



February 2025

## Membership Meeting

**Monday, February 24, at 12PM**

Door opens/Social time 11:30AM

Location: Clearwater East Library  
2465 Drew St. on SPC campus

## Speaker



### Commissioner Rene Flowers Update on Issues Before the Pinellas County Commission

René Flowers (Democratic Party) is a member of the Pinellas County Commission, representing District 7. Flowers assumed office on November 17, 2020, and her current term ends on November 21, 2028. Read the Commissioner's bio [here](#).

## Event



## DWCUP President's Remarks



It's now been two weeks since the Inauguration of the new administration. The adjectives that leap to mind include cruel, deranged, dangerous, and counter-productive.

I could barely control my rage as the president blamed an air collision on DEI. And he's fired the leadership of the FBI for doing their job. And cut funding off for just about all services. Much scientific data has been deleted from government websites, and news agencies including NBC and NPR have lost their offices in the Pentagon. The list goes on and on with new horrors every day. The latest news is Elon Musk's people have access to the country's checkbook. He is advocating elimination of USAID, the governmental organization responsible for humanitarian aid and assistance to developing countries. And *no one* elected him for anything!

And then there are the nominees for Cabinet positions and highest-level government positions. What irony when a man spouts off about the need for the most competent people in each job while nominating flotsam

and jetsam utterly unqualified for those positions. Of course, he is totally incompetent for his position as well!

It's also more than likely that prices will soar in many areas instead of falling. Slapping tariffs on our best trading partners and allies, Canada and Mexico, may cause the start of a trade war. But what do I know? I believe in supporting allies, instead of turning them against Americans.

So what can we do in the face of so many issues outside of our control? First, we holler. Louder than ever. Look at your Voter Registration card to find your Congressional district. Like many of us in Pinellas, I'm in Congressional District 13, and Anna Paulina Luna currently fills that position. Her DC office number is 202-225-5961; her local office is 727-610-3980.

Call her daily if you disagree with the actions/pronouncements out of DC. And do the same for your state rep, senators, etc. They may ignore emails, but calls are counted. [See the article about taking action every day, which is included in this newsletter.] Tally Days is coming up April 7-10, 2025. That's when club members travel to Tallahassee to lobby legislators, meet with Democratic legislators, attend hearings and press conferences and more. If you're interested in learning more about this, call or email me.

Please join us next Monday evening from 5 to 7 pm at the Lucky Lobster in Dunedin for another Dem Women's Nite Out. We'll enjoy great food and drink along with exceptional conversations with like-minded people. RSVP [ruthanrichwine@gmail.com](mailto:ruthanrichwine@gmail.com) so we can give the restaurant an idea of the crowd.

We will continue to work together, support each other, and fight for the survival of our democracy. JOIN US!

## DWCUP Commemorated MLK Day

DWCUP was proud to again this year commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King Day by participating in the breakfast and march organized by the NAACP Clearwater Upper Pinellas County Branch, and co-sponsored with the City of Clearwater.

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, it felt particularly important for us to come together with the hundreds of others gathered in the Greenwood recreation center, to hear reflections on the life and teachings of Dr. King, and to contemplate the state of our life as a people in the United States of America.

DWCUP Board and many club members were in the crowd, and our members Karen Mullins and Kathleen Beckman had roles in the program.

The march followed the program, a brisk (!) mile to Coachman Park, with a marching band, banners, and people together in thoughts and hopes, cheered on along the way by residents of Clearwater, and supported by Clearwater Police and Fire.



## DWCUP Recap of Last Month's Meeting

Monday, January 27, 2025

That was a phenomenal meeting! Over 120 participants! A record crowd! County Commissioner Rene Flowers, who will speak with us in February, was in attendance. SPC students were there. Many came because David Jolly is an extraordinary speaker. And it's a new year with a new administration and most of us are wondering how we'll survive! That's why it's so important to gather as we do.



*"Just because they won, doesn't make them right."*

That, and the need to expand the Democratic Coalition to overcome this despicable administration, was a key point stressed by David Jolly. It is the Democratic coalition that is going to lead the country out of the mess now being created. He also said that upcoming issues will trip Republicans up, like raising the debt ceiling and getting a federal budget passed. Catalyzing moments will come. The economy will be unpredictable with all the head-spinning changes going on. The function of government is to expand people's freedom and then protect it. That is not happening in this new regime.

As a Floridian, Jolly believes we can be a Florida for *all* people. His emphasis is on an economy, education, and equality for all. Jolly is advocating for a national natural disaster fund that would provide insurance policies to all people. He wants the money out of politics and he's also fighting the war on public schools. He wants families to have a reason to stay in Florida. Part of that is investing in climate resiliency. We should never feel threatened by diverse voices. Start preparing now for the midterm elections!

We were happy to meet candidate Gay Valimont on Zoom. She's running for the 1st District Congressional seat vacated by Matt Gaetz. Her backstory is inspiring and we're encouraged to support her. Learn more at [GayforCongress.com](https://GayforCongress.com). We were visited by Joe Barkley who came to thank us for our condolences on the passing of his beloved wife, Mary Lou Ambrose, longtime club member, and we applauded her contributions to the club.

# DWCUP Call your representatives

By Donna Dennis

**FOR THOSE OF YOU LOOKING TO TURN YOUR ANGER INTO ACTION**, here's some advice from a high-level staffer for a Senator. Re-posting from a friend of mine:

There are two things that we should be doing all the time right now, and they're by far the most important things. You should **NOT** be bothering with online petitions or emailing.

- 1) The best thing you can do to be heard and get your congressperson to pay attention is to have face-to-face time — if they have town halls, go to them. Go to their local offices. If you're in DC, try to find a way to go to an event of theirs. Go to the "mobile offices" that their staff hold periodically (all these times are located on each congressperson's website).
- 2) When you go, ask questions. A lot of them. And push for answers. The louder and more vocal and present you can be at those the better.

However, those in-person events don't happen every day. So, the absolute most **important thing that people should be doing every day is calling. YOU SHOULD MAKE 6 CALLS A DAY**, to each of your **2 Senators and 1 State Rep (to their DC office and their local office)**.

The staffer was very clear that any sort of online contact basically gets immediately ignored, and letters pretty much get thrown in the trash (unless you have a particularly strong emotional story — but even then it's not worth the time it took you to craft that letter).

**Calls are what all the congresspeople pay attention to.** Every single day, the Senior Staff and the Senator get a report of the 3 most-called-about topics for that day at each of their offices (in DC and local offices), and exactly how many people said what about each of those topics. They're also sorted by zip code and area code. **She said that Republican callers generally outnumber Democrat callers 4-1**, and when it's a particular issue that single-issue-voters pay attention to (like gun control, or planned parenthood funding, etc...), it's often closer to 11-1, and that's recently pushed Republican congressmen on the fence to vote with the Republicans. **In the last 8 years, Republicans have called, and Democrats haven't.**

Guidance when calling:

- A) When calling the DC office, ask for the Staff member in charge of whatever you're calling about ("Hi, I'd like to speak with the staffer in charge of Healthcare, please") — local offices won't always have specific ones, but they might. If you get transferred to that person, great, if you don't, that's ok — ask for that person's name, and then just keep talking to whoever answered the phone. Don't leave a message (unless the office doesn't pick up at all — then you can — but it's better to talk to the staffer who first answered than leave a message for the specific staffer in charge of your topic).
- B) Give them your zip code. They won't always ask for it, but make sure you give it to them, so they can mark it down. Extra points if you live in a zip code that traditionally votes for them, since they'll want to make sure they get/keep your vote.
- C) If you can make it personal, make it personal. "I voted for you in the last election and I'm worried/happy/whatever" or "I'm a teacher, and I am appalled by Betsy DeVos," or "as a single mother" or "as a white, middle class woman," or whatever.

## DWCUP Call your representatives

- D) Pick 1-2 specific things per day to focus on. Don't rattle off everything you're concerned about — they're figuring out what 1-2 topics to mark you down for on their lists. So, focus on 1-2 per day. Ideally something that will be voted on/taken up in the next few days, but it doesn't really matter — even if there's no vote coming up in the next week, call anyway. It's important that they keep getting calls.
- E) **Be clear on what you want** — "I'm disappointed that the Senator..." or "I want to thank the Senator for their vote on..." or "I want the Senator to know that voting in \_\_\_\_\_ way is the wrong decision for our state because..." Don't leave any ambiguity.
- F) They may get to know your voice/get sick of you — it doesn't matter. The people answering the phones generally turn over every 6 weeks, so even if they're really sick of you, they'll be gone in 6 weeks.

**Please keep in mind:** If you don't like calling and feel awkward, that is ok, many feel that way and there are scripts online (Indivisible has some). However, after a few phone calls, it starts to feel a lot more natural. Afterall, we are their employers and we are merely calling to speak to them about issues and asking them to do their jobs.

### Helpful step:

Put the 6 numbers in your phone (all under P – Politician.)

The Clerk of the House maintains addresses and phone numbers of all House members and Committees, or you may call **(202) 224-3121 for the U.S. House switchboard operator**. You will hear a recorded message asking which Congressional member OR Senator you want to reach.

<https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>

<https://www.house.gov/representatives>

For those of us in FL-13

Rep – Congress or Senate	Local	Washington, DC (direct)	General Switchboard for all including Sen. Thune
Sen. Rick Scott	850-942-8415	202-224-5274	<b>202-224-3121</b>
Ashley Moody	Call Switchboard		
Anna Paulina Luna	727-610-3980	202-225-5961	

**Luna's direct line in DC:** Mon–Fri, 9 AM–5:30 PM

[\(202\) 225-5961](tel:2022255961)

**Luna's direct line in Seminole:**

District Office

9200 113th St. N. Office Suite: 305

Seminole, FL 33772

[\(727\) 610-3980](tel:7276103980)

Mon–Fri, 9 AM–5:30 PM - By Appointment Only



# DWCUP Legislative Report

As Legislative Liaison to the Democratic Women's Club of Florida ([dwcf.org](http://dwcf.org)) my task is to attend weekly Zoom meetings, report to you what the positions are on the bills, and pass on any alerts asking for us to contact our senators and representatives. These meetings have not started yet.

This link can be used to view weekly update videos on Fridays, and has videos of proceedings:  
[thefloridachannel.org](http://thefloridachannel.org)

To support the liaison task, I have written a program to scrape the websites and create a spreadsheet of the bills. These are the websites: [flsenate.gov](http://flsenate.gov) [flhouse.gov](http://flhouse.gov)

This is my spreadsheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/12e2Djmgps4n398AadXHCXwL5uwxVnnVq/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=105103654553308080498&rtpof=true&sd=true>

I have prioritized and commented on many of the bills on my own, currently without DWCF input. I would appreciate any comments you might have. I can relay any concerns you may have during the DWCF zoom meetings. DWCF can make our voices heard!

**2025 Florida Legislative session runs March 4 through May 2. There have been two special sessions - 2025 A, and 2025 B.** These are also captured in the spreadsheet.

2025 A was held for a single day. It covered immigration, the petition process, and denying in-state tuition to dreamers. The legislature closed the session without passing any bill.

2025 B was then held, covering immigration. A bill passed, with an appropriation of over half a billion dollars. It makes the Commissioner of Agriculture the immigration head, funds bonuses for local law enforcement who participate in detentions, creates a new law enforcement division under the Department of Agriculture, transfers authority from other departments to Agriculture department including authority to declare immigration emergency. It punishes unauthorized alien voters and anybody who aids them. It punishes unauthorized alien criminals more harshly, including capital punishment. All detention facilities must report inmate immigration status. No sanctuary cities. Deny in-state tuition to dreamers. Provide physical assets to help the federal government address illegal immigration.

**373 bills have been filed for the regular 2025 session:**  
**Democrat:**

Guns - safe storage, background checks, licensed dealer requirements with respect to sales/transfers, no undetectable or unserialized firearms, no 3D printing guns, expand list of sensitive areas, more severe punishment for using machine guns

Elections - elect President by National Vote, prohibit spending money advertising against ballot initiatives

State Preemption - local control of crane regulation (Lindsay Cross - relates to St. Pete crane hurricane event). Repeal gun regulation preemption.

Insurance - resolving disputed property insurance claims, have citizens provide windstorm coverage and private insurance provide fire, etc. (similar to what Carl Zimmerman presented to us), spread risk nationally to lower our insurance

## DWCUP Legislative Report

Rights - require one physician not two for abortion, and if needed to preserve fertility. ERA ratification. Incarcerated has right to request pregnancy test.

Education - free school breakfast and lunch

Criminal Justice - Youth conflict resolution program, criminal rehabilitation, inmate education

Workers - heat illness prevention measures

### **Republican:**

Guns - lower the age to 18. Repeal prohibition on bump stocks.

Culture War - government entities can't display political flags (but can display neutral flags? - vague). Expedite claims related to adverse reactions to vaccines, ban weather control.

State Preemption - state regulates Presidential Library

State Park Preservation

Affordable Housing - incentivize ADUs

Consumer Protection - improve unlicensed vendor regulation

Education - local control of school start times

By Jean Greenawalt

## DWCUP Local and State Election Alerts

1. Municipal elections on Tuesday, March 11 for Gulfport, Indian Rocks Beach, Indian Shores, Oldsmar, Redington Shores, South Pasadena, St. Pete Beach Dist. 2, Tarpon Springs, and Treasure Island. Deadline to request a VBM ballot for these elections is Feb. 27.
2. Local volunteers for Gay Valimont (Special Election April 1 in District 1) can participate in phone banking. Go to [www.mobilize.us/gayforcongress/](http://www.mobilize.us/gayforcongress/) and [gayforcongress.com](http://gayforcongress.com). Karen Mullins is a local volunteer contact.
3. Everyone must renew their Vote by Mail Ballot Request for 2025 and 2026. All previous VBM expired as of the last election. Renew on line at [VotePinellas.gov](http://VotePinellas.gov).

## DWCUP Who We Are

The DWCUP is one of 66 Democratic Women's Clubs of Florida, begun by women in Pinellas County on September 9, 1940, forming the Democratic Club of Upper Pinellas County. Today, DWCUP carries on their goals.

The Democratic Women's Club of Florida, Inc. (DWCF, Inc.) began in 1956, on May 24, the day chosen by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt as Democratic Women's Day, with the aim to unite all Democratic Women's Clubs in Florida by providing a forum for discussion of public matters, supporting qualified candidates for public office, and encouraging qualified Democratic women to seek elected positions. In the 1980's, DWCF became a full member of the National Federation of Democratic Women (NFDW). DWCF is a separate entity from the Florida Democratic Party but DWCF is recognized as the Florida Democratic Women's Caucus because DWCF maintains full membership in the NFDW.

DWCF members and clubs support campaign activities. The DWCF recruits women to run for political offices. The DWCF Political Committee which disseminates money to DWCF-endorsed candidates. The Legislative Chair and Legislative Liaisons of the DWCF, Inc. serve as the grassroots legislative advocacy arm of the DWCF, to monitor and lobby for or against legislation that has a dramatic impact on the lives of the citizens of Florida.

## DWCUP MEMBERSHIP

### DWCUP Annual Membership Dues: \$25

Your DWCUP membership includes becoming a member of the Democratic Women's Club of Florida. Go to the DWCF website, [www.dwcf.org](http://www.dwcf.org), and register, create a password and review the activities of the state organization, what's going on with other clubs in the state, the Florida Democratic Party, and so much more!

Get the best deals with a tiered membership!

**PLATINUM MEMBER:** 3 Years for \$70

**SILVER MEMBER:** 5 Years for \$100

**GOLD MEMBER:** Member for Life \$250

**Pay your membership dues here:**  
[dwcup.com/donate](http://dwcup.com/donate)

## DWCUP OFFICERS & CHAIRS

President  
Donna Dennis  
313-443-2587  
[DWCUP727@gmail.com](mailto:DWCUP727@gmail.com)

1st Vice President  
Program  
Cora Kostka

2nd Vice President  
Membership  
Nancy Vellucci

Secretary, Newsletter  
Jan Walton

Treasurer  
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Regional Rep.  
Donna Dennis

Fundraising Coordinator  
Liz Dahan

Webmaster  
Polly Kraus

Hospitality Chairs  
Ruthann Richwine, Karen Miracle

Legislative Liaison  
Jean Greenawalt

Bylaws Revision Chair  
Karen Mullins

Publicity Chair  
Marjorie Murphy



## DWCUP Connections

DWCUP Website  
DWCUP.org

Democratic Women's Club of Florida, Inc.  
DWCF.org

Club Email  
DWCUP727@gmail.com

National Federation of Democratic Women  
www.nfdw.com

Instagram  
@DWCUP727

Florida Democratic Party  
Fladems.com

Facebook  
facebook.com/groups/DWCUP

Pinellas County Democratic Executive  
Committee  
Pinellasdemocrats.com

## DWCUP Upcoming Meetings

February 24 – DWCUP Monthly Meeting

March 31 – DWCUP Monthly Meeting (*last* Monday in March)

April 28 – DWCUP Monthly Meeting