

DWCC

APRIL 2026 NEWSLETTER



DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUB OF MANATEE COUNTY FLORIDA

WWW.DWCCManatee.com

Don Meier was raised on a farm in Illinois and later served in the Peace Corps in Iran from 1966-68. After graduating from Cornell University, he returned in 1973 for another year on an agricultural project near Tehran. After this initial exposure to expat living, he continued working overseas for much of the remainder of his career. He was employed throughout the region in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan on various projects with the UN, U.S. Agency for International Development as well as various non-governmental organizations. In addition, he has visited more than 50 countries. This has allowed him to gain a unique perspective on the culture and politics of many places throughout the world. Don brings a deeply personal perspective shaped by life in Iran—a nation marked by resilience, culture, and decades of upheaval. With the current Iran war creating such upheaval around the world, this is the speaker you won't want to miss.



Don Meier



DWC Luncheon Is April 9, 2026

11:30 AM

Peridia Golf & Country Club

4950 Peridia Blvd E, Bradenton, FL 34203

**Cut-off date for your reservations
and meal choice must be made by**

April 5, 3:00 p.m

**Reservation Information and
Meal Choices Are On The Next Page**

Cost is \$25

President's Corner

When much of the country went to sleep on February 27, few had any idea they would wake up to news that the United States and Israel had carried out airstrikes on Iran. Most members of Congress were reportedly unaware that this action was imminent. Like many people across the country, I am deeply upset by the ongoing bombing campaign against Iran, which has now dragged on for weeks. It feels less like an effort to protect American citizens and more like an attempt to advance geopolitical interests that do not reflect concern for the safety or wellbeing of civilians—either abroad or at home.



Lori Rogge

What angers me most is that sustained violence of this kind predictably fuels rage among extremist organizations, increasing the likelihood of retaliation against innocent people. History shows that revenge often surfaces far from the original conflict, in places with no direct connection at all—such as resorts or public spaces in otherwise peaceful countries. Time and again, it is civilians who suffer, despite having no role in the decisions that led to the violence.

Beyond the human cost, there are numerous additional consequences of this bombing campaign. Iran has threatened to attack any ship passing through the Strait of Hormuz, a move that carries serious global implications. Already, oil prices have risen sharply, driving up fuel costs and placing further strain on ordinary people.

Most of the Republican leaders are backing the president in his decision to start this war, as usual, behaving like puppets. We cannot undo what is done and look forward to ending this warfare. Once the fighting ends, the public must stay informed, speak out, and participate fully in the democratic process to hold leaders accountable for decisions made in our name.

Lori Rogge, President

Democratic Women's Club of Manatee County

PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATION AND MEAL CHOICE FOR THE APRIL 9 DWC MEETING

Email, call, or text Marilyn Baiz for reservations

durf1211@gmail.com

or 734-776-6023

Deadline to register is Sunday, April 5, 3:00 p.m.

1. Marinated grilled chicken with sauteed mushrooms, and Swiss cheese on toasted Hawaiian roll with lettuce, tomato and onion, served with house chips
2. Gluten-free vegetarian lasagna

All meals come with salad, rolls, butter, a non-alcoholic drink, and dessert.

No-shows will be billed

Meet the 2026 Democratic Women's Club of Manatee Annual Marge Kinnan and Shirley Snyder Scholarship Winners

Ella Fish will receive \$ 2,000

Ella attends Manatee High School and has been accepted at Florida State and University of Miami. She is still waiting on Lehigh, Boston, and Wake Forest. She has a GPA of 4.5 and hopes to study industrial engineering. She is seventh in a class of 445 students.

Ella is an outstanding Honor student who has fulfilled advanced placement courses. Throughout her school career she has been very active in sports, theater, clubs and volunteering within the community.

The cost of private colleges, as we all know, is outrageous. She will receive Bright Futures if she attends a college within the state.

Aiden Gitt will receive \$2,000

Aiden also attends Manatee High School and has been accepted at the University of Florida and hopes to study environmental engineering. He has a grade point average of 4.3 and an outstanding SAT of 1440.

Some of the impressive things he wrote in his essay was "education and democracy are closely linked and can even be said to depend on each other for society to effectively function."

His family lost their house on Anna Marie Island with both hurricanes and spent many nights in other people's homes. He deserves this scholarship and his family is indeed proud of all he has accomplished.

Our last two winners are two young women continuing their education.

Samantha Tucker will receive \$1,000

Samantha was a Palmetto High School Advanced International Certificate of Education honors student who graduated in the top 4% of her class. She is attending University of Central Florida and aspires to get her bachelor's in social work, then continue her education in law school, or graduate with an masters of social work.

Samantha lives on campus; her mom is a teacher who has supported her older brother with college expenses and can no longer help her financially. She is on the Dean's List and supports herself with a part-time job.

She has also worked on a Democratic campaign. Samantha deserves our help.

Emilia Rouifed will receive \$1,000

Emilia attended Manatee High School and is now attending State College of Florida hoping to graduate with a Bachelor of Science in nursing and then a Master of Science in nursery midwifery. She will continue her education after two years at State College of Florida. She is maintaining a 3.5 GPA.

Emilia can receive a Pell Grant for \$7,395 per year.

Submitted by Patty Benson



WHAT'S YOUR
SHOE SIZE?
DONATE TODAY!



Manatee County has 800 homeless families and many of the children need Elementary school and we need sneakers for boys/girls size 3-7. These sneakers. Patty Benson is leading the effort to collect sneakers for Prine can be inexpensive shoes from discount stores, but these will have a significant impact on a young person's daily life and confidence. Donations can be brought to the

April meeting and Patty will coordinate delivery to the appropriate recipients. Thank you for your continued generosity and support.

History of the Emancipation Proclamation

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, as the nation approached its third year of bloody civil war. The proclamation declared “that all persons held as slaves” within the rebellious states “are, and henceforward shall be free.”

Despite this expansive wording, the Emancipation Proclamation was limited in many ways. It applied only to states that had seceded from the United States, leaving slavery untouched in the loyal border states. It also expressly exempted parts of the Confederacy (the Southern secessionist states) that had already come under Northern control. Most important, the freedom it promised depended upon Union (United States) military victory.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery in the nation, it captured the hearts and imagination of millions of Americans and fundamentally transformed the character of the war. After January 1, 1863, every advance of federal troops expanded the domain of freedom. Moreover, the Proclamation announced the acceptance of black men into the Union Army and Navy, enabling the liberated to become liberators. By the end of the war, almost 200,000 black soldiers and sailors had fought for the Union and freedom.

From the first days of the Civil War, slaves had acted to secure their own liberty. The Emancipation Proclamation confirmed their insistence that the war for the Union must become a war for

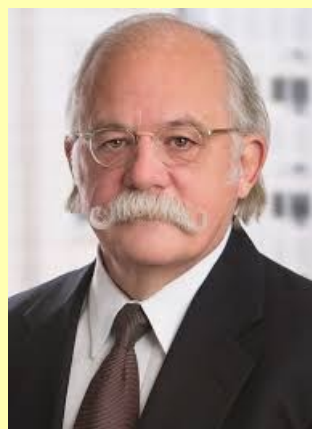
freedom. It added moral force to the Union cause and strengthened the Union both militarily and politically. As a milestone along the road to slavery's

final destruction, the Emancipation Proclamation has assumed a place among the great documents of human freedom.

The original of the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863, is in the National Archives in Washington, DC. With the text covering five pages the document was originally tied with narrow red and blue ribbons, which were attached to the signature page by a wafered impression of the seal of the United States. Most of the ribbon remains; parts of the seal are still decipherable, but other parts have worn off.

The document was bound with other proclamations in a large volume preserved for many years by the Department of State. When it was prepared for binding, it was reinforced with strips along the center folds and then mounted on a still larger sheet of heavy paper. Written in red ink on the upper right-hand corner of this large sheet is the number of the Proclamation, 95, given to it by the Department of State long after it was signed. With other records, the volume containing the Emancipation Proclamation was transferred in 1936 from the Department of State to the National Archives of the United States.

Source: *National Archives*



Ty Cobb's Quote on Trump's post that he was glad Robert Mueller was dead

“What the president said of course, is petty, shameful, despicable, and undignified. Sadly, that is the president we have. But fortunately, in American history, we've had people like Bob Mueller, and hopefully our better angels like Bob can get us beyond the fascism that we're experiencing at this moment. So, that's the type of person that President Trump is, a demented narcissist. You know, he seriously hates anybody who stands in opposition to him, has reworked the justice department into a revenge machine, and rules the country in a very authoritarian manner with the assistance of a cowardly cabinet and even more cowardly Republicans in Congress.”

— TY Cobb, One of the Attorneys Who Helped Trump Navigate the Mueller Investigation

US earns its lowest-ever score on freedom index

A pro-democracy research group said Wednesday that freedom in the United States has declined to its lowest level since it started assessments, as President Donald Trump aggressively wields executive authority.

Washington-based Freedom House said that freedom eroded around the world in 2025 for the 20th straight year, in what it called a “grim milestone.”

The United States remained rated free but fell to 81 points out of 100. It was the lowest score since the survey, which first covered 1972, began its 100-point system in 2002.

The score put the United States at the same level as South Africa and below a number of U.S. European allies as well as South Korea and Panama.

Freedom House said the U.S. decline was due to “both legislative dysfunction and executive dominance, growing pressure on people’s ability to engage in free expression, and efforts by the new administration to undermine anticorruption safeguards.”

Trump has aggressively asserted his power as president, ordering the closure of entire government agencies and deploying armed, masked anti-immigration agents around the country, with the White House promising them impunity.

The United States declined by three points, a drop only experienced by one other “free” country, Bulgaria, where 2024 elections were marred by allegations of fraud.

Overall, only 21% of people live in countries rat-

ed as “free,” with much of the slip in Africa due to military coups, violence against protesters and the weakening of constitutional protections, Freedom House said.

Over the past two decades worldwide, “many more have fallen into the ‘not free’ category than have democratized or moved up to that free category,” said Cathryn Grothe, a senior research analyst at Freedom House who co-authored the report.

“The world is getting less and less free and that middle area is shrinking, and then the free countries are staying relatively stable” despite the U.S. score decline, she said.

On a positive note, three countries were upgraded to “free” from “partly free” — Bolivia and Malawi, which both held competitive elections, and Fiji, which strengthened the rule of law.

The only country to receive a perfect 100 score was Finland, while only South Sudan was rated 0.

The biggest decline in score was in Guinea-Bissau, where the military last year seized power and suspended an election process days after voting.

Other countries with steep falls in scores included Tanzania, Burkina Faso and Madagascar, while Syria and Sri Lanka both saw gains.

Freedom House, founded in 1941 with bipartisan U.S. support, is independently administered but historically has received U.S. government funding, which was sharply reduced by Trump as he slashes efforts at democracy promotion.

Source: Courthouse News Service



“A lot of our people were being killed. They were being maimed. They were being destroyed with their bombs all over the place, planted in roads, and we called them the roadside bombs — walking around without legs, without arms, face blasted. Killed many, many people.”

— Donald Trump



**Join us for the
April DWC
Meeting!**



Florida Republicans pass bill empowering Ron DeSantis to oust local officials who support LGBTQ+ Pride

Florida lawmakers have approved a bill that could allow Gov. Ron DeSantis to remove local elected officials from office if they promote Pride events or other activities tied to diversity, equity, and inclusion. It's a significant escalation in the state's campaign against LGBTQ+ visibility.

The Florida House voted 77–37 to pass the legislation, known as HB 1001 / SB 1134, sending it to DeSantis's desk. Five Republicans joined Democrats in opposing the measure, including state Reps. Hillary Cassel, Will Robinson, Chip LaMarca, Jim Mooney, and Paula Stark.

Advocates warn the bill could intimidate cities and counties that recognize or support LGBTQ+ residents. Written in broad and ambiguous language, critics say it is among the most aggressive state laws targeting diversity programs and could chill local governments from supporting Pride events or LGBTQ+ services.

"This bill is dangerous, vague by design, and part of a broader political agenda of censorship and government overreach," Stratton Pollitzer, executive director of Equality Florida, said in a statement to *The Advocate*. "Once again, Florida lawmakers have manufactured a sweeping anti-LGBTQ law — legislation intended to bully local governments and have a chilling effect on how they celebrate and support the diverse communities they serve."

The legislation bars cities and counties from "promoting or adopting" programs that reference race, gender identity, or sexual orientation. It also prohibits local governments from funding contractors or organizations that conduct training or programming referencing those same identity categories.

Critically, the bill adds a powerful enforcement mechanism. Under Florida's constitution, the governor can suspend elected officials for



"misfeasance in office." SB 1134 would expand that authority to include certain actions related to DEI programming, potentially allowing DeSantis to remove mayors, city commissioners, or county officials who support Pride initiatives in their official capacity.

Local officials could appeal their removal only to the Florida Senate, where Republicans hold a supermajority.

Supporters say the bill prevents taxpayer funds from advancing ideological agendas. House sponsor Rep. Dean Black framed the effort bluntly during debate, declaring that "Florida is where DEI goes to D-I-E."

In a video from the *Florida Channel*, House Speaker Daniel Perez said the measure does not ban Pride festivals outright, though it may limit how cities promote or fund them.

"We will continue to partner with local leaders who are committed to celebrating their LGBTQ residents and all of the diverse communities that make Florida strong," Pollitzer said.

If DeSantis signs the bill, it would take effect in January 2027.

This article originally appeared on *Advocate*: Florida Republicans pass bill empowering Ron DeSantis to oust local officials who support LGBTQ+ Pride

By: Christopher Wiggins, *Yahoo News*





There is a master plan being developed for the Tampa Bay region on flooding issues: April 9th the Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus meeting will be at the Palmetto Public Library, 6:00 to 7:30 PM. This will be a Coastal Master Plan community listening session. Please come share your input in this important four-year, six-county plan. Your personal knowledge and experience on local flooding, such as storm surge, sea level rise and extreme rainfall is critical. Your input will be invaluable in developing the Tampa Bay Coastal Master Plan that addresses flooding issues.

Ruth Lawler, Environmental Chair

Welcome to the 2026 MEDP Gala!



BIG BLUE GALA: MAY 3, 2026 Get ready for an inspiring, entertaining evening to support Manatee Dem’s local mission of electing Democrats.

Our traditional premier fundraising Gala is back. Experience the Manatee Dems BIG BLUE GALA; an exciting, inspiring gala tradition at the Grove. Be inspired by our message of hope for the future.

Enjoy the evening’s cocktail hour, delicious dinner and inspiring soon-to-be-announced speakers. Have fun with our exciting live and silent auctions, and the return of Janelle, the Gala Gal. We end the evening on a high note with a special performance by stars Leon Pitts and Ariel Blue.

Sunday, May 3, 5:30 PM

GROVE RESTAURANT

10670 Boardwalk Loop,
Lakewood Ranch, FL 34202

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO, PRICING, AND TO REGISTER](#)

April 16 marks the 161st anniversary of Washington, D.C.’s Emancipation Day—a historic milestone commemorating the end of slavery in the nation’s capital in the spring of 1862. To learn more about the significance of this event, consider watching the video produced by WHAS Channel 11 titled “The History Behind Washington, D.C.’s Emancipation Day.”

Next is a humorous parody clip of Donald Trump performing his classic 1950’s hit song “Suspicious Mines” on the Ed Sullivan Show with his back-up singers Marco Rubio, Pete Hegseth and J.D. Vance. Inspiration for the song was from Iran closing down the Strait of Hormuz in the conflict with the USA.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH HISTORY OF EMANCIPATION DAY](#)

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH SUSPICIOUS MINES](#)



DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUB OF MANATEE COUNTY OFFICERS/LEADERS 2026 - 2027

ELECTED OFFICERS	
President	
Lori Rogge	lori4dems@gmail.com
1st VP (Programs)	
Brian Heavrin	brianhwithdwc@gmail.com
2nd VP (Membership)	
Carol Plant	carolplant@optonline.net
Recording Secretary	
Anne Keane	Keanneanne20@gmail.com
Treasurer	
Wini Meier Oakes	winimo3@gmail.com
Regional Representative	
Pat Benson	pattybeenutty@gmail.com

Website Links	
	DWC of Manatee County Website
	Manatee County Democratic Website
	Democratic Women's Club of Florida

OTHER OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS	
Fund-Raising	Pat Benson pattybeenutty@gmail.com
Hospitality/ Calling	Marilyn Baiz durf1211@gmail.com
Candidate Search	Vicki Waters vwaters@earthlink.net
Parliamentarian	Open
Web Master	Lori Rogge lori4dems@gmail.com
Newsletter and Directory	Brian Heavrin blh3011@gmail.com
Environmental	Ruth Lawler ruthlawler@att.net
Legislative Liaison	Open
Corresponding Secretary	Open
Bylaws Chair	Anne Marie Keane Keanneanne20@gmail.com

Manatee County Democratic Women's Club
6403 Heritage Lane
Bradenton, FL 34209



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The Manatee County Democratic weekday office hours are Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.. To check status, times, dates of events and club meetings, please visit our Manatee County Democratic website at www.ManateeDemocrats.com.

Elected Officials

CONTACT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

PRESIDENT

Donald Trump (switchboard) (202) 456-1111
www.whitehouse.gov

U.S. SENATORS

Rick Scott (R)
help@rickscott.senate.gov (202) 224-5274

Ashley Moody (R) (202)224-3041
www.moody.senate.gov

U.S. REPRESENTATIVES

Vern Buchanan (R-Distr. 16) (202) 225-5015
www.Buchanan.house.gov (941) 747-9081

GOVERNOR

Ron DeSantis (R) (850) 717-9337
www.flgov.com/email-the-governor

OUR FLORIDA SENATORS

Jim Boyd (R-Distr. 21) (850) 487-5026
Boyd.Jim.web@flsenate.gov

OUR FLORIDA REPRESENTATIVES

Michael Owen (R-Distr.70) 850 717-5070
MichaelOwen@myfloridahouse.gov

Will Robinson (R-Distr. 71)
Will.robinson@myfloridahouse.gov (941) 744-5097

William "Bill" Conerly (R-Distr.72) (941) 327-0150
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