

DWC

OCTOBER 2026 NEWSLETTER



DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUB OF MANATEE COUNTY FLORIDA

WWW.DWCManatee.com

Kelly Kirschner is a third-generation Floridian who grew up in the Sarasota-Bradenton area. He is a former Sarasota city commissioner and mayor, a returned Peace Corps volunteer, and an advocate for education and community development. After earning bachelor's and master's degrees from Georgetown University, Kirschner joined the Peace Corps and spent nearly four years in Guatemala working with Mayan farming families and local government.

Following his Peace Corps service, Kirschner returned to the Gulf Coast and built a career in business, education, and nonprofit leadership. He served for more than a decade as Vice President and Dean of Executive and Continuing Education at Eckerd College. He also co-founded UnidosNow, a regional nonprofit that has helped more than 1,000 first-generation students pursue higher education.

Kirschner entered public service in Sarasota after organizing neighborhood residents around local development issues. As a City Commissioner and Mayor, he worked on responsible development, utility costs, government accountability, and campaign-finance reform. He led an effort resulting in campaign-finance reforms approved by more than 80% of Sarasota voters and challenged developers and Florida Power & Light over issues affecting residents.

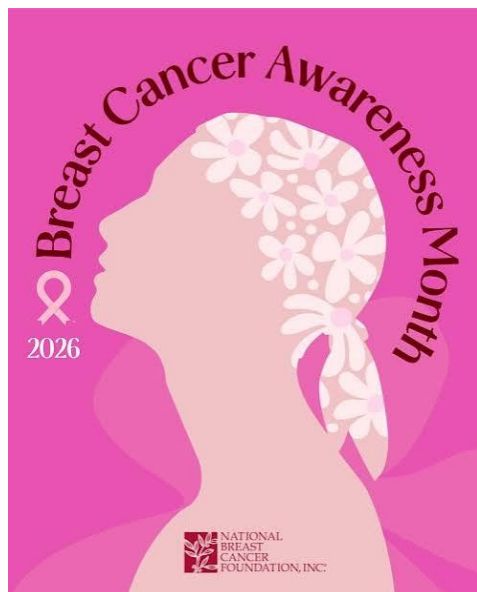
Kirschner is now running as a Democrat for Florida's 16th Congressional District. His campaign says his priorities include lowering the cost of living, protecting Social Security and Medicare, reducing healthcare and prescription drug costs, expanding affordable housing, supporting veterans, strengthening disaster preparedness, and increasing government accountability.

A father of two, Kirschner says he wants to bring his experience in local government, education, nonprofit leadership, and community organizing to Washington while focusing on families and communities throughout Florida's 16th District.

Kelly will discuss his vision for representing the people of Florida's 16th Congressional District, including his priorities for making life more affordable, protecting the environment, and creating good-paying jobs, along with other issues Floridians are currently facing.



**Guest Speaker
Kelly Kirschner**



DWC Luncheon is October 8, 2026

11:30 AM

Doors Open at 11, Arrive Early

**Cut-off date for your reservations
and meal choice must be made by
October 4, 3:00 p.m.**

Peridia Golf & Country Club

4950 Peridia Blvd E, Bradenton, FL 34203

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

Cost is \$25

No shows will be billed

President's Corner

Getting So Close: Our Work Matters Now

As we move closer to the November 3 election, I want to thank each of you for the energy, determination, and heart that makes up our Democratic Women's Club. This is an important moment for our community, our state, and our country. The choices voters make in the coming weeks will shape our schools, neighborhoods, rights, and especially our democracy.



Lori Rogge

We are fortunate to have outstanding Democratic candidates running this year — leaders we are proud to support and hopeful to see elected. They are working hard to earn every vote, but they cannot do it alone. Campaigns are won by conversations, by neighbors reaching neighbors, and by volunteers willing to give their time and voices to help make change possible.

There is still so much we can do. We can make phone calls, send texts, write postcards, share trusted voting information, attend candidate events, put up signs, help with voter registration, and remind friends and family to make a voting plan.

Most of all, we can be encouraging. Many people are tired of division and discouraged by the constant and ongoing vitriol from the other party, especially the "one at the top." Our role is to remind them that hope is not passive. Hope is action.

Let us keep our spirits high and our focus clear. We have great candidates, strong values, and committed members who know how to get things done. Between now and November 3, let us do everything we can to get the word out, turn out voters, and elect candidates who will serve with compassion, courage, and integrity. Together, we can make a difference — and now is the time to do it.

Lori Rogge,

President, Women's Democratic Club

PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATION AND MEAL CHOICE FOR THE OCTOBER 8 DWC MEETING



Email, call, or text Marylin Bais for reservations

durf1211@gmail.com

or

734.776.6023



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

1. Apple Harvest Chicken Wrap

w/dried cranberries and lettuce

2. Trio Classic Sandwich:

cured ham, roasted turkey, lean roast beef w/lettuce and signature sauce

3. Southwest Chicken Salad

grilled chicken, corn, tortilla strips, cheddar cheese and avocado on top of salad greens

4. Southwest Salad

same as #3, but no chicken or cheese

All meals come with salad, rolls, butter, a non-alcoholic drink, and dessert.
No-shows will be billed.

**Cost
\$25**

CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP

**DEADLINE:
Oct. 4
3:00 p.m.**

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast Cancer Awareness Month, or BCAM, takes place every year from October 1 to October 31. BCAM is recognized as a time to increase awareness of breast cancer, emphasize the importance of early detection, and support those affected.

BCAM isn't just symbolic. It's an annual, coordinated effort to educate, engage, and take action on behalf of those facing breast cancer — and those who may in the future.

BCAM reminds us that breast cancer doesn't wait. Right now, someone is getting the news that they have breast cancer and doesn't know what to do next. Someone is starting treatment and needs support to make it through. Because of BCAM — and people like you — we can deliver help, hope, and support when it's needed most.

The first BCAM occurred in October 1985 as an awareness campaign led by the American Cancer



Society. In 1992, the pink ribbon emerged as the universal symbol for breast cancer awareness and fundraising efforts. Since then, BCAM has expanded across the nation and world, with a focus on promoting early detection, reducing stigma around breast cancer, and supporting patients and survivors.

Since the first BCAM more than 40 years ago, breast cancer death rates in the U.S. have dropped by 44%. It's not a coincidence that greater awareness, increases in early detection, and advancements in treatment have coincided with the rise of BCAM. These efforts show that when we raise awareness, we can save lives.

This October, National Breast Cancer Foundation is Helping Women Now® by funding life-saving mammograms, providing critical breast health information, education, and connecting women with the help and hope they need as they face a diagnosis. With your help, we can ensure that no one faces breast cancer alone.

Source: *National Breast Cancer Foundation, Inc*

National Coming Out Day is October 11

October 11 is National Coming Out Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness of civil rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

LGBTQ advocacy group, the Human Rights Campaign, said National Coming Out Day is meant to help create an environment where living openly and honestly is possible.

"Coming out is one of the most courageous acts any LGBTQ person makes, and on this National Coming Out Day that courage remains essential to our continued progress toward full equality," HRC President Chad Griffin said in a statement. "As LGBTQ people across the nation and around the world continue to come out, opposition to equality will continue to crumble. Sharing our stories is a key way each of us can fight back against attempts to turn back the clock on LGBTQ equality."

The idea for the day was the culmination of four months of momentum where more than 100 activists were gathered in Manassas, Virginia, near Washington D.C., according to the HRC, conceived by psychologist Richard Eicherg and activist Jean O'Leary on Oct. 11, 1988. Their meeting followed the second march on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights on Oct. 11, 1987, in which half a million people participated and

the AIDS Quilt was displayed.

In the 1980s, AIDS and HIV disproportionately affected the gay and lesbian communities in the U.S., but many felt the epidemic was not being researched because of discrimination against that community.

A study sponsored by GLAAD, formerly known as the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, said that 20 percent of millennials identify as LGBTQ. According to the National Coming Out Day Report sponsored by the HRC, about 42 percent of LGBT youth say the communities in which they live are not accepting of LGBT people.

Source: *ABC News*



The Trevor Project estimates that more than 1.8 million LGBTQ+ young people (ages 13–24) seriously consider suicide each year in the U.S., with roughly 39% of LGBTQ+ youth seriously considering suicide in the past year

On July 17, 2025 the Trump administration abruptly terminated the LGBTQ suicide hotline.

Florida Republican could face death penalty after allegedly molesting grandson under new law he voted for

In 2023, Florida Republican state legislator Mike Caruso enthusiastically voted yes to the new Florida Capital Sexual Battery law, which allows prosecutors to pursue the death penalty for adults who molest children under 12. Caruso is now accused of molesting his young grandson and may well become a victim of the very law he put in place.

The 67-year-old Caruso, originally appointed by Ron DeSantis, is accused of repeatedly molesting his grandson between fall 2024 and summer 2025. The alleged abuse came to light when the victim told his father that Caruso had abused him on a family cruise, with investigators claiming: "During the voyage, while in international waters, Caruso separated the victim from his parents under the stated pretext of taking the child to obtain ice cream. Victim was away from his parents in Caruso's company for at least an hour and was not taken to get ice cream."

The young victim later detailed to law enforcement other instances of abuse, including one around Thanksgiving 2024. Sadly, this is not the only case with Republicans being accused of these kinds of crimes in Florida and in South Dakota.

Caruso was confronted with these allegations and denied everything. As per *IB Times*, he apparently argued that this is the work of his "evil" ex-wife, who he said had invented the abuse "in an effort to poison the child against him." The investigators' report also notes that Caruso's daughter had previously made accusations of "sexually inappropriate behavior" from her father.

Caruso was arrested and officially charged with five felony charges, including kidnapping, child molestation, lewd exhibition, luring or enticing a child, and child abuse causing mental injury. Following the arrest, DeSantis suspended Caruso from his legislative position.



The 2023 statute that Caruso voted for underlines that crimes like the ones he's accused of "destroy the innocence of a young child and violate all standards of decency held by civilized society" and specifically allows the imposition of the death penalty, so long as a jury unanimously finds "at least two aggravating factors beyond a reasonable doubt."

The *Miami Herald* notes that the investigation is ongoing and that Caruso may soon face "an indictment under Florida's capital sexual battery law, which went into effect in 2023 and opened up the death penalty for those convicted of sexual battery of a child under 12."

To date, nobody has been given the death penalty under this law. In December 2023, they attempted to pursue this, but the defendant pled guilty and was sentenced to life in prison without parole. As per *IB Times*, Caruso has been booked into the Orange County Jail and is being held without bond.

By: David James, *Newsbreak*

Republican Midterm Convention attendees pledge to Trump

Trump said, "Please raise your right hand. I pledge — to the greatest president in the history of the United States, that loves us so much he can't even breathe, that I will go out with my family, my friends. I'll do it anyway. I don't care if I'm registered or not, I'm gonna try and cheat like hell like they do. They never — there's never

been bigger cheaters. They don't care. I am gonna go out and I'm gonna get my friends, my family, and we are going to vote on November 3rd or we are going to vote before that. So help me God."



'The most expensive choice on the ballot': Sierra Club opposes 'devastating' Amendment 3

One of the state's most significant grassroots environment groups warns that an increased home-
stead tax exemption could "effectively gut the
budgets of local governments."

Sierra Club Florida says Amendment 3, which
would increase the tax break to \$250,000 by
2028 on primary homes (excluding school levies,
for which the exemption
would stay the same),
would "be devastating as
property taxes are a critical
source of local revenue that
supports county and city
parks, land preserves, and
other public spaces, as well
as public safety, schools,
and hospitals."



Under the amendment, local governments would
be limited in what they can fund with remaining
ad valorem revenue to categories including pub-
lic safety, infrastructure, schools, natural re-
source projects, debt service, pensions and gov-
ernment operations. County constitutional offi-
cers — such as elections supervisors, clerks of
court and property appraisers — as well as coun-
ty and city commissions, would also be funded.

The Sierra Club said key environmental priorities
would get short shrift if the measure clears 60%
support in November.

"If Amendment 3 passes, municipalities will no
longer be able to fund stormwater management
and runoff programs, flood mitigation, and fire
prevention and abatement at the level they do
now," the group said.

As climate change fuels stronger and wetter
storms, local governments' abilities to prepare
their communities by constructing sea walls, trim-
ming trees, and other storm hardening prepara-
tions will be cut drastically, leaving communities
unprotected from the effects felt during the annu-
al hurricane seasons."

Ultimately, the Sierra Club believes "local gov-
ernments are likely to charge their residents fees
to raise the revenue necessary to fund parks and
public spaces as well as storm hardening prepa-
ration."

While numerous political
committees, unions such as
the Florida Sheriffs Associ-
ation, the Florida State
Fraternal Order of Police
and the Florida Professional
Firefighters, and various
local officials have come
out against the proposal, it
seems to have tailwinds go-

ing into the stretch run.

The Florida Realtors contributed \$10 million to
their own Vote Yes on 3 political committee last
week, meaning that a proposal that has up until
now lacked advertising muscle behind it will be
able to spend on earned media in the two
months left before election day.

But the Sierra Club says nominal savings come
at a dear price.

"Florida voters who are seeking relief and afford-
ability should know that Amendment 3 is, in fact,
the most expensive choice on the ballot," the
group argued.

By: A.G. Gancarski, *Florida Politics*

Master negotiator?

Mexico didn't pay for the wall

He didn't reduce the deficit

He didn't end the Russia/Ukraine War

He didn't reduce gas prices to under two dollars

He didn't cap credit card interest at 10 percent

He didn't reduce the cost of groceries

He still doesn't have a deal with Iran

He clearly has no idea how to negotiate.



***But he did know how to make 2.4 billion dollars in the
first 16 months of his second term off of Americans!***

Florida's Department of Health removes 4 vaccines from required list for public schools

On August 24, 2026 the Florida Department of Health announced a new rule that would allow Florida children to attend public school without receiving immunizations for chickenpox, hepatitis B, Haemophilus influenzae type B, and pneumococcal disease. The rule also expanded religious exemptions for school vaccines.

Department officials said the proposed rule eliminates vaccine mandates for shots that aren't required under state law. State law still requires students to receive vaccinations for measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), polio, diphtheria, rubella, and tetanus to attend public K-12 schools.

Rule comes one year after Florida set out to eliminate mandates

Nearly a year ago, Florida Surgeon General Joseph Lapado, MD, made headlines when he announced he wanted Florida to be the first state to remove all public school vaccine mandates.

"Every last one of them is wrong and drips with disdain and slavery," Ladapo said about vaccine

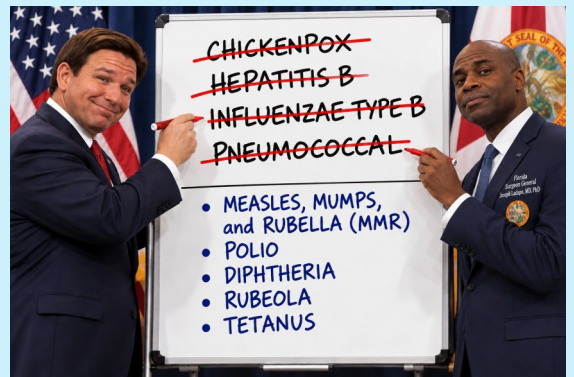
mandates at a news conference in September of 2025. At the time, President Trump

publicly disagreed with Florida's plans, saying some vaccines should be required, or else too many people will get sick.

The effort to remove all vaccine mandates stalled. Lapado approved the new rule earlier this week, and the public has 21 days for input before final approval.

Currently, the Florida attorney general is at odds with Catholic bishops in the state, who say Florida Catholic schools have a right to mandate vaccines for attending students. Florida's Catholic schools do not accept religious exemptions for vaccines.

By: Stephanie Soucheray, Cidrap



Election Day is NOVEMBER 3, 2026

★ **Vote Early at any of these locations.** ★



G T Bray Park

5502 33rd Avenue Dr W
Bradenton FL 34209



John Marble Recreation Center

3675 53rd ave E
Bradenton FL 34203



Lakewood Ranch Library

16410 Rangeland Pkwy
Lakewood Ranch FL 34211



Lakewood Ranch Town Hall

8175 Lakewood Ranch Blvd
Lakewood Ranch FL 34202



Palmetto Library

923 6th St W
Palmetto FL 34221



Parrish Fire Dist Station #2

3804 North Rye Rd
Parrish FL 34219-9627



Rocky Bluff Library

6750 US Hwy 301
Ellenton FL 34222



Supervisor of Elections Office

600 301 Blvd W
Bradenton FL 34205



Dates: Monday, October 19, 2026
through Sunday, November 1, 2026



Hours:
8:30 am to 6:00 pm daily

'Unhinged and culty': Republicans mocked for playing 'God gave us Trump' video

Critics mocked Republicans as “unhinged and culty” after a tribute video to the president was shown at the second night of the GOP’s midterm convention proclaiming that “God gave us Trump.”

The video was a riff on the 1978 speech, “So God Made a Farmer,” by radio broadcaster Paul Harvey.

“And on June 14th, 1946, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, ‘I need a caretaker,’ so God gave us Trump,” the narrator says as clips of the president are shown.

“God said, ‘I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, fix this country, work all day, fight the Marxists, eat supper, then go to the Oval Office and stay past midnight at a meeting of the heads of state, so God made Trump,” the video continued.

The video, critics said, got more outrageous.

“I need somebody with arms strong enough to wrestle the Deep State and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild ... so God made Trump,” the voice continued.

“God had to have somebody willing to go into the den of vipers, call out the fake news for their tongues as sharp as a serpent’s, the poison of vipers is on their lips and yet stop, so God made Trump.”

Among the clips in the montage were Trump pushing the prime minister of Montenegro out of the way at a 2017 NATO Summit, the president hugging the American flag and faith leaders praying for him.

The video was met with widespread mocking on social media.

“Wow — RNC video: ‘On June 14th, 1946, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, ‘I need a caretaker, ‘so God gave us Trump.’ It only gets more unhinged and culty from there,” posted Trump social media chronicler Aaron Rupar.

“And [Republicans] spent the entire day yesterday calling James Talarico blasphemous,” added MeidasTouch editor-in-chief Ron Filipkowski, referring to the Democratic Senate nominee in Texas. “This should be repulsive to any real Christian, but these people worship Republican Jesus — Donald J. Trump.”



“Anyone who thinks this is a normal political movement, or maybe just a spicier version of party politics, is deluding themselves,” said Bob Rae. “This is a cult, blind obedience brought to life.”

Added another X user: “Sweet Baby Jesus, this is next level cult behavior.”

By: Howard Koplowitz , *Yahoo News*

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO GOD MADE TRUMP](#)

A protest poster for "NO KINGS PROTEST". It features a crown with a red prohibition sign over it, an American flag, and silhouettes of protesters holding signs. The text "NO KINGS PROTEST" is in large, bold, white letters. To the right, it says "PEOPLE NOT KINGS" and "DEMOCRACY NOT DICTATORS". The date and time are "SATURDAY OCTOBER 17, 2026 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM". At the bottom, there are two locations: "637 Cortez Rd W Bradenton, FL" and "5584 Cortez Rd W Bradenton, FL".

NO KINGS PROTEST

PEOPLE NOT KINGS
DEMOCRACY NOT DICTATORS

SATURDAY
OCTOBER 17, 2026
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

637 Cortez Rd W
Bradenton, FL

5584 Cortez Rd W
Bradenton, FL



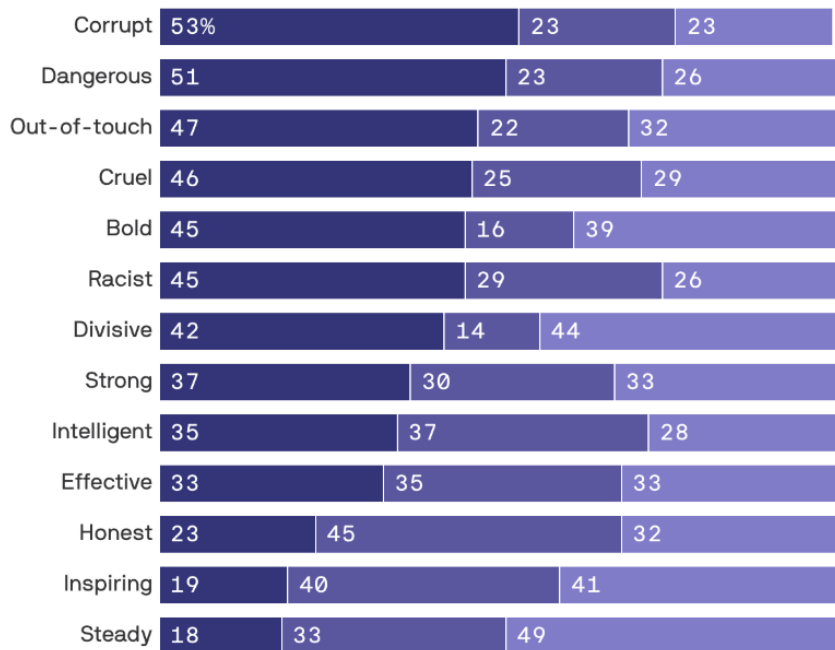
The phosphate industry has a tremendous influence in Manatee County and throughout Florida. Mosaic Company is the single largest landowner in Manatee County, and much of its land has not yet been developed for phosphate mining and production. Phosphorus is an essential nutrient required for plant growth, but the process of obtaining and using phosphate can have significant environmental consequences. As environmental advocates point out, synthetic phosphate fertilizers pose serious threats to our environment. Phosphate rock mining, along with the production of inorganic fertilizers, animal-feed supplements, and pesticides for which phosphate is mined, can pollute the air, contaminate water, and destroy valuable wildlife habitat. The Manatee Democratic Environmental Caucus will explore these issues during its October program, "The Phosphate Industry: A Cradle-to-Grave Operation of Pollution." The featured speaker will be Glenn Compton, chairman of the environmental organization Mana-Sota-88. Please join us Thursday, October 8, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m

Ruth Lawler, Environmental Chair

Words U.S. registered voters say they'd use to describe Trump

Poll of 1,461 U.S. registered voters conducted September 11-14, 2026

■ Share who say it describes Trump ■ Share who say it does not describe Trump ■ Share who have no opinion



Data: [The Economist/YouGov](#); Chart: Avery Lotz

What one word describes Trump?

Simply put, recent polling has not been favorable for President Trump — or for several of his top priorities, including the Iran war, tariffs, immigration, and other key initiatives. With the midterm elections only weeks away, however, Trump has continued to place himself at the center of the campaign, effectively making the election a referendum on his presidency.

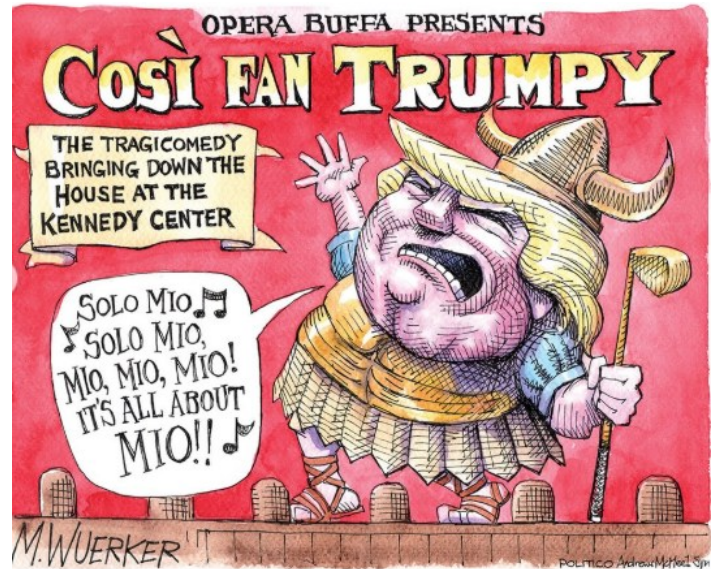
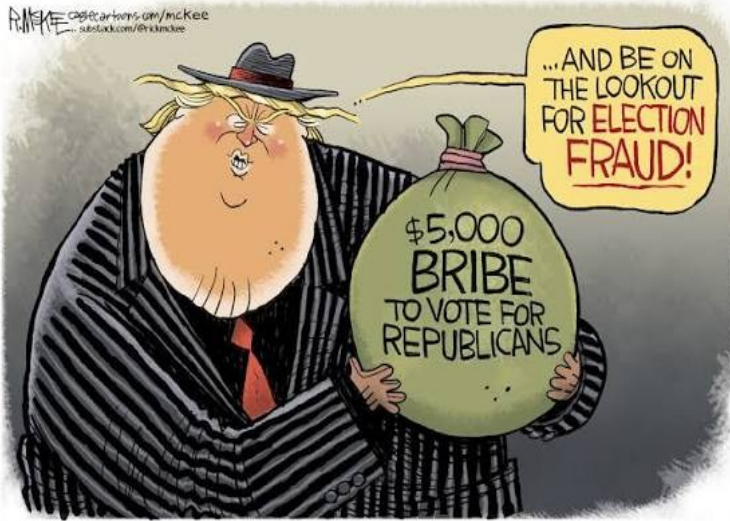
Democrats are testing an anti-corruption message for the midterms as Americans' concerns about government corruption have reached a 20-year high, according to Gallup. Recent polling also indicates that many Americans believe Trump has inappropriately profited from cryptocurrency while in office.

October is **Breast Cancer Awareness Month**, observed worldwide to raise awareness about breast cancer and its impact on women and families. But have you ever wondered how October became the month dedicated to breast cancer awareness? Or why the pink ribbon became the symbol of the movement? The following video explores the history behind Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the origins of the pink ribbon, and the number of women diagnosed with breast cancer each year. It also examines why those numbers continue to be a concern.

October 11 is National Coming Out Day, a day recognizing LGBTQ+ individuals who choose to share their identity with others and live openly as their authentic selves. While coming out can be a positive and affirming experience, not every story has a happy ending. Some individuals face rejection or mistreatment from family members, friends, and others in their lives. The following video offers an example of the challenges some gay individuals can face when they come out and the importance of acceptance and support.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH
BREAST CANCER
AWARENESS](#)

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH
NATIONAL COMING
OUT DAY](#)



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	
Open	
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	Open

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.

Elected Officials

CONTACT OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

PRESIDENT

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

U.S. SENATORS

Rick Scott (R)
rickscott.senate.gov/contact (202) 224-5274

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

U.S. REPRESENTATIVES

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

GOVERNOR

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

OUR FLORIDA SENATORS

Jim Boyd (R-Distr. 20) 941-742-6445
850-487-5020

Boyd.Jim.web@flsenate.gov

Joe Gruters (R-Distr. 22) 941-378-6309
850-487-5022

gruters.joe.web@flsenate.gov

OUR FLORIDA REPRESENTATIVES

Michael Owen (R-Distr. 70) 850 717-5070

MichaelOwen@myfloridahouse.gov

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

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