

NEWSLETTER OF THE MANATEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Letter from the Chair



The Democratic Party is strong because we seek positive solutions that include everyone and safety nets that are most needed in times such as these. In this issue we bring you a sampling of what you can do now to get Democrats elected and help all our Manatee County neighbors.

This is the perfect time to get on the phone and make a difference. Please email vpb.mcdp@gmail.com to help us reach thousands of Democrats across the county.

First, please know that I wish you and your families are safe and well. In times of crisis we are reminded that elections matter, because this is when we feel the brunt of failed leadership. As we struggle to adapt to social distancing guidelines to keep ourselves and our community safe, we also struggle with the daily news stream of incompetence from state and federal Republican leadership resulting in inadequate, and sometimes dangerous, responses to COVID-19.



Tracy Pratt, Chair
Manatee County
Democratic Party

As we continue to fight for good government, we also recognize the many citizens who are the heroes in this crisis. I want to tip my hat to all the first responders and healthcare workers, to all essential food and service industry workers, delivery drivers and U.S. Postal Service workers. To all the heroes who are working from home while schooling their children, to all the teachers and school staff who switched gears as quickly as possible in order to keep our children learning. When our government fails us, we continue to care for each other.

Personally, I would like to thank all our volunteers who worked very hard to move our operations to the safety of our homes, so that we could continue our very important work of engaging people to vote Democrat. We are still working very hard preparing for upcoming elections. From phone banking to get people registered to Vote By Mail, to assisting candidates with virtual meetings so that they can talk to voters, the Manatee County DEC is still in full swing. What we do is too important to slow down! There are plenty of ways to get involved with our party, and we also encourage you to support local non-partisan non-profits that help the most vulnerable in our community during this time of great need. Stay Safe! - *Tracy Pratt*

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Here are some local, non-partisan services that will welcome your generous donations:

- ◇ Food Bank of Manatee mealsonwheelsplus.org/the-food-bank-of-manatee
- ◇ Healthy Start Manatee hsmanatee.com
- ◇ Our Daily Bread of Bradenton ourdailybreadofbradenton.org
- ◇ SunCoast Blood Bank scbb.org
- ◇ Turning Points (integrated services for the homeless) tpmanatee.org

Gun Control Legislation Fails

First week in March, advocates of gun control in Florida suffered a gut punch. The last standing proposed gun control legislation for the 2020 session withered and died before it reached the Senate floor. According to an NRA newsletter, more than 125 measures involving firearms failed to make it out of legislative committees in the 2020 session.

After months of planning, talking, cajoling and hoping by various gun control groups, Florida Senate President Bill Galvano, a Republican from Bradenton, announced the bill, SB 7028, would not be brought to the Senate floor for debate or a vote.

The measure, which sought to close the so-called gun show loophole, sought to have sellers check the identification of gun buyers to determine if they could legally purchase firearms. Additionally, the measure would have required the buyer to attest that they were not a felon, were not involved in domestic violence nor had a mental illness.



Florida law states a person purchasing a gun from a licensed dealer must undergo a background check. But a background check is not required for private gun sales, such as those made at gun shows.

“The bill was introduced by Mike Lee, a Republican, and Galvano wanted it,” said Ginger McCallum, the legislative lead for the Manatee County chapter of Moms Demand Action. “But it lost traction and result was net zero.”

The bill actually fared better than all the other gun control measures that were introduced in the 2020 session. It made it through a Senate committee but Galvano decided not to bring it to the floor for a vote.

Galvano shepherded the bill through committee, and picked up three Republican votes, which angered Florida’s NRA lobbyist Marion Hammer as well as Donald Trump Jr., according to published reports. Trump Jr. was quoted as calling Galvano a RINO (Republican In Name Only). The bill was allowed to die when House Speaker Jose Oliva, and other Republican leaders, raised objections that it was another chipping away of gun owners’ rights.

McCallum expects the introduction of other background check bills for Florida’s 2021 session. “Nationally, Moms Demand Action is trying to get Congress to pass universal background checks,” she said. “In Florida, our focus continues to be closing the background check loopholes.” - *Will Clapper*

Manatee County Dems Go Virtual



Office operations, canvassing and candidate gatherings are not options right now, but that doesn’t mean the work stops in this critical election year. Manatee County Democrats are hosting candidate meet-and-greets, panel discussions, precinct outreach, club/caucus meetings and committee organizing – all virtually. Look for online events at manateecountydemocrats.com.

New to online meetings? Email John Brackett to set up a short practice with him: jbrackett01@gmail.com.

Data Guru Mike Coleman Challenges Manatee Dems to 50K Votes-By-Mail

Mike Coleman, Campaign Coordinator for the Florida Democratic Party, energized and challenged Manatee Dems in a wide-ranging Saturday morning webinar. The main lesson was simple: Democrats can win when we enlist our voters to Vote By Mail (VBM). Studies have shown that Democratic voters who receive a mailed ballot are nearly twice as likely to cast a vote than those who only choose the “vote in-person” option.

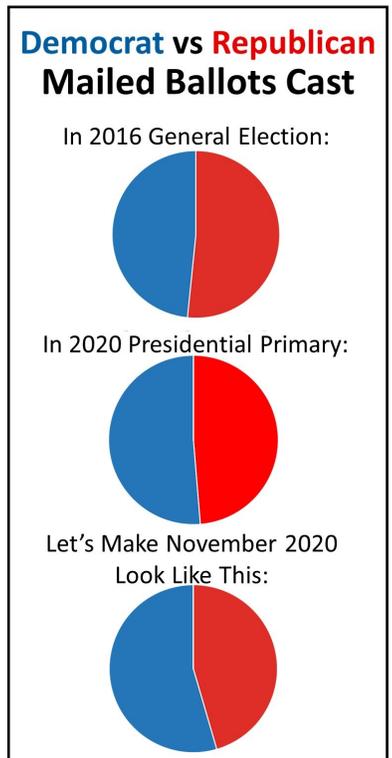
Armed with state-wide statistics going back to 2010, Coleman said the Republican Party recognized early the advantages of VBM and successfully focused their energies on it to lead Democrats by a wide margin. By 2016, the Republican gap narrowed to a mere 52% of all the requested mailed ballots. That year Republicans cast 58,244 more mailed ballots than Democrats and Trump won Florida by 113,000 votes – a razor thin margin considering that Florida now has over 12 million registered voters.

And then in March’s recent Presidential Preference Primary, Florida Democrats overtook the lead by tipping the scale to 51% of the mailed ballots. Democrats now have 113,000 more voters enrolled in VBM than Republicans. Coleman believes that Florida Democrats will need to go further and get at least 54% of all mailed ballots to turn the state blue.

What does that mean for Manatee County? Currently about 29,000 of Manatee County’s 80,000 Democrats are enrolled in VBM. Coleman challenged Manatee Dems to increase the Party’s participation in VBM to 50,000 by the August primaries. *And, we have a plan for that!*

It’s called the Virtual Phone Bank (VPB). The Manatee County Democratic Party has assembled volunteers (and need many more) who call fellow Democrats asking them to sign up for Vote by Mail. It can be done at home with a script and training provided. The message is simple: Signing up for VBM is no-cost insurance and ensures voting under any circumstance. Phone bankers who participated in Coleman’s webinar as panelists concurred that many people are happy to receive the call. Susie Copeland, president of the Black Caucus and an active phone banker, relayed that calling is also an opportunity to lend a caring ear, listening and offering, when possible, information on where to get help during the COVID-19 shutdown and recovery.

To volunteer for the phone bank, contact Team VPB at vpb.mcdp@gmail.com. For a recording of the webinar, contact Bob McCaa at vr.manateedems@gmail.com.
–Bob McCaa, Amy Palmer



When talking to friends, neighbors or people on your phone bank calls, here is some helpful information you can pass on, if requested.

- ⇒ Text or phone 211: free referrals to community resources 24 hours/day, 7 days/week
- ⇒ Employment: [covid19.floridajobs.org](https://www.covid19.floridajobs.org) FedEx offers free printing of unemployment forms and free mailing of completed forms.
- ⇒ Food Bank Of Manatee: 811 23rd Ave E, Bradenton, 941-747-4655
- ⇒ Manatee County Health coronavirus testing: 941-242-6649, [mymanatee.org/departments/public_safety/coronavirus_information](https://www.mymanatee.org/departments/public_safety/coronavirus_information)
- ⇒ Turning Points: 701 17th Ave W, Bradenton, 941-747-1509. One stop shop for housing, food, medical, dental, hygiene

Stay Healthy—Vote By Mail



If you were a Wisconsin voter, would you have gone to the polls on April 7th? Would you have stood in the rain and the snow for hours, the whole time wearing a mask and maintaining a perimeter of six feet? Here in Florida would you vote in person no matter what pandemic, weather or voter suppression tactic comes at you? You don't have to challenge yourself like that if you request a mailed ballot.

As a poll worker for Manatee County, I was automatically signed up for Vote By Mail (VBM). I was not happy about it. I felt I needed to watch my ballot slide through the tabulator. I now realize I was underinformed. VBM is **THE** most flexible voting option citizens have. [Here are your choices:](#)

- **Choice #1.** Complete your VBM ballot in the privacy of your own home with the resources you feel best inform you of the candidates and issues. Sign the outside envelope and mail it early to assure it will arrive before 7:00 pm on Election Day. **You can log onto the Supervisor of Elections' website and confirm your ballot has been received at www.votemanatee.com.**
- **Choice #2..** Drop off your completed and signed VBM ballot in the designated drop box at any of the Early Voting Centers (during their open hours) or at the Supervisor of Elections' office before 7:00 pm on Election Day.
- **Choice #3.** Ignore your VBM ballot and go in person to an Early Voting Center or your voting precinct on Election Day. The individual checking you in via Manatee County's Electronic Poll Book system will note that you were sent a ballot. Their preference is that you bring your VBM ballot with you for surrender, but it's not required. You will not be prevented from voting in person if the Supervisor of Elections' office has not received your VBM ballot.

The post office will not forward your VBM ballot. Call the Supervisor of Elections at 941-741-3820 if you need your ballot sent to an address different than the one on your voter registration record.

VBM successes translate across all demographic groups in achieving higher voter turnout. And it has been shown to be more effective for down-ballot candidates in elections with long ballots. Make your vote count. Don't risk your health or let unforeseen circumstances block your right to vote. **Sign up today!**

– Amy Palmer

Despite their offices being closed due to COVID-19, Agriculture Commissioner Nikki Fried and her team at the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) are working hard on behalf of all Florida residents. They are encouraging buyers, farmers and other producers of Florida grown commodities to connect via a newly created Florida Farm To You commodities list. The list is updated daily and can be filtered by product or county.



Search for Manatee County in the drop-down menu on this page: flfarmtoyou.fdacs.gov/consumers.aspx
One of the suppliers, Gamble Creek Farm in Parrish, has a \$30 box of seasonal veggies for pickup.

Check out the interactive map on the Florida Farm to You home page:
fdacs.gov/Agriculture-Industry/Florida-Farm-To-You