



**Manatee County
Democratic Party**

Manatee Matters

March 6, 2023 Newsletter

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Newsletters**

Gala Reconnects Manatee Democrats

By Diana Hines – The **Manatee County Democratic Gala** is the Manatee County Democratic Party's largest fundraiser of the year. The evening provides an opportunity for Democrats to mobilize, get together with like-minded people, share values, strategize and become involved leading to the 2024 elections.

The event will include a greeting from MCDP Chair Evelyn Almodóvar, a song performance by the West Coast Black Theatre Troupe, an online and live auction, and a keynote speaker, who will soon be announced. Previous keynote speakers included Val Demings and Charlie Crist.



Recipients will be named for the John Lewis Memorial Award and the William McGrath Memorial Award. The John Lewis award honors the late U.S. Representative from Georgia who dedicated his life to the pursuit of civil rights. The William McGrath award honors the volunteer's spirit of community outreach and his commitment to registering Democratic voters throughout the county. The awards are presented to the groups or individuals who best exemplify the work of Lewis and McGrath.

The MCDP does not receive monetary support from the state or national Democratic parties; it is a totally self-funded, non-profit organization. The Gala, then, provides nearly all the funds necessary to support Manatee Dems operations.

Looking toward the party's activities for 2024, Gala Chair Robin Sathan said, "Of course electing Democrats is our vision. We need great candidates." Proceeds from the Gala help support the recruitment and funding of candidates in Manatee County.

To encourage early registration, Gala organizers offer a discount and confirmed seat registration. Tickets purchased by March 18th are \$110/individual, \$75/student, \$1,050/table of 10. Tickets after March 18th are \$120/individual, \$75/student, \$1,150/table of 10. Seating is limited to 300 this year. The Gala welcomes contributions or auction bids from individuals who cannot attend the event.

Manatee County Democratic Gala

April 15, 6 p.m., at Grove ballroom, 10670 Boardwalk Loop & Main Street, Lakewood Ranch.

For more information, contact Robin Sathan, mcdpgala@gmail.com 908-553-5672.

Florida Legislative Session Begins March 7

The Manatee County Democratic Party encourages all citizens to pay close attention to bills that the Republican-controlled state legislature is considering this year.



The non-partisan Florida League of Women Voters anticipates upwards of 3,500 bills will be filed by March 7, the starting date of the legislative session. Here are just a few of them. The MCDP urges everyone to learn about these bills by reading the analyses on myfloridahouse.gov and flsenate.gov. Then contact your state legislators; click [here](#) to see how. Stand up and speak out on what you support and what you oppose.

- [HB 1](#) – Would divert taxpayer money from public schools to individual persons to pay for private and parochial schools. It is estimated the bill will cost \$4 billion a year. This bill is a priority of House Speaker Paul Renner (R-Palm Coast) and cosponsored by Rep. Will Robinson (R-Bradenton).
- [HJR 129](#) – Proposes amending the Florida Constitution to increase the percentage of elector votes required to approve revisions from 60 percent to 66.67 percent. This will make it even more difficult for voters to pass public initiatives.
- [HJR 131](#) – Proposes amending the Florida Constitution to allow for the recall of county officers and commissioners.
- [SJR 122](#) – Proposes amending the Florida Constitution to reduce the three percent cap on property taxes for homesteaded property to two percent. While the bill would save homeowners money, it is estimated that the change could cut local-government revenues statewide by about \$150 million a year and could require cuts in services or lead to more reliance on taxes from non-homesteaded properties.
- [HB 543](#) – Allows people to carry a concealed weapon without completing a gun safety course, providing fingerprints, undergoing an additional background check for a permit or paying a permitting fee.
- [SJR 94](#) – Proposes amending the Florida Constitution to make school board elections partisan. Sen. Joe Gruters (R-Sarasota) filed this same bill last year but it did not pass.
- [HB 477](#) – Term limits for school board members would be changed from a 12-year limit to an eight-year limit. Lawmakers imposed the 12-year limit just last year. Sen. Gruters has filed an identical proposal (SJR 94) in the Senate.
- [HB 225](#) – Would put the governor in charge of appointing all the members of the governing board of the Florida High School Athletic Association, a private nonprofit organization that oversees sports for grades six through 12 in public schools. A House committee advanced the bill after the association's decision to remove questions about students' menstrual histories from high school sports physicals.
- No abortion bill has been filed — but don't rule it out. House Speaker Paul Renner (R-Palm Coast) said that Republicans are "working toward it."

Manatee Pride Festival

Manatee LGBTQ+ Dems Lead Voter Registration



Manatee
Pride

By Diana Hines - The **Manatee LGBTQ+ Democratic Caucus** will have a strong presence at the Manatee Pride Festival, Saturday, March 11, noon to 5 p.m., at the Riverwalk Pavilion & Event area, 452 3rd Avenue West, Bradenton.

Logo design by Craig Byers.

LGBTQ+ Caucus and Manatee Democratic Party volunteers will conduct voter registration activities during the festival. In addition, caucus members will inform guests about current issues in education, business and government and relate these issues to the importance of voting. Voter registration volunteers may register [here](#).

The Manatee LGBTQ+ Caucus will dedicate its Manatee Pride proceeds to the ALSO Youth Organization. ALSO is a 501(c)(3) non-profit Florida corporation providing advocacy, leadership, support and outreach for LGBTQ+ youth in Manatee and Sarasota counties.

Anyone wishing to be involved with Pride festivals or volunteering with ALSO will find information [here](#).

The Pride Festival will showcase live entertainment, music, food, refreshments, health checks and more. Entertainment will be provided by: Diversity Voices of Sarasota, an LGBTQ+ choir; Momma Ashley Rose of the Rose Dynasty Foundation, whose mission is to provide a family friendly atmosphere; Brittany Zeff & Crew, a local rock band; Hovercar, a rock n' roll duo from the Tampa Bay area.

Logo design by Craig Byers.

Plan to Abolish AMI Cities' Governance Thwarted

By Nancy Hughes – State Rep. Will Robinson (R-Bradenton) has backed down on his threat to introduce legislation this session to abolish the city commissions of Anna Maria, Holmes Beach and Bradenton Beach and then create a new consolidated island government.



The Manatee County Democratic Party thanks everyone who contacted his office to voice outrage over this attack on home rule.

Robinson's plan was cooked up without consulting any of the city leaders or citizens of Manatee County.

But the attack on home rule isn't over. Robinson has introduced legislation ([HB 947](#)) that would preempt the ability of Holmes Beach to regulate construction in the city. Robinson explained his proposed bill “would allow the county, without approval from Holmes Beach, to build a garage, and Manatee County could issue that permit itself.” On February 28, the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners voted to support the bill.

The Florida legislature is considering other bills to grab control from local government.

[SB 102, the Live Local Act](#), would pre-empt local government rules on zoning, density and building height for certain multi-family rental developments in commercial and mixed-use areas to incentivize private investment in affordable housing.

[SB 1240/HB 1197](#) preempts local governments from regulating wetlands, water quality, pollution control, “pollutant discharge prevention or removal” and more. It also repeals state law that created land management review teams under water management districts.

[SB 942/HB 941](#) would do away with bans by local governments and housing authorities on specific kinds of dogs, including Miami's ban on pit bulls that dates back to 1990.

[HB 41](#) would prohibit local initiatives and referendums to address land development, one of the few remaining tools for residents to weigh in on community planning.

After Two Terms, Tracy Pratt Steps Down



By Diana Hines – Tracy Pratt may have lost a state house race in 2018, but she did not lose her desire to influence Manatee County politics.

Without missing a beat, she took on the role of Manatee County Democratic Party Chair because, as she puts it, “I felt confident that I could build out the Manatee County Democratic Party to increase our presence in the community and be a voice of opposition to anti-democratic movements.”

Her confidence is palpable when she addresses an audience, and her commitment has drawn many Democrats from the shadows to become more politically engaged in solidly “red” Manatee County. After four years, she now has stepped down as chair but the Democratic presence in Manatee County has been elevated because of her leadership.

Her first act as leader was to increase the visibility and effectiveness of the Democratic Party through a five-point plan:

1. **Organization**--Developed committees and caucuses and revised the by-laws.
2. **Fundraising**—Established the Manatee Society for large donors and continued the tradition of an annual gala.
3. **Outreach and Visibility**—Used social media platforms and publicized statements on issues.
4. **Field campaigns**—Expanded field volunteers through collaboration with other groups.
5. **Democratic campaigns**—Recruited candidates and provided training and financial support.

During the last election cycle, voter outreach emerged as one of the most successful pieces of this strategic plan. Through ongoing precinct work and canvassing, volunteers made 20,000 literature drops at residents' doors, sent 32,000 bulk-mailed postcards, phoned 25,000 Democrats and sent 140,000 peer texts, according to Manatee County Democratic Party statisticians.

Further increasing Democrats' presence was the creation of the Communications Committee, which developed a robust and visually appealing website, a bi-monthly newsletter with an impressive open rate and a strong, modern presence on numerous social media platforms. These avenues of visibility allowed for greater circulation of party statements to the press, which were quoted in both local and national news.

To expand the party's reach into the community, Pratt established an array of caucuses and committees. Among these are the Hispanic and environmental caucuses, as well as committees for candidate support, diversity and inclusion, legislative action and finance.

Newly elected Democratic Party Chair, Evelyn Almodóvar asserts, "Tracy worked hard to grow the party financially and structurally." Almodóvar adds, "My hope is to build upon that established foundation by supporting these efforts that we already know are working; no need to reinvent the wheel."

Picking up the baton, Almodóvar will continue Pratt's work in building the volunteer base: "I know there are many young professionals upset about the decisions our current conservative local leaders are making, and they want to get involved."

Engaging volunteers and running candidates is unrelenting work. Yet Pratt maintains: "Because of our deep red demographics, it makes the work we do as an oppositional voice that much more important."

Fried Wins State Democratic Chair

Manatee County State Committeewoman Florence Shelton-Clark and State Committeeman Rev. James Golden stand with Florida Democratic Party Chair Nikki Fried. Fried was elected with 52 percent of the vote to fill the chair's vacancy. She defeated former state senator Annette Taddeo, Broward County Democratic Party chair Rick Hoye and activist Carolina Ampudia. Fried was unsuccessful in a bid for the Democratic nomination for governor last year. She served as Florida Commissioner of Agriculture in Gov. DeSantis's first administration and was the only elected Democrat holding a state office.



Events Roundup

March 7 – Longboat Key Dems to Host Legal Access Inequality Talk

The **Longboat Key Democratic Club** presents "What it Means to Be a Low-Income Person Facing the Civil Legal System" on Tuesday, March 7, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Sarasota Yacht Club, 1100 John Ringling Boulevard, Sarasota. Presenters are CEO of Legal Aid of Manasota Linda Harradine and Larry Eger, president of Legal Aid



of Manasota. Tickets are \$45 including lunch. Non-members are welcome. Please register at www.lbkdemocrats.com/events.

The LBK Democratic Club meets the first Tuesday of the month, November through April. For more information, contact Nancy Greenhouse, nancygreenhouse1@gmail.com, 617-838-7398 or www.lbkdemocrats.com.



March 8 – Progressive Caucus Schedules Zoom Meeting

The **Manatee Democratic Progressive Caucus** will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, March 8, 6 p.m. To gain the link to the meeting, email vrain1964@gmail.com before Tuesday, March 7. Topics for the meeting include status of ArtsForHousing.org; planning for first applications for housing and the screening/coaching process and membership update.

March 9 – Progressive Soiree Gathers in Village of the Arts

The **Manatee Progressive Soiree Group** will gather in person at Village Voices, 1010 10 Avenue West, Bradenton, Wednesday, March 9 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Donna Lee is the coordinator.



March 16 – Environmental Caucus Addresses Red Tide Issue

Join the **Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus** on March 9, 7 p.m., to hear Sandy Gilbert, chair and CEO of the not-for-profit Solutions to Avoid Red Tide, speak on *Our Red Tide and You*. The meeting will be at Manatee Democratic Headquarters, 435 Cortez Road West, Bradenton. For more information or to get on the caucus mailing list, contact [Ruth Lawler](#) or [Cyndy Rosso](#), Co-Chairs.

March 19 – Sarasota Dems to Host Kennedy-King Dinner

The **2023 Kennedy-King Dinner** is scheduled for Sunday, March 19, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Sarasota. The event is a major fundraiser for the Sarasota Democratic Party.



The keynote speaker will be Congressman Maxwell Frost, America's first Gen Z member of Congress. Special guest Florida Rep. Anna Eskamani will also join the discussion.

For more information, contact: 941-320-8825 or kennedyking@sarasotadems.org. To purchase general tickets, click [here](#). To purchase sponsorships and group tickets, use the form found [here](#).



March 20 – AMI-West Bradenton Dems Host Education Talk

The AMI West Bradenton Democratic Club will present *Saving Public Education-Part 2* during its meeting Monday, March 20, 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the Island Branch Library, 5701 Marina Drive, Holmes Beach.

The featured speaker will be Thomas Edwards, a Sarasota

County school board member. He will continue a dialogue started in January with Scott Hottenstein about saving public education and how to address current challenges to save public education.

Contact Barbara Beckwith, bbeckwith02@gmail.com with questions and to register for the meeting.

March 21, 22 – County Commissioners Host Town Halls

Manatee County Commissioners George Kruse and Amanda Ballard will host Town Halls this month at Manatee Public Libraries. The events allow Manatee County residents to discuss and ask questions on topics related to the county.



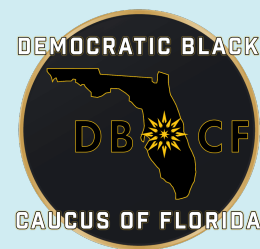
Commissioner Ballard Town Hall is March 21 at the Palmetto Branch Library, 923 6th Street West, Palmetto, 7 to 8:30 p.m. and **Commissioner Kruse Town Hall** will be March 22 at the Rocky Bluff Branch Library, 6750 US-301, Ellenton, 6 to 8 p.m.

April 16 – Earth Day Picnic Features Clean Water Presentation

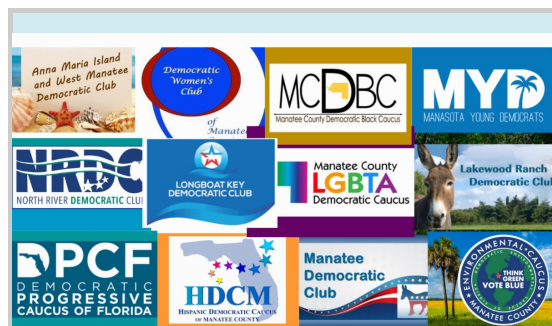
The **Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus** will host an Earth Day picnic at GT Bray Park, Bradenton on April 16. Featured speaker will be a representative of FloridaRightToCleanWater.org.



May 19 – State Black Caucus Schedules Convention and Gala

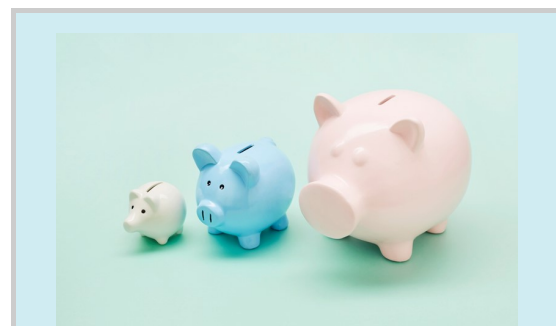


Registration is open for the Democratic Black Caucus of Florida's 40th Annual Conference and Gala, *Fight for Our Future*, May 19 to 21, at the Rosen Center Hotel, Orlando. For registration and information, contact treasurerdbcf@gmail.com, registrationdbcf@gmail.com or call 850-259-4735.



Get involved! Check out the many area Democratic Clubs and Caucuses. Meet like-minded people at fun events!

[Click for Events List](#)



*The Manatee County Democratic Party is a 100% **volunteer organization**. All contributions of any size are appreciated.*

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435 Cortez Road West
Bradenton, Florida 34207
(941) 301-4336



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