

DWC February 2024 NEWSLETTER



DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUB OF MANATEE COUNTY FLORIDA

WWW.DWCManatee.com

Our guest speaker for The Marge Kinnan and Shirley Snyder Scholarship Fundraiser speaker will be Barbara Zdravecky, who is the president of Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida.

Starting her career as a registered nurse, she joined Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida (PPSWCF) and, under her 24-year tenure, oversaw the expansion of services to include men and members of the LGBTQ community; spearheaded the building of headquarters in Sarasota; and established a successful transgender care program.

While extending the services, reach, and resources of PPSWCF, Barbara led countless battles against legislative efforts to damage the reputation and financial stability of Planned Parenthood. She has fought tirelessly for the healthcare needs of all and has received numerous state and national awards for her advocacy. Leading up to the 2020 election, Barbara served as Interim CEO of Ruth's List, recruiting and assisting pro-choice Democratic women to successfully run for public office throughout Florida.



Guest Speaker

Barbara
Zdravecky

The Marge Kinnan and Shirley Snyder Scholarship Fundraiser

Palm Aire Country Club

5601 Country Club Way

Sarasota, FL 34243

February 15, 2024

Each year, the Democratic Women's Club of Manatee County raises money to provide scholarships to deserving young men and women in Manatee County. Scholarships not only provide financial assistance to outstanding students, but also provide a wonderful opportunity for you to give back to the community. We will have a silent auction, delightful lunch and a wonderful speaker. We hope you can attend. See the next page for more details.

President's Letter

I can think of no timelier speaker for our DWC Scholarship Fundraiser than Barbara Zdravecky, president and CEO of Planned Parenthood for Southwest and Central Florida. Let's look at the status of women's rights in Florida. First, no abortion can be performed after 15 weeks and 6 six days. Many women don't even know they are pregnant during that time. But we won't have to worry about that silly time frame if Republican legislators have their way and pass a no abortion bill scheduled to be introduced during the current session.

How do the people of Florida feel about women's rights? They signed thousands more petitions than needed to get women's abortion rights on the ballot. Of course, the chances are slim to none that it will make it to the electorate if Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody, has her way. She's asked the Florida Supreme Court to keep women's rights off the ballot. Why? Because we may be smart enough to understand and sign the petitions, but she says the wording of the new law is too complicated. Speaks a lot about our intelligence. Speaks even more about what Republicans do when they are elected.

Joanie LaBaron

Nonreligious Americans are the new abortion voters

Unaffiliated Americans are today overwhelmingly in agreement on abortion — even more so than white evangelicals. A new survey conducted by the Survey Center on American Life found that 60 percent of white evangelical Christians believe that abortion becoming less available is a good thing for society — but a much larger percentage (78 percent) of unaffiliated Americans say this has been a negative development. And a Pew survey found last year that religiously unaffiliated Americans are much more united in support for legal abortion than white evangelicals are in opposition (84 percent vs. 74 percent, respectively). Recent polling also found that 65 percent of nonreligious Americans say the term “pro-choice” describes them very well, a jump from 54 percent roughly a decade earlier. By: Daniel Cox, *Five Thirty Eight*

PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATION AND MEAL CHOICE FOR THE

The Marge Kinnan and Shirley Snyder Scholarship Fundraiser

February 15, 2024 11:00 AM

Palm Air Country Club

5601 Country Club Way, Sarasota

Please allow enough mailing time for your reservation and check for \$55 to reach Wini Meier-Oakes by February 12th.

Registration and meal choice form is attached to the newsletter.

Please mail to :

Wini Meier-Oakes

3607 A Avenida Madera

Bradenton, FL 34210

Call or email Winni Meier-Oakes at winimo3@gmail.com or 608-347-9464 with any questions or concerns.

More people sign up for Obamacare in Florida as nation breaks record and deadline nears

Florida is once again leading the nation in people signing up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, with more than 4 million people enrolling for 2024 coverage as the country sees a record number of sign-ups.

More than 20 million people in the U.S. have signed up for plans on the federal health insurance exchange since the open enrollment period launched Nov. 1, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

In Florida, enrollment has ballooned to more than 4 million, about a 25% jump over last year's open enrollment period under ACA, commonly known as Obamacare, federal data shows. California has the second highest number of 2024 enrollments so far, with slightly more than 1.7 million.

The healthcare reform law, which went into effect more than a decade ago, requires insurance plans to cover preventive care services, such as annual checkups, and provide coverage to people with pre-existing conditions, without charging them more. The law also created a government-run insurance marketplace, with the goal to make affordable health insurance available to more people through the creation of tax credit subsidies. The law also gives states the ability to expand Medicaid to cover adults with income below 138% of the federal poverty level, though some states have declined to do so, including Florida.

While county-specific data for the 2024 enrollment period isn't available yet, Miami-Dade County has previously led the country in Obamacare enrollments. Florida also had the highest number of Obamacare enrollments among the states for 2023.

In Florida, people had the opportunity sign up for a plan through January 16.

"Today is a momentous day. A record number of people in the United States have health care coverage through the



Affordable Care Act's Marketplace — more than at any point in history," said U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra in a statement. "More people with access to preventive care means a healthier country and lower health care costs across the board. Quality health care gives people the peace of mind they need to participate fully in their communities, spend time with those they love, and pursue their part of the American Dream."

WHY DOES FLORIDA LEAD IN OBAMACARE ENROLLMENTS?

Experts have previously told the *Herald* that there are several reasons why Florida has such high Obamacare enrollment, including outreach efforts, lack of jobs that provide health coverage, and the state's decision to not expand Medicaid eligibility. More people were also expected to turn to Obamacare as the state purges its Medicaid list.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, to make sure there was continuous access of care, Medicaid participants were automatically re-enrolled in the health insurance program. When the federal public health emergency ended in May, Florida began checking people's eligibility again.

So far, more than half a million Floridians have lost their Medicaid. While some would likely turn to an ACA plan for coverage, experts have warned that many will fall into the Medicaid access gap. This gap refers to when people have incomes too high for Medicaid eligibility but too low for the Obamacare marketplace and are left without insurance.

By: Michelle Marchante, *Miami Herald*

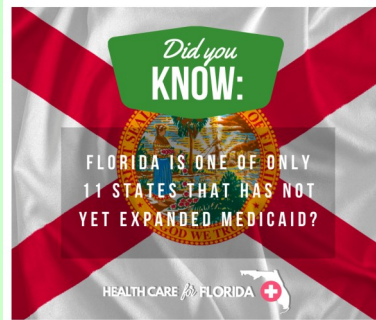


FL Senate president shuts down Medicaid expansion in Florida

Florida Senate President Kathleen Passidomo made it clear that she would not be willing to expand Medicaid, the subsidized insurance for low-income people, during her remarks on the opening day of the 2024 legislative session.

Although Passidomo proposes to expand access to health care through the “Live Healthy” legislation, Democrats’ hope for expanding subsidized coverage through Medicaid seems unlikely to materialize.

“I want to be clear. I’m not going to spend the next 60 days re-litigating Medicaid expansion. I understand the arguments both for and against,” she said January 8, 2024. “We have had the debate several times over the last decade. Medicaid expansion is not going to happen. It is not a quick fix. It is not a panacea.



In fact, if you cannot actually schedule an appointment with a health care provider, Medicaid expansion is nothing more than a false government promise.”

On January 8th, Democratic Rep. Dotie Joseph filed a proposal to expand coverage, and Democratic leaders in the House announced it would be one of their priorities.

Instead, Passidomo’s initiative aims to retain and attract healthcare workers through additional residency slots and a student loan reimbursement program, among other things.

“This is a robust package of bills. It is complex but critically important. In order to care for our growing population and meet the increased demand for health care, we must expand our workforce, increase efficiencies and elevate quality,” Passidomo said.

By: Jackie Llanos, *Florida Phoenix*

Federal judge in FL allows legal challenge to Escambia County book ban to proceed

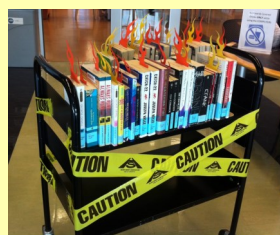
A federal judge in Pensacola has rejected the Escambia County School District’s plea to dismiss a lawsuit challenging its removal of books including “The Bluest Eye,” “Slaughterhouse-Five,” and “The Kite Runner” from its shelves.

In a terse order on January 10th, U.S. District Judge Kent Wetherell allowed claims of viewpoint discrimination and denial of the right to receive information under the First Amendment, but did reject an equal-protection claim.

“Today, we urged the court to vindicate the constitutional rights of students, parents, authors, and publishers. We are heartened that Judge Wetherell agreed and that our case can proceed,” Katie Blankenship, director of PEN America’s Florida office, said in a written statement:

“These books need to be returned to the shelves where they belong, and every day that students are refused access is a day they’re not

getting the high-quality education they deserve. This case cuts to the heart of who we are as a country, and for the sake of our children and the future of our democracy, it’s critical that we adhere to the language of the First Amendment and the precedents of our federal courts,” Blankenship said.



PEN America is a plaintiff in the lawsuit along with Penguin Random House, authors whose books were ordered removed or restricted, and parents in the school district who want their children to have access to the books.

The Escambia district has banned more than 1,600 books, by PEN America’s count, including dictionaries.

Districts are required to review literature in libraries and classrooms for LGBTQ content under Florida’s Parental Rights in Education or “Don’t Say Gay” law and for racial concepts considered divisive under the Stop Woke Act. Additionally, schools must post searchable online databases of their holdings to facilitate challenges to books.

By: Michael Moline, *Florida Phoenix*

Check out this Google interactive site to help you reduce our carbon footprint

At Google we have a unique opportunity to empower individuals, organizations and governments with the data and tools they need to drive positive action for our planet.

That means using our products and platforms to help people make more sustainable choices, and working together with our partners to help reduce their emissions and advance transformative technology for a carbon-free future. It also means using our deep legacy in research and the breakthroughs we're making in AI to accelerate innovation that can tackle climate change. We know that we also have a responsibility to address our own carbon footprint.

As we enter our third decade of climate action, we're setting ambitious goals for ourselves. We're pursuing net-zero emissions across our operations and value chain by 2030. This is supported by our ambitious clean energy goal to operate our data centers and office campuses on 24/7 carbon-free energy, such as solar and wind.

We expect this new era in technology to open up new, even bigger opportunities to accelerate system-level change. It's a big part of the reason we're optimistic about what's possible in the years ahead.

**[CLICK HERE TO VISIT
GOOGLE SUSTAINABILITY](#)**

Which states pay teachers the most and least?

In the 2021–22 school year, the average salary for a K-12 teacher was \$66,397. But after adjusting for differences in the cost of living across the country, patterns emerge about where teachers are more highly compensated.

For example, if a teacher in Virginia and Iowa each make around \$59,000 per year, that money would go further in Iowa because Virginia has a higher cost of living. If these salaries were adjusted to compensate for the different costs of living, the teacher in Iowa would make closer to \$66,000 and the Virginia teacher would make closer to \$58,000.

When considering cost of living adjustments, New York and Massachusetts K-12 teachers are compensated more than teachers in the rest of the country. Adjusted teacher pay is the lowest in Florida.

How does teacher pay differ by state?

For the 2021–22 school year, the nation's average cost-of-living-adjusted K-12 public teacher salary was \$64,300. Nineteen states and Washington, DC, paid higher than this national average and 31 states paid less.

Florida had the lowest average adjusted salary at \$50,508.

Florida was an outlier compared to other states that pay lower teacher salaries. In the next three states with adjusted salaries close to Florida – Mississippi, South Dakota, and West Virginia – the average teacher salary was within \$600 of \$55,000, or nearly \$5000 more than the average Florida teacher salary.



More than a third of states paid teachers an adjusted average of less than \$60,000 per year.

Meanwhile, New York paid the highest teacher salary — \$84,218 — when adjusted for cost of living. Massachusetts was second highest, with an average teacher salary of \$83,434. This pair was separated by nearly \$5,000 from the third-highest teacher salary: \$79,125 in Connecticut.

Hawaii's teacher salary was the most impacted by the cost-of-living adjustment. Hawaii's unadjusted teacher salary is the 15th highest in the nation, but 35th when taking cost of living into account. Its unadjusted teacher salary of \$67,000 is much more difficult to live on compared to a state with a similar nominal teacher salary, such as Minnesota, where the average unadjusted teacher salary is \$68,491.

Source: *USA Facts*

You've heard about the video "God Made Trump" and now the Lincoln Project has made a counter video titled "God Made a Dictator"

God made Trump

The video, called "God Made Trump," was shared by the former president on his Truth Social account January 5th. In the video, a narrator paraphrases the Bible while describing Trump as "a man who cares for the flock" and "a shepherd to mankind who won't ever leave nor forsake them."

The video begins as a parody of Paul Harvey's famous "So God Made a Farmer" speech, opening with a shot of the earth. A narrator says, "And on June 14, 1946, God looked down on his planned paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker,' so God gave us Trump."

The Trump video includes repeated religious references and quotations from the Bible. A narrator describes Trump as one who "follow(s) the path and remain(s) strong in faith." He paraphrases Psalm 140 to describe the "fake news media" — with "their tongues as sharp as a serpents" and "the poison of vipers ... on their lips" — and credits Trump with "finish(ing) a hard week's work by attending church on Sunday."

The video was created by Dilley Meme Team, a group of online content creators independent from the Trump campaign, though they work in close contact with it. The group — which calls itself Trump's Online War Machine — has faced controversy for its vulgar and sexist context.

By: Samuel Benson, *Deseret News*

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

God made a dictator

The Lincoln Project, a Republican anti-Trump political advocacy group, on January 9th released a new ad comparing former President Donald Trump to dictators past and present.

Titled "God Made a Dictator," the minute-long ad shows images of dictators, including Adolf Hitler and North Korean leader Kim Jung Un, as well as videos and still images of the former president.

"God said I need a corrupt man who is above the law and immune from justice," the narrator says as the images pan to Trump's mugshot. "So I made a dictator."

The video also features videos of the January 6, 2021 riot and various moments from Trump's first term in office, including his first impeachment trial.

Historians have warned that Trump's recent rhetoric, particularly on the subject of immigration, has paralleled language used by dictators in the past. Trump himself has joked about the comparisons, which he has mocked during town halls.

Last week, however, the former president claimed during a Fox News town hall that his comments have been taken out of context.

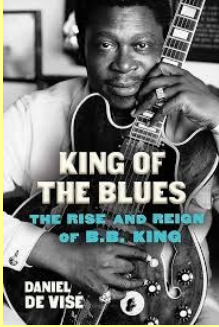
By: Eva Surovell, *The Messenger Politics*

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH
GOD MADE A DICTATOR](#)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

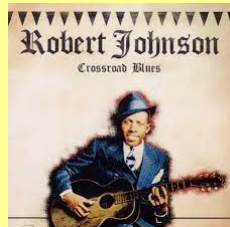
2024 | African Americans and the Arts

The theme for Black History Month 2024 focuses on “African Americans and the Arts”. This



theme is infused with African, Caribbean, and Black American lived experiences. In the fields of visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and other forms of cultural expression the African-American influence has been paramount. African-American artists have used art

to preserve history and community memory as well as for empowerment. Artistic and cultural movements, such as the New Negro, Black Arts, Black Renaissance, hip-hop, and Afrofuturism, have been led by people of African descent and set the standard for popular trends around the world. In 2024, we examine the varied history and life of African-American arts and artisans.



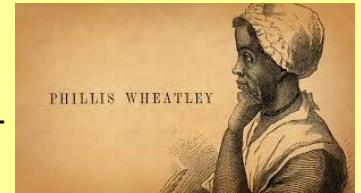
For centuries Western intellectuals denied or minimized the contributions of people of African descent to the arts as well



as history, even as their artistry in many genres was mimicked and/or stolen. However, we can still see the unbroken chain of Black art production from antiquity to the present,

from Egypt across Africa, from Europe to the New World. Prior to the American Revolution, enslaved Africans of the Lowcountry began their more than three-hundred-year tradition of making sweetgrass baskets, revealing their visual artistry via craft.

The suffering of those in bondage gave birth to the spirituals, the nation’s first contribution to music. Blues musicians such as Robert Johnson, McKinley ‘Muddy Waters’ Morganfield and Riley “BB” B. King created and nurtured a style of music that became the bedrock for gospel, soul, and other still popular (and evolving) forms of music. Black contributions to literature include works by poets like Phillis Wheatley, essays, autobiographies, and novels by writers such as David Walker and Maria Stewart. Black aesthetics have also manifested themselves through sculptors like Edmonia Lewis and painters like Henry O. Tanner.



Source: Central Michigan University

Florida Republicans eye new target: Flags

Flags could be the latest casualty in Florida’s ongoing culture wars.

Flags heralding support for LGBTQ pride, Black Lives Matter and even Donald Trump would have to be taken down in classrooms and government buildings across Florida under new legislation introduced January 16th by House Republicans.

GOP lawmakers contend removing all flags with a political viewpoint is necessary to save students from being “subliminally indoctrinated” with critical race theory, Marxism and transgender ideology. The proposal would also ban the Con-



federate flag from these places.

Critics of the legislation claim it is an attempt by Republicans to quiet the voices of LGBTQ and minority communities, efforts they equate to “bullying” and “affirming hate” for building on past legislation.

In 2023, GOP officials led by Gov. Ron DeSantis passed laws broadening the state’s prohibition on teaching about sexual identity and gender orientation, known by critics as “Don’t Say Gay,” banned transgender

minors from receiving gender-affirming care and made it a criminal offense for someone to use bathrooms that don’t align with their sex at birth.

By: Andrew Atterbury, Politico



It's another year and another chance to make things better. We can start by thinking about what we can do to help our environment. Just think, do we need to drive so much, or can we consolidate our daily trips and do our part in slowing pollution. What about all of the things we throw away! Many things that we toss could be donated to Goodwill or given to others. That would help reduce the trash in our landfills. Do we really need a perfect lawn? One way to help our environment is to not use so many chemicals on our yards and consider zero scaping. Maybe consider including areas in your yard to help the birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Remember, they need water, and many plants can contribute to helping them populate. There's a lot that we can do to help protect our environment that is so easy if we would just think before acting. Mary Bass, Environmental Chair

Florida Democrats flip House seat, elect Tom Keen to Florida House District 35

The Florida Democratic Party is proud to celebrate Tom Keen's election as the next member of the Florida House of Representatives from District 35.

Florida Democrats flip House seat, elect Tom Keen to Florida House District 35

Tom Keen is a decorated 21-year military veteran, a former Naval Flight Officer, and successful businessman. A committed progressive with a long history of public service, Tom's core values of honor, courage, and commitment have driven him to run for office and create positive, lasting change in Florida.



"Florida Democrats rallied behind Tom Keen," said FDP Chair Nikki Fried. "We saw unprecedented enthusiasm and investment in this special election from all corners of the state, as well as many of our national partners. We proved that Florida is still worth fighting for, and that a well-organized, well-funded Democratic campaign can still win a swing seat in this state.

"I have to congratulate Tom most of all, for working tirelessly to prove to Democratic primary voters that their faith in him, and in Florida's future, is worth it. The Keen campaign left it all on the field — thanks to them, we're one seat closer to ending the Republican supermajority in Tallahassee.

Source: Florida Democratic Party

As you may be aware, our annual dues of \$35 are due the first of the year. If you are going to attend the February fundraiser, please consider paying them then, or you can send a check to our treasurer.

Wini Meier-Oakes

3607 Avenida Madera Unit A

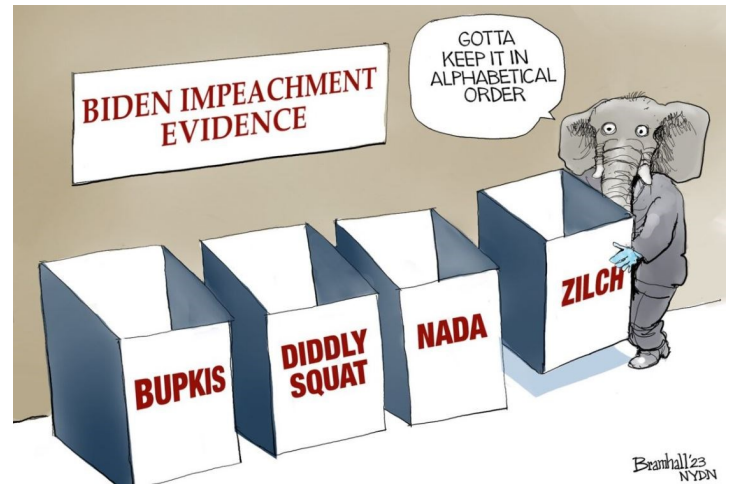
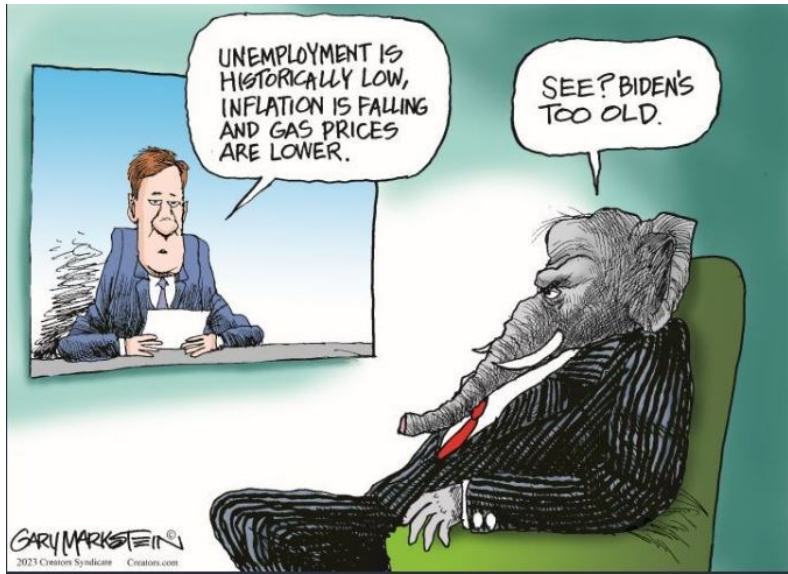
Bradenton, FL 34210



Both of this month's videos are excerpts from interviews of two Republican members on how the Republican Party has changed since Donald Trump's hijacking of the party. Both of these videos were created by The Lincoln Project.

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH MITT ROMNEY](#)

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH LIZ CHANEY](#)



DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CLUB OF MANATEE COUNTY OFFICERS/LEADERS 2024 - 2025

ELECTED OFFICERS

President	
Joanie LeBaron	joanielebaron0108@gmail.com
1st VP (Programs)	
Brian Heavrin	blh3011@gmail.com
2nd VP (Membership)	
Nancy Hadley	hadley1@me.com
Recording Secretary	
Patti Boynton	pboynton5@gmail.com
Treasurer	
Wini Meier Oakes	winimo3@gmail.com
Regional Representative	
Mary Duda	mduda@aol.com

Website Links

[DWC of Manatee County Website](#)
[Manatee County Democratic Website](#)
[Democratic Women's Club of Florida](#)

OTHER OFFICERS

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Candidate Search	Vicki Waters vwaters@earthlink.net
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Environmental	Mary Bass marygbass@gmail.com
Legislative Liaison	Patty Benson pattybeenutty@gmail.com
Corresponding Secretary	Mary Duda mcmduda@aol.com
Bylaws Chair	Fay Murphy faymurph@aol.com

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



PLACE
STAMP
HERE

The Manatee County Democratic week day office hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, Noon to 4:00 pm. Saturday hours 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 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

Joseph Biden (switchboard) (202) 456-1111
www.whitehouse.gov

U.S. SENATORS

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

Marco Rubio (R) (202) 224-3041
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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
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OUR FLORIDA SENATORS

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