

April 2018



# MANATEE MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

## Be Part of the Solution



Manatee County Democratic  
Executive Committee

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Office Hours:  
10 am to 2 pm weekdays

*Democratic precinct meet-  
and-greet events and  
Democratic club/caucus  
meetings are happening  
around the county. Look for  
them in the events calendar  
on our website.*

## CALENDAR

[https://  
manateecountydemocrats.com/  
events](https://manateecountydemocrats.com/events)

This year's midterm elections will be highly important in shaping the national and state political landscape for many years to come, yet voter turnout for midterm elections has historically been much lower than for general elections. Our challenge this year is to achieve unprecedented Democratic voter participation with the results possibly affecting a full generation.

The Manatee County Democratic Party has seen a tremendous upswing in volunteer activity, but we need much more. There is no need to wait until we get closer to the election – there are many opportunities now for you to be part of the solution. Here is what you can do starting today:

**Get to Know Your Voting Precinct.** Call or get together with identified Democrats in your neighborhood, recruit new volunteers, or make Vote By Mail reminder calls on behalf of the Democratic Party. Lend your creativity to our goal of getting all registered Democrats in every precinct out to vote.

**Register Voters.** Volunteer to work with the Manatee/Sarasota Black Caucus at upcoming voter registration events.

**Help Underwrite This Year's Outreach Efforts.** Mail in a donation to the Manatee County Democratic Party (MCDP), make a one-time donation using the MCDP website, or set up a monthly donation online. Help make the upcoming Manatee County Democratic Dinner on April 20 more successful than last year by supporting the silent auction and placing an advertisement in the dinner program.

**Volunteer at the Manatee County Democratic Headquarters.** The office is open weekdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and needs additional volunteer staff. Help is especially needed now with on-going phone banking for Vote By Mail.

**Donate Your Special Skills.** The communications and fundraising teams need individuals to work on the monthly newsletter, social media, website and printed materials, in particular volunteers who can provide layout and basic graphic design.

Call or email MCDP headquarters at [HQManateeDems@gmail.com](mailto:HQManateeDems@gmail.com) with your volunteer preferences and you will be directed to the right place to start!



## Vote 4 to Restore the Right to Vote

The proposed amendment to the Florida Constitution to restore the vote automatically to citizens who have paid their debt to society is now on the November 2018 ballot as Amendment 4. The amendment must have 60% voter approval to pass.

Florida is one of four states whose constitution permanently disenfranchises citizens with past felony convictions and grants the governor the authority to restore voting rights. A procedure exists by which such individuals can get their rights restored once they have completed their sentence, including fees and restitution. However, the present state administration has imposed a highly restrictive process which requires an extended waiting period prior to applying for restoration of voting rights.

The underlying problem is that the sitting governor determines the procedure as he or she chooses. To-date the current administration under Governor Rick Scott has restored the right to vote to only a small percentage of eligible people, as compared to the percent of individuals whose rights were restored under Governor Charlie Crist.

Although a federal court recently struck down the state's procedure as unconstitutional, the amendment is still essential. The court ruled that a better procedure with more reasonable criteria could pass constitutional muster, while also allowing for the governor to continue controlling the process. Importantly, the court left the impediment of long waiting periods in place. Amendment 4, if approved, would eliminate the arbitrary and capricious approach to restoring the vote.

Approximately 1.1 million signed petitions have been gathered to put the amendment on the November ballot. The Florida Supervisors of Elections have already validated 842,796 signatures, exceeding the minimum required by roughly 77,000. The threshold was surpassed in 15 of Florida's 27 congressional districts, satisfying another requirement of reaching the threshold in a majority of districts.

Unfortunately, here in the Sixteenth Congressional District we fell well short of the necessary total of validated petitions, notwithstanding a concerted effort by many people. We need to work even harder to get the amendment passed. Reaching out to your neighbors to gather volunteers is a first step for a winning campaign. For more information or to volunteer, contact [restorationben100@gmail.com](mailto:restorationben100@gmail.com).

## What is the CRC?

As provided in the Florida State Constitution, the Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) convenes every 20 years to review and propose changes to the Florida Constitution.

Florida is the only state with a commission empowered to refer constitutional amendments directly to the ballot for a public vote. The State Attorney General has automatic membership, with the other 36 members of the CRC appointed as follows:

- Governor appoints 15 commissioners, including the commission chair.
- President of the Senate appoints nine commissioners.
- Speaker of the House of Representatives appoints nine commissioners.
- Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court appoints three commissioners.



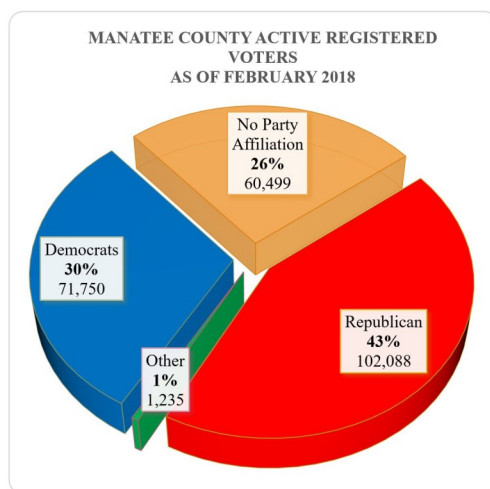
The current Commission has until May 10 to refer amendments to the ballot for the election on November 6. Beyond what is required in Section 2 of Article XI of the Florida State Constitution, the CRC sets its own rules and procedures, so it's easy to see how one-party dominance of state government can determine the nature of the amendments considered. Look for more information on CRC proposed amendments in future Manatee Matters newsletters.

## Strategy by the Numbers

Numbers tell the story. In Manatee County, 30% of all registered voters are Democrats, 43% are Republican, and 26% have no political affiliation. In recent years, the number of Democrats in Manatee County has been growing along with the population, while the percentage of registered Democrats has remained relatively static.

But getting people to register is only part of the MCDP 2018 action plan. The other important goal is getting Democrats to vote. In the 2016 general election, 79% of all registered voters in Manatee County went to the polls. **In the 2014 mid-term election, that number dropped to 57%.**

Along with the MCDP, the Manatee/Sarasota Democratic Black Caucus (MSDBC) is spearheading a voter registration and education drive from now through the November election. One of their first goals is to identify local businesses that will allow the MSDBC to set up voter registration tables outside their establishments, particularly those that serve the African-American and Hispanic communities. MSDBC will also be conducting door-to-door canvassing. Although voter registration is focused on selected neighborhoods and areas, volunteers throughout the county are needed for this effort. To volunteer or share ideas for potential voter registration sites, use the contact form on the MSDBC website at [www.msdbcf.com](http://www.msdbcf.com) or email [HQManateeDems@gmail.com](mailto:HQManateeDems@gmail.com).



To ensure success, neighborhood and precinct volunteers in the MCDP will work to get all Democrats out to vote. Currently efforts are underway to develop a network of volunteers and to remind voters to apply for or renew their Vote By Mail status. As we approach November, volunteers will make sure voters know they can take advantage of early voting and will take people to the polls on Election Day. Every vote counts and should not be taken for granted!

### Speakers Announced for April 20 Democratic Dinner

*The Annual Manatee County Democratic Dinner is shaping up to be another fun, inspiring and informative event with keynote speaker former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley. As someone who's spent his career making a difference at the local level – as a city councilman, mayor and governor – Martin O'Malley knows that real change begins at the grassroots level. That's why he created Win Back Your State, a new PAC to support state and local Democratic candidates running in 2018, to help us win back our state legislatures and paint a more positive future for our country.*



*Also included in the stellar line-up of speakers is Florida Democratic Party Chair Terrie Rizzo. Miami Beach Mayor and Gubernatorial Candidate Philip Levine will be a participating sponsor.*

*It's not too late to make your reservations. Go on-line at [ManateeCountyDemocrats.com](http://ManateeCountyDemocrats.com) for details. To donate silent auction items, contact Peggieward at [drpeggiewardphd@gmail.com](mailto:drpeggiewardphd@gmail.com) or Mary Jo Kline at [mjkline@visi.com](mailto:mjkline@visi.com). To advertise in the program book, contact Barbara Hyde at [bhyde@bhyde.net](mailto:bhyde@bhyde.net). To donate live auction items such as travel or entertainment experiences, contact Lucy Lapidés at [lucy@lwrdeems.com](mailto:lucy@lwrdeems.com).*

## Manatee Democrats Support March for Our Lives



On Saturday, March 24, Manatee Democrats gave their support to Manatee March for Our Lives, part of the worldwide rally for gun control and school safety organized by students from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The local event, organized by 15-year old Julie Dortch, began at Riverwalk where more than 1,000 protesters overflowed Mosaic Amphitheater and heard from activists and local politicians.



A point-by-point action plan was circulated in the crowd, with the first action being “Register to vote and support candidates who will stand with us.” Local candidates speaking at the rally included David Shapiro, running for the U.S. House of Representatives; newly elected State Legislator Margaret Good; and Tracy Pratt, the newest candidate for Florida House District 71. Liv Coleman, candidate for Florida House District 73, marched alongside Parkland students in Washington, DC, while her husband, Matt Lepinski, addressed the Bradenton marchers. “In the streets and in the ballot box, that’s how change happens,” Lepinski said. “We’re here to follow the young people. Their fight is our fight. We will follow them into a better future.”

## New Visibility at Manatee County Democratic Headquarters

The monthly meeting of the Manatee County Democratic Executive Committee had an extra burst of enthusiasm on March 26 with the arrival of our new headquarters overhead sign. Chair Sheryl Wilson noted that the bold sign, which is also illuminated at night, will give the Manatee Democratic office much greater visibility. Wilson also recognized Office Operations Manager Gloria Carne and Precinct Chairperson Randi Sathan, among others, for their tireless work and reported that that volunteer activity is at the highest level in recent memory.

Candidates in attendance included Jan Schneider, who is running for the U.S. House of Representatives and reminded us that not only the wealthy deserve to be healthy. Tracy Pratt, brought her family to the event and announced that she is a new Democratic candidate for Florida House District 71. Randy Cooper, who has been campaigning for House District 71 over the past year, announced that after much consideration he is stepping down, but not out. He will be assisting Pratt as campaign treasurer. Erika Lundquist announced that she is running for Manatee County Commissioner, District 4.

