  
34207, United States  
(941) 301-4336

[info@manateecountydemocrats.com](mailto:info@manateecountydemocrats.com)



## Hours

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Noon to 4 p.m.  
Saturdays 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Contact us to schedule a meeting

**Visit our Website**

Manatee County Democratic Party | 435 Cortez Road W, Bradenton, FL 34207

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