

November 2017



# MANATEE MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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**Manatee County Democratic  
Executive Committee  
PO Box 10605  
Bradenton, FL 34282**

**Come visit us at our new  
headquarters  
435 Cortez Road West  
Bradenton, FL 34207  
(941)301-4336**

**We welcome your comments and  
contributions to this newsletter.  
Please email  
[HQManateeDems@gmail.com](mailto:HQManateeDems@gmail.com)**

**Website:  
[ManateeCountyDemocrats.com](http://ManateeCountyDemocrats.com)**

## Welcome to Our First Issue

The Manatee County Democrats are proud to bring you the first issue of Manatee Matters! Why does Manatee matter? As of September 2017, Manatee County has 70,489 active registered Democratic voters, along with 100,371 Republicans and 58,872 No Party Affiliation/Other. In a state-wide or national election, our votes count, or “matter,” just as much as a big blue stronghold. For the 2018 mid-term election, we have a real chance of swinging the vote to a Democratic governor, as well as a US Senate seat and other candidates at the state level. Looking ahead to 2020, we are adjacent to the “swing-counties” of Florida’s I-4 corridor, and our demographics are slowly moving toward more Democratic voters.

We also have the ability to elect qualified local Democratic candidates. Many mayoral and municipal positions in the county are held by Democrats.

In another meaning of Manatee Matters, we have a responsibility to call attention to “matters” in Manatee such as education, the environment, the opioid epidemic, healthcare and many other issues. We intend for this newsletter to be a forum for information and discussion about these issues.

Our County has seen a surge of political activism and interest in the Democratic Party. This is our chance to turn the tides and prove that Manatee Matters.

## Join us for our One-Year-Out Launch Party

Join us from 6 PM to 8 PM on November 6, 2017 at Manatee County Democratic Party headquarters for food, music and great conversation. We are launching into the year leading up to the November 2018 election. Meet Dave Shapiro, Candidate for US Congressional District 16; Ryan Torrens, Candidate for State Attorney General; and local Democratic candidates.

Music donated by the  
Steve Norris Band.

**RIDE THE BLUE WAVE TO END THE RED TIDE!**



## Petitions Needed for Florida Voting Rights Restoration

Florida's Constitution strips persons convicted of a felony of their civil rights, and as a result, 1.6 million Floridians cannot vote. The great majority of states restore voting rights to people who finish prison and probation. Florida is one of only four states that makes all persons convicted of felonies petition state partisan officials to have their voting rights restored. A person can become a felon for crimes most would consider minor.

Former inmates must wait between five and seven years after completing their sentences to even apply for restoration of their voting rights. It often takes years for cases to be heard and that wait has increased dramatically under Governor Rick Scott. In the four years Charlie Crist served as Florida governor from 2007 to 2011, some 155,000 persons regained their right to vote. In almost seven years under Governor Scott, 2011 to the present, only 2,807 people have their rights restored.

**Please help!**

**The Sarasota/Manatee Chapter of the ACLU will have petitions at various locations, including the Bradenton Farmers Market on November 4, and at the Sarasota Farmers Market on November 18. Please drop a line to :**

**Ivan Rubin**

**Manatee Democrat and Board Member of the Sarasota/Manatee Chapter, ACLU**

**restorationben100@gmail.com**

There is now a campaign to amend the Florida Constitution to remove the capricious nature of how the process is conducted. The amendment would restore the vote automatically upon completion of payment of the societal debt. The amendment excludes murderers and felony sex offenders from the automatic restoration and leaves them to the present process.

In order to put the amendment on the ballot in 2018 the proponents need to collect 766,200 valid petition signatures by December 31, 2017. There is also a requirement that specific totals be achieved in at least 14 of the Congressional Districts.

Here in the 16<sup>th</sup> District more than 32,000 signatures are needed, while only about 5,000 have been verified. There are many petitions in the pipeline waiting for review by the County Supervisor of Elections, but many more petitions are still needed.

## Veterans Vote Project

Of the 60,000 people in Florida who either finish their prison sentence or complete their probation period each year, at least six percent are military veterans. Many of those released from prison and probation have never been able to have their voting rights restored - including people who fought for their country.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Florida is seeking stories from US military veterans who have lost the ability to vote due to Florida's voting ban on people with past felony convictions. The ACLU is assuring anonymity.

One story is from Army Private Clarence Office Jr., 60, of Miami. who served in the military for three years, was discharged honorably, but later fell into problems with drugs. He was arrested numerous times for possession and sale of small amounts of narcotics - no violent crimes. He served time in prison, but has been crime-free for ten years. He now works with the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs and counsels other veterans who have encountered problems with the criminal justice system. But he still can't vote.

**The ACLU of Florida is encouraging veterans impacted by Florida's voting ban to contact them.**

**Call [\(786\)363-2727](tel:(786)363-2727) or visit: [www.acluf.org/veteransvote](http://www.acluf.org/veteransvote)**

## Manatee Democrats Help with Puerto Rico Hurricane Relief

*Sometimes the opportunity comes up to use our Manatee County Democratic Party organizational structure to provide help where needed, with no politics involved. Many people in our community have responded to the Puerto Rico disaster, including Patience Little, who shares her story.*

On Wednesday, October 4, we took a Cheyenne twin engine airplane from Sarasota to Vieques Island, Puerto Rico. Our cargo was rice, dried beans and other greatly needed supplies. This was made possible by a dedicated group of people who worked hard the week before raising money, making phone calls, setting up a PayPal account, finding an airplane and picking up donations.



The idea for this flight came from a friend of mine with a family in Puerto Rico that asked for help. I'm a pilot and know a few people who own planes and may want to help. I contacted Dr. Enrique Rivera who owns a plane and is from Puerto Rico, with a family in Vieques. He contacted Leonard, a pilot of a larger plane.

So many people offered donations and they came together quickly to help. The new Democratic headquarters was used as a base of operations. Supplies and donations were collected there and the Manatee Democrats helped. We emailed donation requests to people across the country and the response was very gratifying!



After we landed we gave the supplies to the one person at the airport in Puerto Rico. This woman assured us that she would deliver them to the police chief. We couldn't stay to follow up, but the police chief did thank us a few days later and said he will distribute the food and supplies to twenty families.

We used the money donated to pay for the fuel for the flight, which was \$3,300. We have a balance of \$2,200 and donations are still coming in, so Enrique is planning a second flight.

Thank you everyone for your support. We have a great team in Manatee County!

Patience Little

***The Manatee/Sarasota Democratic Black Caucus (MSDBC), in coordination with Bethlehem Baptist Church, has been collecting food, water, clothes and other supplies for the US Virgin Islands. MSDBC has started a GoFundMe campaign to raise funds for sending these supplies to the Virgin Islands. If you would like to help and want more information, please contact Florence Shelton-Clark, boutiquesoe@comcast.net, (770) 623-3636.***



### Precinct Outreach

Want to help get the Democratic Party message out and help get Democrats elected? Volunteer in your precinct, be a precinct captain or adopt a precinct. No experience necessary and you only reach out to registered Democrats.

Contact Randi Sathan

rmsmanateedems@gmail.com.

### Newsletter Contributions and Special Skills

We are always looking for Democratic news, articles and ideas—please send them in. We also need people with special skills, such as:

- Writer
- Graphic Artist
- Photographer
- Spanish Translator
- Proficiency with Microsoft Publisher and Outlook
- Knowledge of Florida legislative issues and candidates

Contact Bev Pannee

beverlypannee@gmail.com



### Get to Know Our Chairperson

Sheryl Wilson has been a Democrat since she can remember. Growing up in Kentucky, she worked for the Eugene McCarthy Presidential campaign when she was just 17, before she could even vote. A self-described “political junkie”, she stayed active in the Party and worked for the Barack Obama campaign, starting in 2008. By 2012 she was a Team Leader and liaison between the Obama campaign and the Manatee County Democratic Party. Since 2015 she has been the Chairperson of the Manatee County Democratic Party (MCDP).

Asked what she needs to get through the day, Sheryl named coffee, her football “fix”, and her dog, Callie. She can also count on her wonderful husband, two children and four grandchildren. Sheryl said that being an early riser, constantly prioritizing, and keeping the MCDP’s current budget in mind all help her organize her busy days. She also uses the calendar on her cell phone and tablet.



Sheryl named large Democrat voter turnout and participation as goals for this, the midterm election year. She said that she is excited by the recent increase in volunteers and their commitment to make Manatee a Blue County! She was thrilled when last year she brought the largest number of delegates from Manatee County ever to the Florida Democratic Party conference, and has been working to bring even more delegates this year.

As for what makes her job memorable, she pointed to coining the new MCDP logo, “Manatee Matters”. She feels it reminds everyone how important Manatee County votes are in statewide and national elections, as part of the key I-4 Corridor, and that there are many issues that “matter” to voters in this county.

The Manatee County Democratic Party works to elect Democratic candidates and promote Democratic values. We are a local extension of the Florida Democratic Party and the Democratic National Committee. We are a 100% volunteer organization working to increase Democratic voter registration, build and aid coalition partners, fundraise, canvass and help support democratic candidates to win elections in Manatee County.