



# BALLOT BOX

AUGUST 2026



**NICK  
DiCEGLIE**



**MELISSA  
RUTLAND**



**KATHLEEN  
PETERS**



**LISA  
CANE**



**DAWN  
PETERS**

## Senate, House, County Board, School Board candidates to speak at August 7 luncheon

Belleair Women's Republican Club will continue its speaker series featuring area candidates at its meeting and luncheon on Friday August 7. Five office seekers will address BWRC members and guests, three of whom will face challengers on the November 3 General Election ballot—Nick DiCeglie, Melissa Rutland and Kathleen Peters—and two of whom are facing opponents for re-election to the Pinellas County School Board during the August 18 Primary—Lisa Cane and Dawn Peters.

**Nick DiCeglie** is running to retain his District 18 Florida Senate seat. He was elected to the Florida State Senate in 2022. In December of 2022, he successfully sponsored legislation to supply a yearly rebate to Floridians with 35 or more toll transactions on their account, following through on his promise to lower prices for local families. In the Florida Senate, DiCeglie currently serves as Chair of the Appropriation Committee on Transportation, Tourism and Economic Development. Prior to serving in the Florida Senate, he was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in 2018 and reelected in 2020. As sponsor of HB 5 in 2019, Nick successfully passed legislation

making it harder for local government to raise taxes on citizens. The following year, he sponsored and passed HB 441 to improve transparency and competition in the procurement of public contracts. DiCeglie grew up in North Woodmere, NY, and has resided in Florida since 1996. He is married to Erica DiCeglie, an accomplished musician and composer. They have two children, Livia and Carlo.

**Melissa Rutland** hopes to flip the District 60 seat in the Florida House of Representatives that opened up when Democrat Lindsay Cross announced she would not see re-election. Rutland is a fourth-generation St. Petersburg businesswoman whose family helped build the city of St. Petersburg—from the Rutland Brothers department store on Central Avenue to St. Petersburg Bank & Trust, which became Rutland Bank. She began her career in real estate development and investment nearly 30 years ago at the Raymond James headquarters. Since then, she has worked in commercial real estate brokerage, asset

**SEE SPEAKERS—CONTINUED ON PAGE 5**

## AUGUST MEETING INFORMATION

Friday, August 7

Belleair Country Club  
1 Country Club Lane  
Belleair, FL 33756

Luncheon Fee: \$40

Registration & networking  
begin at 11:30am.

Event begins  
at 12 pm.

To RSVP:

A \$38 check made payable to  
BWRC or electronic payment  
is due by July 28.

Mail check to:  
BWRC  
1350 County Road 1 #57  
Dunedin, FL 34697

Scan this code to pay with Zelle  
or send via Zelle bank transfer to  
[bellemessages25@gmail.com](mailto:bellemessages25@gmail.com).



Alternate meal must be  
Requested with your RSVP.

No substitutions may be made  
the day of the luncheon.

Reservations and  
advance payment required.  
Please, no walk-ins.

## AUGUST MENU INFORMATION

Caesar Salad w/ Homemade Croutons  
& Dressing on the side.

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Chicken Cordon Bleu  
w/ a Light Wine Sauce

Sugar Snap Peas  
Sweet Potato Soufflé

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Rolls & Butter

+++

Cherry Cobbler

+++

### ALTERNATE VEGETARIAN PLATE

**Roasted Butternut Squash stuffed  
with parmesan cream cheese, spinach  
& wild mushrooms**

BWRC is privileged to host meetings and social events at Belleair Country Club. Members and guests must comply with BCC's dress and conduct code. Dresses, skirts, blouses, dress slacks and pantsuits are appropriate for women. Men must wear shirts with sleeves and remove caps in the dining room. Blue jeans are not permitted.



## FROM THE BWRC PRESIDENT

Dear Members of Belleair Women's Republican Club,

It is August, and we are now entering the dog days of summer. But be cool and pitch in in every way you can to get out the Republican vote because our party needs each and every one of them for the Primary Election on August 18. Call 10 friends, offer a ride to the voting precinct, knock on a neighbor's door, get involved. Please get the word out to excite people to vote! And, if you have time, grab a sun hat and a beach chair and go out to your local precinct to meet the members of your community. A kind greeting goes a long way! Try it—it's fun! You get to see friends you haven't seen in years.

Our party is counting on all of us to get involved, to do something that will generate enthusiasm for its candidates and encourage others to participate in the great and singular American democratic system by casting their vote. Remind them that their vote is a privilege and an honor, a gift brought about by the sacrifices of many brave and conscientious forefathers, as well as service men and women who have fought to keep the country free and many public servants who have dedicated time, talent and fortune to insure the principles we cherish remain in place.

BWRC is continuing to invite local Republican candidates to speak. They are all very busy, but we hope to see as many of them as possible. As you know BWRC is one of the oldest and largest clubs in this area. Candidates all know how important it is to come and attend our meetings. Over the years, I hope you have all gotten to know many of them.

Hearing directly from the candidates give us great insight into the issues and their position on them. That first-hand impression and knowledge can be invaluable in the both the Primary Election and General Election voting booths and also in our goal of educating others and making them informed voters as well.

Together, we have work to do on August 18, and then we will have even more to do leading up to the General Election on November 3. Once the Primary is over, we will need to all get behind each one of the party's chosen candidates even if our own personal candidate did not come out on top. We Republicans need to show an enthusiastic, united front and throw all our efforts behind the Republicans who will appear on the November 3 ballots.

To close, God bless our great country! The celebrations we watched the last few weeks celebrating America's 250th Birthday have been outstanding. I hope you all enjoyed them as much as I have.

*Corinne Steinhardt*  
BWRC President

## BWRC OFFICERS

### President

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### Parliamentarian

**Louise Davis**  
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## Important Information

- ♦ The **deadline** for making a luncheon reservation is **Tuesday of the week before the luncheon**, and payment must be **received** no later than the Friday before the luncheon. Failure to meet these requirements will necessitate denial of a reservation. **No late reservations/payments will be accepted.**
- ♦ As of September 1, there will be **no credit moved to future luncheons** for unattended luncheons.
- ♦ If bringing a guest to a luncheon, you must **email the treasurer her/his name.**

## WELCOME TO THE NEWEST BWRC MEMBERS

Pat Coughlan

Teresa Ditmyer

\* Dean McLeod

Adrienne Nguyen

Juli Peluso

Natalie Scott

\* Sustaining Member

# BWRC celebrates America's 250th



With chants of "USA! USA!" led by Belleair Women's Republican Club President Corinne Steinhardt, BWRC celebrated the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence at its meeting on July 3. In honor of the occasion, each person attending received a commemorative button, and adding to the festivities was a huge red, white and blue cake beautifully displayed at the top of the stairs. The birthday cake, when served to all those present, was not only delicious but also somewhat of a surprise for the inside layers were also red and blue joined by white icing. Another special feature of the event was a special celebratory photo backdrop where members could take pictures alone or in groups with cutouts of President Donald Trump and Vice President J.D. Vance. All agreed the luncheon was a wonderful way to recognize America's semiquincentennial.



## SPEAKERS—Continued from Page 1

management, development and consulting. In 2015, she founded Rutland Florida Gulf Group, a commercial real estate firm. Rutland served nearly a decade on the St. Petersburg Development Review Commission, including as its first woman chair. Governor Ron DeSantis appointed her to the Pinellas County Juvenile Welfare Board in 2023. She also has served on the board of the YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg for over a decade and on the delegation of Global Tampa Bay on several trade missions to bring businesses and jobs to Pinellas County. She serves on boards across the community, including the St. Petersburg Downtown Partnership and the Orlando Health Bayfront Hospital Foundation.

**Kathleen Peters** is running to retain her seat on the Pinellas County Board of Commissioners, which she has held since 2018. Prior to serving on the County Commission, Peters took office as a South Pasadena City Commissioner in 2008, then served as Mayor of the city from 2009 to 2012. In 2012, she was elected to the Florida House of Representatives. Throughout her tenure as a State Representative, Peters was known for being at the forefront of behavioral health epidemic, working to reform access to proper treatment for those suffering from mental illness and substance use disorder. As Commissioner, she continues to work towards improving the behavioral health system of care. Serving as an appointee on both the Statewide and Pinellas County Opioid Abatement Task Forces, she is the county's foremost legislative advocate for mental illness and addiction issues. She also leads the County's advocacy efforts to ensure Pinellas beaches receive the critical nourishment needed to protect them, and she serves on the Board of Directors of Tampa Bay Water, the regional drinking water supplier. Kathleen lives in Treasure Island with her husband, Jack, and yellow lab, Paisley. She has four sons—all born and raised in Pinellas County—four daughters-in-law and eight grandchildren.

**Lisa Cane** is seeking a third term on the Pinellas County School Board, serving in the District 2 At-Large seat. Cane was first elected in 2018 and won re-election in 2022. She is a Pinellas County native and graduated from St. Petersburg College with an Associate in Arts degree and completed her Bachelors degree in creative writing at Eckerd College. She is the founder and Executive Director of Tampa Bay Performing Arts Academy, where she has dedicated nearly two decades to serving the community. She is a leader, educator, small business owner, wife and mother of four who has been married to her husband for 19 years. She is a voting member of The National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences aka the Grammy Awards Association) and is a member of the National Association of Teachers of Singing. Cane says she is committed to academic excellence, parental involvement, fiscal responsibility, safe schools and teacher support, believing every child deserves a high-quality education that prepares them for success while ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent responsibly and transparently.

**Dawn Peters** is seeking re-election to the Pinellas County School Board District 3 At-Large seat. She was elected to her first term in 2022, and is currently serving as the Board's Vice Chairperson. She is a Florida native, a successful businesswoman and a devoted mother of two daughters. Peters answered the call to public service after a successful career in property management and after serving as a certified substitute preschool teacher, an elementary school student mentor and a PTA officer for many years. Through those experiences, she says she acquired a unique perspective and understanding of the Pinellas County school system's strengths and challenges and is committed to transparency and to achieving real change in area schools. She also worked as a volunteer and mentor coordinator at Thurgood Marshall Fundamental Middle School, where she gained insight into the struggles facing many students and families and the crucial role of parental and community involvement. She is a certified personal trainer and nutritionist and currently serves as president of a Pinellas County volunteer group serving veterans.

## Early Voting Schedule

**Dates:** August 8-16, 2026

**Hours:**

Monday-Friday, 8 am to 6 pm  
Saturdays/Sundays, 8 am to 5 pm

**Early Voting Locations:**

- **Supervisor of Elections Office**  
County Building 501 First Ave.  
N, St. Petersburg, FL 33701
- **Supervisor of Elections Office**  
Election Service Center  
13001 Starkey Road  
Starkey Lakes Corporate Center  
Largo, FL 33773
- **Supervisor of Elections Office**  
Pinellas County Courthouse  
315 Court Street, Room 117  
Clearwater, FL 33756

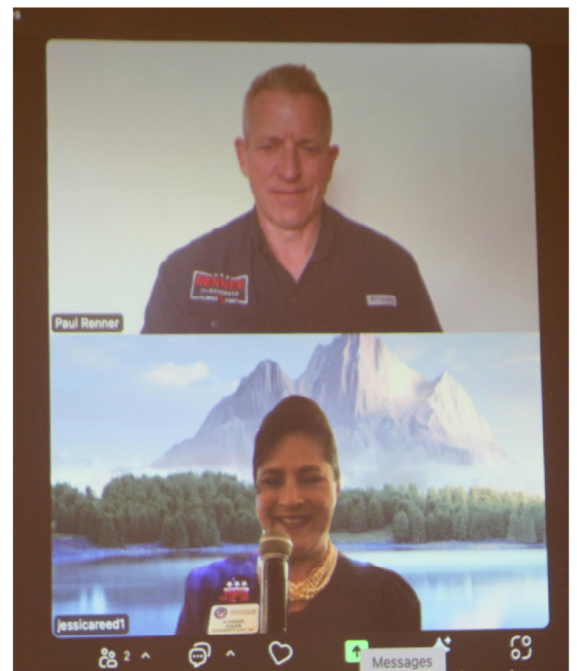
(Voter parking spots will be designated in courthouse parking lots.)





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## PICTURES FROM THE JULY BWRC LUNCHEON



(To see more pictures from BWRC events, visit [bwrc.us](http://bwrc.us) > Photo Gallery)