

May 2018



MANATEE MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY



Manatee County Democratic
Executive Committee

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Office Hours:
10 am to 2 pm weekdays

*Democratic neighborhood
get-togethers, volunteer
recruitment and voter
registration canvassing are
happening around the
county. Look for them in
the events calendar on our
website.*

CALENDAR

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

Manatee County Democrats Smash Attendance Records at Annual Dinner

Enthusiasm and optimism abounded at the Manatee County Democrats Annual Dinner and Silent Auction among a sell-out crowd at the Polo Grill on April 20. Guest speakers included former Miami Beach Mayor and Florida gubernatorial candidate Philip Levine as participating sponsor and Florida Democratic Chair Terrie Rizzo. Florida House District 71 candidate Tracy Pratt and Florida House District 73 candidate Liv Coleman introduced keynote address speaker, former Maryland governor and 2016 presidential candidate Martin O'Malley. O'Malley has launched a new political organization, "Win Back your State" to help democratic candidates across the country.



Chair Sheryl Wilson and Event Chair Lucy Lapedes, along with a group of dedicated volunteers, ensured the event was not only fun and inspiring, but also the most successful Manatee County Annual Democratic Dinner yet. For more commentary by Herald Tribune Editor Zac Anderson:

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/news/20180420/democrats-envision-blue-wave-in-manatee>

The work continues. Financial contributions are still needed to ensure the most effective operations and voter outreach. Contributions can be made at <https://manateecountydemocrats.com/donate>.



Candidates' Corner—Florida House District 70

Vito Sheeley, Keisha Bell and incumbent Wengay Newton are all Democratic candidates running in Florida House of Representatives District 70 . We spoke with each to learn their views on key issues and what they have to offer.



Wengay Newton, Florida District 70 Representative (Incumbent)

Representative Wengay “Newt” Newton served on the St. Petersburg City Council for eight years beginning in 2007 and was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in November 2016. Newton reminds voters, “I’m a product of the environment - born and raised in the district.”

When asked what the most important issues in District 70 are, he replied, “Affordable housing and gentrification.” Newton said his signature achievement of his first term was getting full \$3.9 million in funding returned to The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters program (HIPPPY) this session, allowing reinstatement of 100 jobs that were lost in the program.

In his first session he co-sponsored a bill that was passed into law creating a task force on affordable housing. Other accomplishments include securing \$1.5 million in funding to improve storm drains in the Rubonia community, bringing back \$275,000 in appropriations for the Sarasota YMCA, and attaining \$365,000 to renovate the facilities of the historic Happy Workers Learning Center in St. Petersburg.

Learn more about Representative Wengay M. Newton at: <http://www.newthd70.com/>

Keisha Bell

Keisha Bell’s motivation for running is to propose and pass better legislation and get us going in the right direction. “I feel that with my extensive educational background and a track record of helping people, I’m capable of offering strong representation, and that’s what District 70 needs,” said Bell.

When asked about the most important issue in District 70, Bell said, “In my house education is a high priority, so if I had to choose, funding for public education would be #1”. She asserts that there are multiple critical issues and that they often intersect each other. For example, better education not only leads to better health care, better education is sustained with affordable health care. Also, important family values are supported by every hard-working person’s right to a living wage.



Bell describes herself as diverse, well educated, professional and personable. With her community background and analytical skill set, she feels she is someone who is passionate and educated about the issues who can write legislation. She also notes that she mentors youth, and views herself as a public servant (not a politician) looking to get things done.

Learn more about Keisha Bell at: <https://votekeishabell.com/>

Florida House District 70 is geographically a long, narrow strip spanning four counties (Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee and Sarasota). It covers the southern tip of St. Petersburg, part of Palmetto, downtown Bradenton, and part of downtown Sarasota.

Candidates' Corner—Florida House District 70 (Continued)

Vito Sheeley

Vito Sheeley is a former district aid to U.S. Representatives Kathy Castor and Charlie Crist. Sheeley has been actively doing outreach in the District and speaking with constituents. He states it is time for a change. His passion is his community and he wants to help the people who have helped him. He feels this work is his calling.

He believes the two most important issues in District 70 are education and jobs. Sheeley said we have a system that's broken and needs to be fixed, stating “We need to increase funding for public education, pay teachers what they're worth and keep them in the state. Secondly, we need quality, good paying jobs, and a minimum wage increase.”

Sheeley brings to the table the endorsement of public officials, including St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman and City Council Chair Lisa Wheeler-Bowman, and Pinellas County Commission Chair Ken Welch. He emphasized, “I have a one-on-one connection with my community, having spoken and worked with constituents, educators, pastors, police chiefs and sheriffs.”

Learn more about Vito Sheeley at: <https://www.facebook.com/VitoSheeleyFL/>



Senator Nelson Meets With Manatee and Sarasota Democratic Parties

Senator Bill Nelson addressed a joint meeting of Manatee/Sarasota Democratic volunteers in April, where he thanked us and said that our efforts will be important in helping him win this year. He emphasized that the most effective communications with voters are face-to-face, and he reflected on election year 2000 where he first won by speaking to voters at every house in his district, saying “You can learn a lot about life and people appreciate it.” He said we must go out and talk about the issues, start conversations and get voters “out of their box.”

Nelson carried both Manatee and Sarasota Counties in 2016. He noted that the Republicans usually win mid-term and lose general elections, implying that we can win both this time. Nelson said he decided to run again because of the shape this country is in. As a member of the Armed Services Committee and ranking member of a subcommittee with jurisdiction over information warfare, it is clear to him that the U.S. outperforms Russia militarily, but that Putin is winning the cyber war. He also reminded us how electing a Democratic governor and turning over some legislative seats can positively affect the appointment of judges in Florida.

Nelson reiterated his priorities that can be successful if Democrats win back Congress:

- Protect the public school system which is the “bedrock of this country”
- Reverse Florida’s policy of not accepting Medicaid dollars that are there
- Allow no oil rigs off our coasts
- Expand Everglades restoration
- Address climate change



SHINE THE LIGHT

On February 14, 2018, an individual with an AR-15 assault weapon walked through the doors of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School (MSD) in Parkland, Florida and forever changed the lives of the students, staff, and families of this school and community. In the days and weeks following, we have watched in awe, admiration and appreciation as the students of MSD have taken the lead in delivering the message that this violence must end.

Sawyer Garrett and Andrea Peña of the MSD Drama and Music departments composed the music and lyrics of “Shine the Light.” It was performed at the Manatee County Democratic Annual Dinner by students from the Manatee School of the Arts (pictured here).



We salute all these amazing young people as they continue to remind us “together we can shine the light.” If you want to contribute to their work in providing support for the impacted families and in promoting healing through mental health awareness and the arts, please visit <http://www.shineMSD.org>.

Manatee/Sarasota Democratic Black Caucus Hosts Gubernatorial Candidate Andrew Gillum

The Manatee/Sarasota Democratic Black Caucus hosted a successful fundraising event for gubernatorial candidate Andrew Gillum at the River Strand Golf and Country Club in March. Gillum addressed the packed room with his vision for Florida. He noted his court fight against the NRA and successful youth programs as Mayor of Tallahassee, and expressed his commitment to public education funding, high speed rail and environmental protection. He reminded the group that a coalition including people of color will be vital for high voter turnout needed by Democratic candidates throughout Florida.



Gillum returned to the Tampa area in April, energizing a crowd of over 500 at the Hillsborough County Democrats “Spring Fling.”

Manatee Progressives Join the Democratic Progressive Caucus of Florida

Congratulations to the Manatee Democratic Progressive Caucus (MDPC) for receiving certification last month from the Florida Democratic Party. MDPC has been organizing and working on progressive ideals with the primary goal of electing progressive Democrats in Florida. Their current initiatives include a candidate forum in June, a candidate questionnaire, voter registration, a solar co-op, supporting restoration of voting rights and supporting Senator Bill Nelson’s campaign.

The caucus meets the second Wednesday of every month at 7 pm at Manatee County Democratic headquarters at 435 Cortez Road West. MDPC invites all Democrats to join them at their meetings and on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/ManateeProDems/>

