

July/August 2020



NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Letter from the Chair



Important Dates for the August Primary Elections Tuesday, August 18, 2020

Registration Closes
Monday, July 20, 2020

Early Voting Begins
Saturday, August 8, 2020

Early Voting Ends
Saturday, August 15, 2020

Find your sample ballot [here](#).

In these challenging times we are provided with an opportunity and a duty to fight for a government that will work for *all* people.

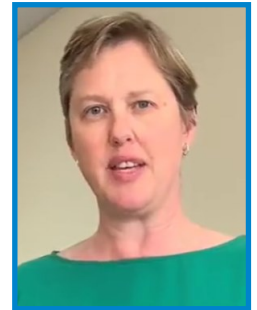
I have been saying since 2016 that Donald Trump's presidency is shining a light on all the darkest corners of our American culture and showing us the work that we need to do.

Our country has been plagued with racism since its birth, infecting our institutions with strains of systemic racism and prejudice. America is waking up to the heartbreaking deaths of African-Americans like George Floyd and so many others, by the very governmental body we employ to protect us. Communities of color remind us all that this is nothing new, but the ease of filming these tragic events and distributing them globally is.

Democrats believe in true equality, and therefore we have a duty to continue the work that unifies all of us, regardless of skin color, gender, age, physical capability, religion or sexual orientation. We must push for a government that does more than provide lip service to this most basic idea of human rights.

Out of the dark comes the light. Let us all be lifted by the amazing work Democrats have been doing in these times as we come to terms with our past and work together for a better future where people can feel safe from the police in their own neighborhoods and where economic repression no longer denies individuals the opportunities we believe should exist for all in America.

We can do this. Together. - Tracy Pratt, Chair, Manatee County Democratic Party



**Manatee County Democratic
Executive Committee**

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#ManateeTogether

Vote By Mail Sign up TODAY at votemanatee.com

Mail your ballot or drop it off at any of these early voting locations.

- Palmetto Library
- Rocky Bluff Library
- Lakewood Ranch Town Hall
- Supervisor of Elections Office
- Manatee County Utilities Administration Offices



Mele Champions Environmental Concerns in House Race



Andy Mele's mantra, *The Environment IS the Economy*, is the reason he is on course to capture the state House seat in District 71. Mele, former executive director of Suncoast Waterkeeper, is challenging Rep. Will Robinson (R) in District 71, which encompasses Manatee County and Suncoast communities.

"The environment and economy is the core issue, particularly in Florida," said Mele in an interview. On his website, Mele explains, "As the environment is degraded by radical Republican excesses, the state's economy becomes more and more vulnerable. We're in

a total water crisis. The red tide devastated our economy and for two years the legislature did nothing. It's incomprehensible. All those people in Tallahassee, and there's not an environmentalist among them."

Mele cited mining and agriculture companies that poison and deplete the aquifer as well as municipalities that permit untreated stormwater and sewage to flow into the waterways as threats to the environment. When he gets to Tallahassee, Mele wants to create an environmental caucus in the legislature and write bills to prevent further environmental degradation. "I'm fed up with the legislature," said Mele. "I'm not going to play footsie with the Republicans when I get to Tallahassee."

Mele is more than a one-issue candidate. As District 71's representative, he'll push for common sense firearm laws and regulations. "I have a comprehensive plan that includes licensing, training, insurance, background checks and closing loopholes. I don't see any reason for assault weapons." He advocates reform among Florida's law enforcement. "When you talk about Black Lives Matter, you have to talk gun control. I want to have that conversation."

Mele seeks repeal of the Bert Harris Act, which strips counties of home rule, and funding for "Roads to Nowhere," three toll highways through Central Florida. He would end the system of charter school vouchers and support public schools, fight for Medicaid expansion, raise corporate taxes, and raise the state's minimum wage.

"The Environment IS the Economy."

Why run for the legislature? "I believe it's not enough to bang on the gates of the castle. If you want change, you have to be inside the castle. It's my time to stand up for common sense and a civil society built on respect."

Mele faces a challenge from a well-funded, corporately-connected incumbent. He needs broad-based support. Check out Andy Mele's environment work at his website, <https://andymeleforflhouse.com/>. On the website, you can donate to Mele's campaign and volunteer. Follow his campaign and share his concerns on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/andy.mele.3>. - Wil Clapper

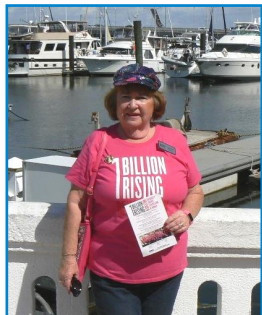
THINK GREEN VOTE BLUE Democratic Environmental CAUCUS OF FLORIDA

Breaking News! Andy Mele has just been endorsed by the Democratic Environmental Caucus of Florida (DECF)! DECF has an extensive environmental report card for each legislator. Mele's opponent, Wil Robinson, received a "D" grade for 2019-2020. His Republican predecessor received an "F." DECF has also been instrumental in ensuring that every open Florida House of Representatives seat has a Democratic candidate. Learn more at environmentalcaucus.com.

Building Neighborhood Democratic Connections – the Heart of the Party



*Leslie Harrell
Neighborhood
Canvassing*



*Kathy Eckert
(Precinct 123)*



*Sybille Schellack
(Precinct 121)*

Research has shown over and over that the most effective political organizing is done locally. Building grassroots support one-on-one works because voters are more apt to be persuaded by someone who has a personal connection. The strategy worked for Barack Obama twice and now Democrats across the nation are embracing it.

Manatee County Democrats are building a solid structure with Area Coordinators, Precinct Captains and neighborhood volunteers. Volunteers can reach out in their own neighborhood or “adopt” a predominantly Democratic area in need of more help.

Precinct Development Coordinators Deb Pierce and Bob Fine welcome anyone who wants to help build community among Democrats on their block, in their neighborhood or in their voting precinct. “In organizing, we have to go where our voters are. The voters are in their neighborhoods and in their communities – and that’s the precincts. Come join our team and make a difference for democracy!” says Deb Pierce.

To find out how you can get involved, submit your interests on the volunteer form at manateecountydemocrats.com or reach Bob and Deb at deb Pierce720@gmail.com or bobfine@ameritech.net.
- Deb Pierce and Bob Fine



*Luther Wilkins
(Precinct 213)
Dan Coppinger
(Areas 1&2) and
Betty Rhodes*



*Megan Martin & helpers
(Precinct 517)*



*Deb Pierce and Bob Fine
(Precinct Coordinators)*



*Bil Bowdish
Precinct Area Leader*



*Mike Kennedy and helpers
(Precinct 221)*



Area 1 Team



*Peggy Klimek, Brenda Russell,
Collette Mason (Precinct 523)*

Brown Offers a 'Breath of Fresh Air' for County Commissioners

Dominique Brown promises to bring a different perspective and voice to the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners. The Manatee County native and attorney is running for the District 1 seat on the seven-member board.

"I'll bring a breath of fresh air," she related in a recent conversation. "Look at the commission; it's not representative of Manatee County. There's one person of color. There aren't any millennials. I want to change that. Younger people have to have a seat on the Board to give everyone a voice."

Brown, who is a criminal defense and veteran's affairs attorney with an office in Bradenton, stressed that she is not a career politician. "I don't have a political agenda. My attributes are different."

Out of high school at age 17, she joined the Air Force and spent 12 years serving, including a combat tour in Afghanistan. Brown holds two criminal justice degrees from Florida A&M University. When she graduated from North Carolina Central University law school she became a prosecutor in North Carolina.

She returned to Manatee County and currently lives in Palmetto with her two sons. Brown's focus includes traffic and infrastructure issues, affordable housing, employment opportunities, the environment, diversity and inclusion in local politics. Learn more [here](#). - Wil Clapper



Bridget Mendel for Manatee County School Board District 1



Bridget has been a long time teacher and pro public school activist working tirelessly to protect parent's rights and to bring an end to high stakes assessments and excessive computer based instruction. Our most vulnerable students are at risk and more needs to be done to provide all children with a developmentally appropriate free public education.

Her goal is to end the fraud and corruption in Manatee public schools as substantiated by the Florida Department of Education. Bridget advocates stopping the funding for legal defense of our Superintendent and redirecting those funds back into our classrooms. Learn more at bridget4manatee.com.

School Board members represent five districts in Manatee County. They will be elected in a non-partisan county-wide vote during the Primary Election on August 18. Mendel faces one opponent, however districts that have more than two candidates may go to a runoff in the General Election on November 3 if no candidate gets more than 50% of the vote.

August 18 Primary Important for State House District 70

*Florida House of Representatives District 70 covers parts of Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota Counties. Four qualified Democratic candidates for this seat will be on the August 18 Primary ballot: **Keisha Bell, Michelle Grimsley, Mark Oliver and Michele Rayner**. Learn more and get contact information for each candidate at manateecountydemocrats.com/candidates. Scroll to the bottom of the web page for a District 70 map.*