

# DWC

## JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER



DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUB OF MANATEE COUNTY FLORIDA

WWW.DWCManatee.com

Our January speaker is Deborah Mazzaferro, who is a Subject Matter Expert trained by the National Popular Vote (Dr. John Koza), the originators of the bill that has currently passed 17 jurisdictions, amassing 209 Electors of the 270 needed for the compact to go into effect. We only need 61 more!

The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact guarantees the president and vice president are elected by the national popular vote. NPVIC preserves the Electoral System while assuring the votes of Americans in all 50 states count equally.

In 2017, members of the League of Women Voters formed a state-wide committee, which Deb joined. Today, that core group is now a coalition called Floridians for National Popular Vote. Coalition members include LWV, Common Cause Florida, National Popular Vote (Dr Koza and team), and Make Every Vote Matter.



**Deborah  
Mazzaferro**

In addition to speaking engagements, Deb works on legislative strategy and manages the FL4NPV marketing team, including website, social media, and an e-newsletter.

Deb will be speaking on why it's important that every vote counts in our Presidential elections, how the Floridians For The National Popular Vote is promoting the cause and what you can do to help.

You can volunteer, ask for a speaker, or donate to the cause on [Floridians for NPV](https://www.floridiansfornpv.com). For any additional questions you can reach Coach Maz at 727-258-8015.



**DWC Luncheon Is January 8, 2026**

**11:30 AM**

***Peridia Golf & Country Club***

***4950 Peridia Blvd E, Bradenton, FL 34203***

***Please make your reservations  
and meal choice by  
January 4, 3:00 p.m.***

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

**Cost is \$20**

## President's Corner

As we step into a new year, I'm filled with gratitude, determination, and a deep sense of purpose. It's an honor to begin my term as president of the Democratic Women's Club of Manatee County, and I'm excited for the work we will accomplish together. January always brings a sense of renewal, but this year that feeling is especially powerful. Across our community, as well as our country, I can feel the energy continuing to build — an eagerness to organize, to speak out, and to stand up for the values we share.



**Lori Rogge**

Many Democrats are calling 2026 the year of the “Blue Wave,” especially due to some recent elections resulting in our favor, and I believe that wave begins with us. Our strength has always come from women who refuse to sit on the sidelines, who show up, who lift each other, and who turn hope into action. This year, we will register voters, support candidates who reflect our vision for a fair and inclusive future and make sure every voice in Manatee County is heard. Together, we can transform that wave of momentum into real change.

I'm looking forward to everything we will build in the months ahead. Here's to a year of courage, connection, and collective power. Happy New Year!

Lori Rogge

President of the Democratic Women's Club of Manatee County

2026 -2028

## **PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATION AND MEAL CHOICE FOR THE JANUARY 8 DWC MEETING**

**Email, call, or text Marilyn Baiz for reservations**

**durf1211@gmail.com**

**or 734-776-6023**

**Deadline to register is Sunday, January 4, 3:00 p.m.**

1. Grilled chicken breast basted with pesto, covered with seared tomatoes and melted provolone with shredded romaine and a side of potato salad
2. Caesar salad with blackened chicken, Parmesan cheese, grape tomatoes with a garlic bread stick
3. Grilled marinated veggies and house-made hummus in a spinach tortilla with pub chips

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

No-shows will be billed

## **After mural crackdown, St. Pete installs 11 Pride-inspired bike racks**

There is a little more Pride on the streets of St. Pete, following the installation of 11 Pride-inspired bike racks in honor of Pride street murals that were removed earlier this year.

The city of St. Petersburg installed rainbow bike racks in the Grand Central District along Central Avenue and 25th Street. The intersection was the site of one of five prominent street murals removed in St. Pete during a statewide crackdown on street art, including artwork representing LGBTQ+ Pride and Black history.

An executive order from Gov. Ron DeSantis led the removal effort. The Florida Department of Transportation completed it overnight at St. Pete's expense, prompting Mayor Ken Welch to call for creative ways to honor the artwork's importance to the community.

Welch and the city council have debated what that would look like in subsequent discussions, but the bike racks represent one step toward honoring the neighborhood's lost mural. The mural was iconic, decorating the intersection with brightly colored stripes in the colors of the progressive Pride flag, drawn just steps from a popular LGBTQ+ nightclub and other safe spaces for the community. Funding for the project was through the city's long-standing public bike rack program.

Welch's Chief of Staff Jordan Doyle Walsh told City Council members in an email that the bike rack installation is only one component of the ongoing response to the erasure of the street art.



The other murals removed include the Black History Matters mural on Ninth Avenue South, despite protests from two local pastors, Revs. Andy Oliver and Benedict Atherton-Zeman who were arrested for sitting on the mural and later released. The Fluid Structures mural located at the University of South Florida St. Pete campus, the Common Ground mural, and the Crux mural in Child's Park were also removed.

"We were excited that there was consensus around one of the administration's proposed actions discussed during the previous (Committee of the Whole) meeting and other forums regarding city and community response," Walsh said in the email.

"We intend that this small gesture of inclusion and celebration will be a symbol of our resolve to not be silenced," he said. "We thank City Council for supporting and collaborating on this effort and we look forward to working with you and the community as we move forward together."

By: Jesse Medoza, *Florida Politics*



**Vote-by-mail (absentee) requests for the 2026 General Election cycle have expired. Requesting mail ballots through the end of 2026 only takes a few moments, so do it now.**

**[CLICK HERE TO REQUEST YOUR VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT](#)**



## **Florida accounts for one-third of total U.S. immigrant deaths in ICE custody in 2025, records show**

Since 2018, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) records indicate that Florida has experienced the highest number of deaths involving immigrants in custody in 2025 compared to previous years, with at least six individuals dying while in custody of the federal agency within the state.

According to reports from ICE, one out of every three immigrant deaths in custody, reported so far this year, has occurred in this state. As of Sunday, a total of 18 deaths have been reported nationwide.

To date, ICE has not reported all of the deaths on its website tracker, though, which is supposed to include reports of every fatality incident when someone is in their custody.

The latest case, it shows is from Sept. 22 of this year, which excludes the death of Norlan Guzman-Fuentes, 37, an immigrant who was shot and killed in Dallas in late September. This means that numbers may change as the agency updates its reporting.

According to records reviewed by *10 Tampa Bay*



News, the most fatal year when immigrants died in ICE's custody in Florida was in 2020.

That year, the COVID-19 pandemic increased the number of deaths across the U.S., with 21 total deaths reported for the fiscal year of 2020. That year, too, three deaths were reported in Florida's inmate population in ICE's custody.

In 2024, only one inmate's death was reported in Florida. For the rest of the fiscal years since 2018, as far as the past is concerned in ICE's public records, no fatalities were reported in the state.

During October, Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem touted the partnerships between Immigration and Customs Enforcement and local law enforcement, saying she hopes more follow Florida's example to support President Donald Trump's goals. In late September, ICE announced that it would give Florida funding for its participation in the 287(g) agreements, stating that the state would be awarded more than \$38 million to support the program.

Previously, *10 Tampa Bay News* reported that just in the Tampa Bay area, sheriffs requested \$1.9 million in grants for immigration enforcement.

By: S.G. de León y León, *10 News Tampa Bay*

## **Florida plows ahead with push to roll back certain vaccine mandates for schoolchildren**

Florida officials are plowing ahead with a proposal to roll back certain vaccine mandates for the state's schoolchildren, after Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis called for the state to become the first in the nation to eliminate all school vaccination requirements.

Pediatricians, infectious disease physicians and teachers have decried the push to undermine vaccines, which for generations have been a cornerstone of public health policy for keeping children and adults safe from potentially deadly — but preventable — diseases.

Experts have warned that doing away with the mandates could allow for a dangerous resurgence of preventable childhood diseases and deaths, amounting to a reversal of one of the greatest advancements in public health history.



Dozens of parents, physicians, educators and advocates crowded into a hotel conference room in Panama City Beach on Friday to testify on a rule change proposed by the Florida Department of Health that would eliminate requirements that Florida children receive the hepatitis B, varicella and Haemophilus influenzae type b or Hib vaccines in order to attend public or private K-12 schools. The proposal also does away with a requirement for the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine for children attending child care facilities.

Other state mandates related to vaccines for polio, mumps, tetanus and other diseases are enshrined in Florida law and would require legislative action to be rolled back.

Pediatrician Eehab Kenawy, who practices in Panama City, detailed two unvaccinated children his hospital has cared for in the past six months, both of whom contracted Hib, which can cause severe infections and brain swelling.

By: Kate Payne, *Associated Press*

## ***A bill for a “Charlie Kirk Day of Remembrance” advances in the Florida Senate***

The Florida Legislature is advancing a controversial bill that would create a Charlie Kirk Day of Remembrance. Emotions ran high during the bill’s first committee stop in the Senate Committee on Governmental Oversight and Accountability.

Republican Senator Jonathan Martin said SB 194 would designate October 14th as a day of remembrance in Florida for Charlie Kirk’s work and contributions.

“His work helped build a movement of young leaders who are active in promoting limited government, free speech, and American values. He motivated an entire generation to get involved, ask questions and learn to defend principles that make our country strong,” Martin said.

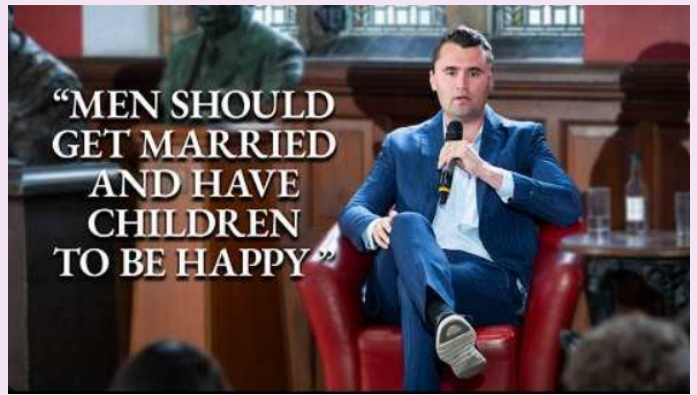
Martin told the committee that Kirk encouraged people to debate. He said Kirk stressed freedom of speech and that ties into what the founders thought was important to the country.

We are letting our perception of Charlie Kirk control our emotions,” Martin said.

There were supporters who agreed. They spoke to the committee about Kirk leaving an impact.

But others strongly disagreed, like Democratic Senator Bracy Davis.

“He is known historically and nationally for minimizing racism and denying systemic discrimination, attacking communities of color, LGBTQ+ youth, spreading misinformation about elections and public health, and using rhetoric that divides Floridians’ rather than unites us. Elevating a figure with this record raises questions and concerns about the values we choose to honor,”



Davis said.

She says Kirk has no meaningful ties to Florida and should not have a day of remembrance.

A member of the public, Julie Keefe, also opposed the bill. She asked the committee to vote no.

“He was not a unifying figure; he was a decisive figure, and it’s offensive that there is a chance this is something we celebrate, have to acknowledge, have to see year after year, and for this reason I sincerely hope this bill will be voted down and will not have to remember this individual if we don’t wish to,” Keefe said.

The bill advanced on a five to two vote.

SB 194 was filed by Sen. Jonathan Martin, R-Fort Myers. Kirk was a co-founder and executive director of the national conservative group Turning Point USA. He was murdered in September during an appearance at Utah Valley University. Oct. 14 was Kirk’s birthday.

Rep. Yvette Benarroch, R-Marco Island, and Rep. Meg Weinberger, R-Palm Beach Gardens, have filed an identical bill (HB 125) in the House. The bills are filed for the legislative session that will start Jan. 13.

By: Leah Burdick, WMNF









## **National Parks Service overhauls free admission days to include Trump's birthday**

National parks visitors will receive free admission on President Donald Trump's birthday next year, but will have to pay a regular fee on Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Juneteenth, after the National Park Service overhauled its free admission calendar.

Admission fees have been waived on Martin Luther King Jr. Day for years, including throughout Trump's first administration. Juneteenth was added as an entrance fee-free day in 2024. The free admission will only apply to U.S. residents, as the Department of the Interior recently unveiled an "America-first" fee system that would require international tourists to pay the standard fee, along with \$100 extra per person at 11 of the most visited national parks, starting January 1, 2026. The annual pass will cost non-U.S. residents \$250, more than triple the standard \$80 that U.S. residents will continue to pay.

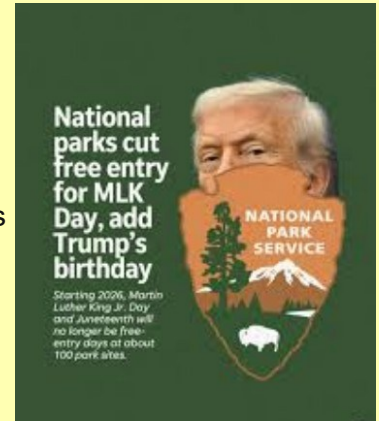
The changes come as Trump has made eliminating diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts a centerpiece of his administration. Earlier this year, on Juneteenth — the oldest regular U.S. celebration of the end of slavery — the president criticized the number of "non-working holidays" in the United

States, which he claimed "is costing our Country BILLIONS OF DOLLARS."

Along with Trump's birthday — which is on June 14 and also marks Flag Day — the 2026 calendar for waived admission days also adds Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, three days for July 4 weekend, the 110th birthday of National Parks Service on August 25, Constitution Day on September 17 and former President Theodore Roosevelt's birthday on October 27. Roosevelt is considered to be "the conservationist president," and made several contributions to the National Park System, including doubling the number of sites during his presidency. According to the calendar it also removes the first day of National Park Week, the Bureau of Land Management's birthday, Great American Outdoors Day, National Public Lands Day, and the first Sunday of National Wildlife Refuge Week.

Visitors will continue to enjoy free admission on Veterans Day.

By: Kaanita Iyer, *CNN*



## **Blue Origin renews permit to dump 500k gallons of wastewater daily into Indian River**

Blue Origin is renewing an agreement with Florida's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to be allowed to dump about 500,000 gallons of industrial wastewater into the Indian River.

This has caused environmentalists to petition the agreement.

In a public notice, the DEP stated that the permit would allow Blue Origin, which recently had a successful launch of its New Glenn rocket, to dump 500,000 gallons daily of both processed and non-processed wastewater.

The DEP stated "0.49 MGD (million gallons per day) of process wastewater and discharge 0.015 MGD of non-process wastewater" would go into a large onsite stormwater pond and then into the Indian River.

A Blue Origin spokesperson said this is a renewal of an existing permit.

"This is a renewal of an existing agreement that



has been in place for more than five years. We are committed to maintaining responsible and compliant operations," stated the spokesperson to *Spectrum News*.

However, environmentalists took to Change.org to petition the agreement.

"The Indian River Lagoon is already fighting for its life. Decades of nutrient pollution, algae blooms, seagrass collapse, habitat loss, and record manatee deaths have pushed this fragile ecosystem to the edge. Now, it faces a new threat — and it's one we cannot ignore," the petition stated about Blue Origin.

Environmentalists are looking to get 200 signatures.

The petition stated that rocket launches (from the loud noise to heavy metals and chemicals) are impacting the plant and wildlife of the lagoon.

Last week, Brevard County commissioners talked about the funding needs for restoration efforts of the Indian River Lagoon.

By: Anthony Leone, *Spectrum News 13*



The choices we make about the foods we purchase and eat have a direct effect on the environment and our health. Purchasing and eating fresh and organic foods, preferably locally grown, versus processed and packaged food, is better for our health and the overall environment. Processed and packaged foods have more chemicals, additives, packaging, and require more energy to produce and transport. The additional packaging creates more landfill waste, too. Organic foods don't require tons of chemical fertilizers and poisons to produce, which, when used, cause great harm to the environment and our health. Eat more fresh organic fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, and fewer animal products for your health and the health of the environment.

Ruth Lawler, Environmental Chair

THERE IS NO ORGANIZATION  
CALLED "ANTIFA."

Antifa stands for anti-fascism.

World War II veterans were  
Antifa because they fought  
fascism.

Anyone who is against fascism  
is Antifa.

There is no membership card.

Anyone can be Antifa.

Everyone should be Antifa.

**ANTIFA**

**It's the Department of Defense. It's the Gulf  
of Mexico. It's The Kennedy Center.**

**And always will be.**



It's time to pay your 2026 membership dues of \$35. You can pay at any of our meetings or you can mail your check payable to Democratic Women's Club to our Treasurer.

**Wini Meier-Oakes**

**3607 AVENIDA MADERA UNIT A**

**Bradenton, FL 34210**

Martin Luther King Jr. Day, observed each year on the third Monday of January, honors the life and legacy of Dr. King, the nation's foremost advocate for nonviolent resistance during the Civil Rights Movement. Through his moral leadership, powerful oratory, and unwavering commitment to justice, King challenged racial discrimination in laws and everyday life, helping to move the country closer to its ideals of equality and freedom. In recognition of his enduring impact, we share a Martin Luther King Jr. tribute titled "Free at Last," created by Ashton Glickman, followed by a lighthearted video produced by Historystoff featuring photographs of many U.S. presidents as children.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH  
FREE AT LAST](#)

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH  
PRESIDENTS AS  
CHILDREN](#)





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

### ELECTED OFFICERS

<b>President</b>	
Lori Rogge	lori4dems@gmail.com
<b>1st VP (Programs)</b>	
Brian Heavrin	blh3011@gmail.com
<b>2nd VP (Membership)</b>	
Carol Plant	carolplant@optonline.net
<b>Recording Secretary</b>	
Lori Rogge	lori4dems@gmail.com
<b>Treasurer</b>	
Wini Meier Oakes	winimo3@gmail.com
<b>Regional Representative</b>	
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

<b>Fund-Raising</b>	Pat Benson pattybeenutty@gmail.com
<b>Hospitality/ Calling</b>	Marilyn Baiz durf1211@gmail.com
<b>Candidate Search</b>	Vicki Waters vwaters@earthlink.net
<b>Parliamentarian</b>	Open
<b>Web Master</b>	Lori Rogge lori4dems@gmail.com
<b>Newsletter and Directory</b>	Brian Heavrin blh3011@gmail.com
<b>Environmental</b>	Ruth Lawler ruthlawler@att.net
<b>Legislative Liaison</b>	Open
<b>Corresponding Secretary</b>	Open
<b>Bylaws Chair</b>	Anne Marie Keane Keaneanne20@gmail.com

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



PLACE  
STAMP  
HERE

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](http://www.ManateeDemocrats.com).

#### *Elected Officials*

##### **CONTACT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

###### **PRESIDENT**

Donald Trump (switchboard) (202) 456-1111  
[www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov)

###### **U.S. SENATORS**

Rick Scott (R)  
[help@rickscott.senate.gov](mailto:help@rickscott.senate.gov) (202) 224-5274

Ashley Moody (R) (202) 224-3041  
[www.moody.senate.gov](http://www.moody.senate.gov)

###### **U.S. REPRESENTATIVES**

Vern Buchanan (R-Distr. 16) (202) 225-5015  
[www.Buchanan.house.gov](http://www.Buchanan.house.gov) (941) 747-9081

###### **GOVERNOR**

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

##### **OUR FLORIDA SENATORS**

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

##### **OUR FLORIDA REPRESENTATIVES**

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

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

William "Bill" Conerly (R-Distr. 72) (941) 327-0150  
[BillConerly@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:BillConerly@myfloridahouse.gov)