

Manatee Matters

March-April 2021 Newsletter

*Introducing our new newsletter format. We hope you like it!
Check our website for event updates, current issues, how
to get involved and how to donate.*

**Visit our
website**



2022 & YOU
REGISTER NOW
Saturday, March 27, 2021
10:30 am to 12:30 pm for an
**Interactive
Virtual Forum**

**MANATEE COUNTY
DEMOCRATIC PARTY**

For more information and to sign up:
Manatee County Democratic Party
ManateeCountyDemocrats.com • 941-301-4336

**You're Invited to the
Democrats' Interactive Volunteer Forum**

A number of Republican office holders, ranging from governor

to local county commissioners, are up for re-election in 2022. With that in mind, there's no time like the present to begin planning to elect Democrats for every available position.



To get the ball rolling, join the Manatee County Democrats at our **2022 & You** Interactive Virtual Forum, Saturday, March 27th from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Because the event is virtual, you can participate from the comfort of your own home.

The Manatee Democrats are building on last year's successes and we are eager to share our vision of the future. Join us to learn who the Manatee Democrats are, what we've done, what we're planning to do and how you can join and support us through volunteering or funding our activities.

The forum will feature elected Democratic office holders, Democratic affiliated clubs, caucuses and organizations, opportunities to meet and get to know active Democrats, breakout sessions, and ways for you to get involved at whatever level you wish.

The event is organized in three main sections: introductions, interactive forum and a wrap up. At the start of the event, everyone will virtually sit at tables for an overview from Manatee County Democratic Chair Tracy Pratt.

During the interactive forum stage, table and topic hosts will introduce the four main breakout categories. Subject matter experts at each virtual table will provide details of their work, answer questions you may have about the subject or topics, and ways to bring your skills and expertise to best use.

The virtual table sessions are timed, and you will be encouraged to move to any of the other tables and learn about other aspects of the Manatee Democrats' work. Additionally, Manatee Democratic caucuses and clubs will have virtual seating available at their respective tables.

The main breakout sessions with a sampling of topics that will be discussed:

Neighborhood Networks - Yes, Democrats really do live in Manatee County! Here are some ways to get to know them.

- Community events
- Neighborhood meet and greet activities
- Neighborhood Champions

Get Democrats Elected - Together We Win!

- Candidate University, candidate training and support
- Help identify and recruit candidates
- Voter registration and vote by mail
- The voter education video project

Outreach & Inclusion – We need you!

- Inclusion and diversity
- Communicating across Manatee County
- All about volunteering
- Local and state government action and issue advocacy

Happening Behind the Scenes – Manatee County Democrats' Operations

- In the Democratic office
- Volunteer coordination and data management

- Fun fundraising

We hope you'll join us for this fast paced, informative, fun interactive forum, Saturday March 27th. See you there!

–Robin Sathan and B.E. Melendez

[Register Now](#)



"I volunteer and I love it! Saving our democracy is important to me. If I learned nothing else from the past four years, it's that our democracy is not only precious but also quite fragile and that I can't sit back and expect it to work without participating in some way. Volunteers in every state were integral to the Biden-Harris victory. Now it's time to show what Florida – especially Manatee County – can do in our state and local elections."

Florence Shelton-Clark, Newly elected Manatee County State Committeewoman, 2nd Vice-President Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus, Co-Chair 16th Congressional District Caucus.



Bills Aim to Suppress Citizens' Voices and Voting Rights

The Florida legislative session began March 2 and extends to April 30. Republicans own a 24-16 majority in the Senate and a 78-42 majority in the House. Bills are moving through committees and need further scrutiny before being reported to the floors of the chambers.

House Bill 1/Senate Bill 484. Combatting Public Disorder – Although sponsors claim this bill's objective is "combating public disorder," it seems equally possible that it's aimed at suppressing dissent. Among its provisions, it defines "riot" as a public disturbance involving as few as three people and classifies rioting as a felony. It gives the state the power to override cuts to local police budgets. It makes toppling a statue a felony punishable by up to 15 years in prison. And it provides liability protection for people who injure rioters, such as driving through a crowd or shooting a suspected looter.

Senate Bill 90, Vote-by-mail Ballots – Florida was a vote-by-mail success in the 2020 election, with some 4.8 million Floridians casting their ballots by mail. There were no reports of mail-voting fraud. But this bill, if enacted, will invalidate all current requests for mail ballots, requiring voters to file new requests for the 2022 election, and for each subsequent election cycle. And it will require county election supervisors, not the state, to bear the responsibility and costs of notifying voters of the change. The bill's progress has been on strict party-line votes.

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Nikki Fried Speaks

at March Manatee Democratic Meeting



Florida Agricultural Commissioner Nikki Fried will speak on the need for Democrats to regroup and rebuild infrastructure in preparation for the 2022 elections at the Manatee Democratic Party virtual meeting, March 23rd, 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Fried currently is the only elected Democrat to state-wide office and has been mentioned as a possible candidate for governor or Congress in 2022.

At the Manatee Democrats' DEC meeting, she will discuss what she learned about Democratic efforts after the 2020 election. She is also expected to discuss her background and why she ran in 2018, the work she has done in the department on various topics, such as concealed weapons permits, promoting clean water, and moving Florida's cannabis policy forward — especially advocating to expand access of medical marijuana and hemp/CBD.

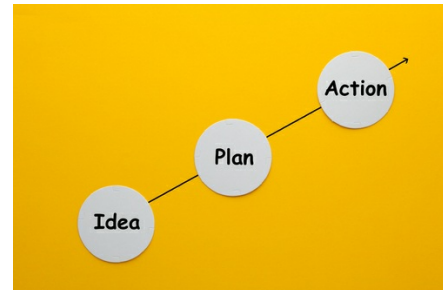
For more information about the virtual Manatee County Democratic DEC meeting, contact rmsmanateedems@gmail.com or call (941) 301-4336. The program is open to all Democrats. If not a DEC member, you can sign up at <https://conta.cc/2O7OBRC>.

Municipal Action Committee Aims to Increase Democratic Presence

Manatee County Democrats' Vice Chair John Brackett has a mission leading up to the next election. He and the entire Manatee County Democratic organization are striving to make sure that Democrats are in contention as candidates running for office in 2022.

"Ideally, we want to provide a Democratic presence at meetings," he said. He especially is interested in Democrats showing up at county commission and school board meetings.

Brackett heads up the recently formed Municipal Action Committee and presided over its first meeting the last week of February. "We're looking for ways to develop issues that are important to Manatee Democrats," said Brackett. "The purpose of the meeting was to brainstorm ideas for determining what the Municipal Action Committee should focus on."



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More](#)

Susie Copeland Steps Down as Black Caucus President



Susie Copeland, a founding member of the Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus, is retiring from her role as president, but her passion for the work of the Caucus continues. The Black Caucus expects to hold elections by the end of the month. High on her list of priorities is continuing voter registration and turnout efforts. “Although in the last election we had 75 percent turnout (in the Black community) we still had registered voters who didn’t vote,” she noted. “We need much more communication. There are people on the rolls who are not voting.”

Even as late as September 2020 the caucus made an effort to increase voter registration, turnout and use of mail-in ballots. “We need to do a better job of voter education, especially on how to complete a ballot,” she said. “The Black community is somewhat apprehensive about vote-by-mail. In 2018 there were 10,000 votes that were not valid.”

[Read More](#)

Club & Caucus Corner

Manatee Democratic Club



Focus: Expand reach of Democratic Party in Manatee County.

Leadership: Paul Dain, president, pauldain73@gmail.com
Ricki Mazzullo, vice-president.

Activities: Speaker at most meetings, Voter registration, Voter education, Vote by mail, Letter writing, Issue engagement.

Current Membership: Approximately 100 members.

Meetings: First Thursday of the month (September through May) 11:30 a.m. via Zoom, Contact Paul Dain, pauldain73@gmail.com.

There are many Democratic clubs and caucuses in Manatee County. Which ones might be a good fit to match your interests and talents? [Here](#) is a full list.

View from the Chair

Opportunities Abound to Get Involved

Hello Democrats!

Even in this non-election year, there are many opportunities to get involved with the Manatee County Democratic Party. We are preparing for a busy 2022 election cycle, and at the same time fighting for the policies that benefit our whole community. Let me share with you some

recent activities and future plans.

Our new Municipal Action Committee, under the direction of Vice-Chairman John Brackett, was particularly active last month in ensuring our voices were heard regarding the blatant corruption in the inequitable distribution of vaccines by Manatee County Commission Chairwoman Vanessa Baugh (R). Commissioner Baugh made national news by working outside the County Commission to offer vaccines to two wealthy zip codes, including a VIP list that included herself, friends and donors. The Democratic Party responded by demanding Commissioner Baugh's resignation, and made local headlines in the process. We will continue to push for equitable vaccine distribution for all residents and to call out corruption!



Plan to attend our spring volunteer event, **2022 & You**, on March 27th. Robin Sathan is organizing this virtual event, which I am sure will be as fantastic as ever. (See the article above or our website for details.)

We reorganized our monthly DEC meetings to make them more educational, inclusive and fun. Business meetings will be quarterly, while other months will feature speakers and special programs. In February the DEC meeting featured Marcus Dixon, the new Executive Director of the Florida Democratic Party, and we chatted with Lisa Strahley, Executive Director of Sawgrass Progressives, a campaign assistance organization. In March we welcome our Commissioner of Agriculture, Nikki Fried. These special-program meetings are open to all Manatee County Democrats, so invite your family, friends and neighbors. Register at the Manatee Democrats' website, <https://manateecountydemocrats.com/2022-and-you>

Many thanks to our African-American leaders of Manatee County who filmed videos explaining what Black History Month means to them. You can view the videos at <https://manateecountydemocrats.com/black-history>.

We are looking forward to removing Gov. Ron DeSantis and Sen. Marco Rubio from their seats in 2022. The work begins today. We need your help! Please [sign up](#) to attend the virtual volunteer forum on March 27.

Tracy Pratt, Chair
Manatee County Democratic Party

The Manatee County Democratic Party is a 100% volunteer organization. All contributions of any size are appreciated. \$22/month goes a long way to help elect Democrats in the 2022 elections.

Donate Now



Join Our Communications Team!

Do you have communication skills that could benefit the Manatee Democrats in our quest to get more Democrats elected to office? The Communications Committee is looking for writers, reporters, social media posters and administrators as well as folks who know public relations, advertising, and broadcast media. If interested in volunteering some of your time and talent,

contact: Wil Clapper, wil.mcdcomm@gmail.com.

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**Contact
Us**