

May 2019



MANATEE MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY



**11am - 2 pm
Pre-Independence Day
Cookout**

sponsored by the
Manatee County
Democratic Party

Pride Park
Splash Pad Area
815 63rd Avenue East
Bradenton

**Free Bar-B-Q!
Family Activities!**

**Manatee County Democratic
Executive Committee**

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Note from the Chair

The two years between each election cycle moves quickly, and with both our state and federal governments dominated by Republican control sometimes it feels like 2020 can't come fast enough! But the stakes are high - higher than any other election in modern history. Perhaps the highest in the history of the United States. Between now and the election, every single day counts and we need your support!



Across our country, Democrats have risen to the challenge. Volunteerism has allowed us to expand our organization and increase voter turnout. Contact our headquarters if you want to join our field team or want to reach out to the Democrats on your street!

Increasing donations have allowed us to expand our outreach and visibility in our community and at the state and national level. Thanks to our newly established donor program, Manatee Society, we will be able to reach further than we have before - including building out our voter outreach programs and expanding our social media communications. Details are on Page 3.

Democrats are gathering in Orlando June 6 to 9 for the Leadership Blue Conference. There will be plenty of opportunities to hear from our leadership, get trained and get involved. Come for the whole conference or for the day. We would love to see you there! To register for the conference, visit floridadems.org. Contact headquarters for more info if you plan to attend the gala.



I would like to congratulate our newly formed Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus and North River Democratic Club. Congrats also to our new Vice-Chair, Matt Lepinski. He is a fantastic addition to our board and we are grateful for the technological and campaign expertise he will bring!

Annual Manatee County Democratic Gala Gets Even Better



It was a beautiful clear evening as the Manatee County Democratic Gala team capped months of work by welcoming guests. Gala Chair Lucy Lapidus and Program Director Sheryl Wilson put their years of experience to work with last-minute checks. Guests perused a fabulous silent auction and enjoyed social hour with music by Steel Pan Jam. The Grove staff helped make it a wonderful evening in their newly-renovated ballroom. The program kicked off with “An American Trilogy” by saxophonist Bill Bowdish. Auctioneer “Gala Gal” Jenelle Taylor ran a rousing live auction made possible by generous donors.

And if all that weren’t good enough, the podium sizzled with Democratic enthusiasm. Chair Tracy Pratt welcomed all and introduced the Manatee Society, a new fundraising initiative to help our party stay strong and get Democrats elected.

Christine Diamond, Senior Advisor of the Florida Democratic Party, extended a greeting from Chair Terri Rizzo. The message from FDP: It’s about taking back our country and the path to the White House runs straight through Florida. Gaining numbers in the State Legislature is also key if you are paying attention to what is going on in Tallahassee. FDP says we can make up the gap in 2020 but is not taking anything for granted.

Sheryl Wilson, Immediate Past Chair and Gala Program Director, welcomed the evening’s trilogy of county, state and national dignitaries. She originally coined *Manatee Matters*, which has taken hold and been brought full cycle with *Manatee Momentum*.

Michael Blake, Vice Chair of the Democratic National Committee, arrived with his mother, Hilary, and completely captivated the audience with his first words. His message from the DNC: 2020 is not just presidential, but up and down the ticket. Blake hit on a variety of important Democratic issues, including health care, which he views as a moral thing.

He congratulated Florida for having seven seats flipped by women in 2018, passing Amendment 4 and having 10% more Democratic turnout. He praised Manatee as one of the top-performing Get Out the Vote counties in Florida.

Blake said we need to stop ceding the conversation to the Republican Party. He asked how they can claim to be the party of morality. Will we be silent in this moment or will we fight for people as Democrats? He said we must have a united Democratic Party. He conceded that in 2016 Democrats were out-positioning each other, but we could be just being prepared for something bigger. “It’s time to be silent no more!”



Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus Takes Action

Members of the Manatee County Democratic Black Caucus participated in a 2019 Lobby Day in Tallahassee to meet with legislators. High on the group's agenda was opposition to bills in process that would undermine Amendment 4 restoration of voting rights for returning citizens. The group supported positions of the Florida Restoration of Rights Coalition and ACLU of Florida. They also lobbied for issues of importance for the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), where focus was on incarceration of minors in adult prisons and other issues of criminal justice reform. For more information on SPLC, go to www.splcenter.org/

Black Caucus members met with legislators and aides from the offices of Rep. Wengay Newton, Rep. Margaret Good, Rep. Dianne Hart, Sen. Joe Gruters, Rep. Bush, Sen. Galvano and Sen. Darryl Rousen. They also met with Desmond Meade and Manatee County Commissioner Reggie Bellamy. The group agreed it was very exciting, educational, informative and empowering. As his constituents, the Democratic Black Caucus expressed kudos to Representative Newton, who rolled out the red carpet for them.

Several weeks later the Manatee/Sarasota Democratic Black Caucus officially split into two counties. The move was seen as a way to be

more proactive and attract more members. New officers of the Manatee Democratic Black Caucus are Susie Copeland - President (reelected), Brian Atkins - Vice President (reelected), Florence Shelton-Clark - Second Vice President, Katrina Colvin - Secretary (reelected) and Michele Grimsley - Treasurer.



**Two new ways to give.
Help elect Democrats at all levels of government.**

\$20.20 for 2020! Make a recurring monthly donation of \$20.20 online at ManateeCountyDemocrats.com/donate. Make a difference!



Introducing the Manatee Society. Recognizing individuals who provide significant monetary support. Three to four special events during the year with guest speakers and discussions. Sky: Over \$5,000, Cobalt: Up to \$5,000, Sapphire: Up to \$2,500 Turquoise: Min. \$1,000, Blue level min. \$500 reserved for those under age 35. For more info, contact Tracy Pratt at tracy.mcdp@gmail.com or Robin Sathan at ManateeDemPrecinct521@gmail.com. Join today!

Florida 2019 Legislative Wrap-Up

The Florida Legislature wrapped up its nine-week session on May 4, enacting laws that could profoundly affect the lives of many Floridians. Votes were often along party lines, with Democrats holding only 42% of the Senate and 38% of the House. As of this newsletter issue, some Governor vetoes may be forthcoming. A summary of key issues:

Anti-Voter Initiatives

1). Amendment 4 — the initiative that restored the eligibility to vote to 1.4 million Floridians — was passed last November with 65% of Floridians in favor. The Legislature has severely limited Amendment 4 by expanding the requirements for returning citizens to include paying back all court fees and costs even if they were not part of the person's sentence. **2).** Threatened by Amendment 4 and other citizen-led petition drives, the Republican Legislature also made it even harder for citizen-led constitutional amendments to make it onto the ballot. Barriers have been set up for the process of gathering required petitions and the percentage of votes needed to pass has been increased.



Public School Funding

As part of a broad education bill, \$130 million of the \$22.2 billion school budget was shifted from public to private schools by greatly expanding tax-payer-funded school vouchers. Private (charter) schools don't have the same accountability as public schools. The new law will likely face lawsuits from public school advocates. In 2006 Florida Supreme Court Justice Barbara Pariente wrote that the voucher program violated the State Constitution. However, Pariente and two other justices recently retired, replaced by Gov. Ron DeSantis with three conservative justices who may be willing to soften the stance against private-school funding.



Arming Teachers

Under the guardian program signed into law last year, classroom teachers have been exempt. The new legislation expands the guardian program, allowing all instructors to participate in the program and be armed — with school board approval — if they pass the required 144 hours of training, along with other conditions. The Manatee County School Board has voted 3-2 on a resolution that opposes the arming of Manatee County public school teachers.



Environment

1). While environmental funding is a priority in the 2019-2020 budget, Florida Forever is still underfunded and bills to regulate polluters are mostly non-existent. **2).** Early in the 2019 session, environmentalists tried and failed to get legislation for a fracking ban. **3).** The Legislature passed developer-supported bills that would allow three highway corridors in undeveloped areas in Florida, contributing to urban sprawl and threatening important wetlands, forests, springs and aquifer recharge areas.

Immigration Enforcement

Local and state law enforcement must now check the immigration status of everyone they interact with and detain individuals without probable cause. The law forces local city and county governments to spend their already limited resources on immigration enforcement, which is the job of the federal government. Opponents say this would create a climate of fear, which could drive immigrants to leave the state, having a devastating effect on our economy and workforce.

