

THE INFORMED DEMOCRAT OF SWFL



Lerner Elected County Democratic Chair

On Monday, Nov. 1, the Lee County Democratic Executive Committee elected Kari Lerner of Cape Coral as County Democratic Chair.



Lerner, a product of the Lee County school system, (a graduate of Caloosa Middle School, Cypress Lake High School, with an AS from Edison Community College (now FWS)), also holds a BS in Business Administration (Summa Cum Laude) from Southern New Hampshire University. She worked in education for nearly a decade and became licensed as a realtor in Florida, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts. In New Hampshire she served as Town Chair of the Chester, NH, Democrats before being elected to the state House of Representatives (2017 - 2018), flipping a previously Republican

seat. On her return to Lee County, she became active in the local Democratic Party. She brought her wealth of organizing experience and political acumen to bear and was soon elected the State Committeewoman for Lee County. She is married to Alan Lerner and has 3 grown children and 1 grandson.

She succeeds Gabriele Spuckes who resigned after serving for 2 1/2 years as chair and 2 years as Executive Secretary. Spuckes's tenure saw significant growth in the number of precinct committee seats filled and in new fund-raising measures introduced. Although Republicans still outnumber Democrats in the county, under her leadership Democrats outperformed expectations in the 2020 election while "blue counties" on the East Coast seriously underperformed, putting Florida's votes in Trump's column. Having led the Party through the pandemic and the trauma of the Trump years, Spuckes said she was looking forward to stepping back and enjoying retirement together with her wife, Beverly Cramer.

Also, on Monday, Rachel Drucker of North Fort Myers was elected Executive Secretary.



DEMOCRATS FIGHT FOR

- VOTING RIGHTS**
- Equality & Justice**
- Economic Opportunity**
- Affordable Healthcare**
- Clean Water**

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From the (New) Chair

By Kari Lerner

As Chair, my focus will be fundraising, communications, and candidate recruitment & support. Vice Chair Jim Rosinus will continue to lead the field organization, credentialing, and volunteer coordination.

- For fundraising there will be monthly events starting with a Holiday Gala in December. Additionally we will have available for purchase shirts and other merchandise from the office.
- For internal communications there will be a bigger push for volunteers, clubs, caucuses, committees & affiliates to utilize the Portal rather than relying on emails, texts, and phone calls for dissemination of information.

- For external communications there will be very brief weekly meetings (<30 minutes) where the weekly talking points will be shared & discussed. The goal will be a focused and strategic messaging strategy that amplifies the messaging across platforms (including social media, traditional media, letters to the editor, and the newsletter).
- For candidate support and recruitment I have already been working with Todd Truax and Janelle Christensen to put together a more organized method for recruitment and support of candidates.

Volunteers Make October Day(s) of Action a Success

For the second month, canvassers hit the streets in Cape Coral, Fort Myers, Lehigh Acres, and Pine Island. This time, the "Day" of Action spread over two days and involved some 80 volunteers, including several FGCU students participating in "Make a Difference Day."



Debbie Canary, Carmen Negron, and Lori Berkowitz check in with Gloria McComas as they prepare to head out for canvassing in Cape Coral.



FGCU "Make a Difference Day" volunteers



Volunteers practicing with MiniVan



Going door to door

The effort focused on making Democrats aware that their Vote-by-Mail (VBM) registration expired as a result of SB90, the Republican voter suppression bill. Volunteers left hundreds of door hangers with information on how to renew VBM. They also brought back 70 updated VBM applications, along with a pile of petitions for Congressional candidate, Cindy Banyai, and 1 new voter registration. Next month's Day(s) of Action will be November 14, 20, 21 and 27 (see page 8 for details). Won't you join in this effort?



Canvassing volunteers are powered by snacks!!!

Protecting the Vote in Florida

Since the Informed Democrat started up again in July, Tom Klee has been detailing the provisions of SB90, aka, "the Florida Republicans' Voter Suppression Act" that make it more difficult for Floridians to cast their ballots. This month, the Informed Democrat continues the focus on SB90, but, in a piece by Audrea Anderson, also looks at another effort to dilute Democratic votes, namely Redistricting. While local redistricting may be a

done deal, the process will continue into next year at the State Legislature as Congressional and State Legislative districts are redrawn. Finally, we'll turn to Sam Koplewicz, the Director of Voter Protection for the Florida Democratic Party, who has some ideas about what you can do to strike back and ensure that Floridians' right to vote is protected.

It's the Law

The Ins and Outs of 3PVROs

By Thomas Klee

Third-party voter registration organizations (3PVROs) are groups that register people to vote. The important voter registration efforts conducted by the Lee County Democrats mean that it is a 3PVRO. Rules regarding 3PVROs existed prior to SB90 and the Party has complied with those rules.

Prior law required that a 3PVRO must register with the Division of Elections and submit to the Division the name and address of each registration agent registering persons to vote on behalf of the 3PVRO. This requirement remains but SB90 clarifies that it does not apply to persons who only solicit applications and do not collect or handle completed applications. SB90 deleted a requirement for a sworn statement from each registration agent.

SB90 revised the requirement for delivering completed applications to the Division or the SOE in the applicant's county of residence from 48 hours to 14 days, but not later than the registration deadline for the next election. That

deadline remains unchanged at 29 days before the election, an unusually long period.

The most controversial change implemented by SB90 concerns what the 3PVRO must notify each applicant about when they collect the application, namely (a) that the 3PVRO may not deliver the application on a timely basis, (b) that the applicant may deliver the application themselves in person or by mail, (c) how the applicant may register online with the Division and (d) how to determine if their application has been delivered. This may have a chilling effect on the collection of completed applications, in addition to being confusing to potential voters.

As in prior law, fines may be imposed on a 3PVRO which does not properly submit completed applications, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per calendar year.

Voter registration is very important to our efforts to Turn Florida Blue in 2022. If you are interested in becoming part of the voter registration effort, please sign up for the monthly training at mobilize.us/LeecountyDec/.

Thomas Klee is a retired lawyer who was co-head of the Canvassing Board team of the Lee County VPP in 2020. Mr. Klee is not admitted to practice law in Florida. Therefore, any statements contained herein are not to be deemed legal opinions. You may address any comments or questions to tklee7532@aol.com.



Redistricting Is Here and Requires Your Attention

By Audrea Anderson

When the United States census is taken every ten years, each lawmaking level of government is subject to the redrawing of electoral boundary lines based on census data. The process may change the number of positions or seats in local, state, regional and national lawmaking bodies. The reconfiguration of boundary lines may change the makeup of a political or voting district. This process is known as redistricting.

While redistricting is intended to be a positive move to ensure that all citizens have an equal and representative voice at each level of government, the process in America has long become tainted with political gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering is the unfair political process of manipulating boundaries of electoral districts to favor one political party. One gerrymandering tactic known as “cracking” _weakens the voting power of the opposition; it splits a natural geographic district comprised of like-minded citizens with common interests.

The Dunbar community is a prime example of a community of common interests, values and issues. Equally important, Dunbar has no natural divisions such as a body of water or a forest that may form a natural split. Therefore, when Dunbar

is split, what emerges is a classic example of gerrymandering.

Gerrymandering is cheating. Legislators in drawing boundaries are selecting their voters. It locks up power for one political party and advances excessive partisanship. It dilutes minority votes, splits communities and diminishes voters voices on issues they care most about.

When the redistricting process split Dunbar in half and paired it with part of North Fort Myers across the Caloosahatchee, clearly that was a manipulation of boundaries that did not comply with the principle of common values, like minded and common interests that comprise community.

Another common gerrymandering tactic is “packing”. Packing takes just enough votes away from one voting district and moves them to a contiguous voting district resulting in both districts casting a majority vote for the same party.

What can we as concerned citizens do about political cheating known as gerrymandering? First, we must be vigilant and let our public officials know that we are watching. We should form groups to attend redistricting hearings and be prepared to provide public comment.

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Update from the Voter Protection Team

By Sam Koplewicz

Dedicated to building upon the growth established by the Voter Protection Teams in the last electoral cycle, we value the hard work that each county team invested in recruiting members and refining our training materials. We are committed to building on the institutional knowledge that you helped forge to create a strong foundation for Florida’s Voter Protection Program. That is why we started with a listening tour across the state and with our out-of-



state supporters. As we revamp and refresh our training materials, we have been mindful to incorporate your feedback and respect the structural differences between regions. This is only the start of our partnerships and we look forward to working with you to defend our democracy. In the following months, we will work to ensure that list maintenance and implementation of SB 90 are as fair and indiscriminate as possible. (For more information, check out the SB-90 Fact Sheet.)

Henry Burden: Volunteer of the Month

The Voter Protection Team named Lee County's own Henry Burden as its Volunteer of the Month. They note that "although a native Floridian, in a previous life he lived in Maryland and worked in Human Resources and Training. In 2018, he thought he would never do anything political again, but he knew the Florida Election Protection and getting Donald Trump out of office were too important."

"Before the pandemic hit, Henry drove across the state training voter protection volunteers. He tracked 5,000 miles from the Florida Keys up to the panhandle. Although he realized that he was only charged with leading Lee County, he knew that training as many poll watchers, canvassing board observers, and boiler room workers would be essential to our statewide race. However, as pandemic illness and fear spread across the nation and the State of Florida, Henry knew that in-person training would no longer be possible. Turning the problem into a solution, Henry rethought his approach and in the first week of May, he started bi-weekly

Redistricting

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And finally, the Florida League of Women Voters (LWVFL), along with other statewide partners, successfully sponsored two Fair District Constitutional amendments in 2010 that created a set of fair, clear criteria redistricting officials are required to follow.

To learn more about redistricting and how we can keep eyes on those in power during this process, go to the LWVFL.org. Sign up for announcements on virtual training sessions.

Stay woke! And stay tuned!

Audrea Anderson is a retired higher education English instructor and marketing administrator. She lives in Fort Myers and is active in community service and social justice issues.

Editor's note: To keep up to date with statewide redistricting, check out the State House and Senate Redistricting Website as well as Common Cause.



trainings over zoom. By November 3, 2021, Henry Burden trained 2,500 volunteers on the rules, structure, and approach to the Florida Voter Protection program."

"His team covered every early voting location and 27 of 80 polling places on Election Day in Lee County, had two people at every Canvassing Board meeting, and support 16 other counties with their programs. For now, Henry has stepped back and left the reins to the others in Lee County. His trainings, materials, and thinking were key to the South West Region's strategy and influential on the whole state's program."

Henry has stepped back, but Voter Protection needs your help! Are you ready to step up? Sign up at <https://form.typeform.com/to/eB1DoQhN>.

Join the Team for the Next Phone Bank by clicking <https://form.typeform.com/to/eB1DoQhN>. Or If you are interested in phone banking in Lee County, email Diamond at drodriguez@floridadems.org!

Sam Koplewicz is the Florida Democratic Party's Director of Voter Protection.

Did you Know?

Not only did Florida's Supervisors of Elections oppose SB90, the bipartisan group recently issued letters supporting democracy and election integrity while warning against "misinformation, disinformation and mal-information that sows discord and undermines trust in America's electoral process." Read the full letter at <https://www.myfloridaelections.com/News/Public-Policy-Advocacy>



Club of the Month

Democratic Women's Club (DWC) of Lee County, FL

The Lee DWC was chartered on October 5, 1968, by the Democratic Women's Club of Florida (DWCF), Inc. On May 24, 1940, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Eleanor welcomed women attending a Democratic National Committee (DNC) Women's Division in Washington, DC. This was the beginning.

Some of the objectives of the club are:

- To bring together in common purpose all Democratic women of Lee County;
- To stimulate an active interest in governmental affairs among the Democrats of Florida and to provide a forum for the discussion of public matters.

The three most important factors of the Lee DWC are issues, grassroots, and charity.

Issues. We invite outstanding speakers to talk about important issues. They are there to inform us, inspire us, and call us to action. For example, our virtual meeting on November 13 at 10:30 will focus on Mobilizing against a Texas-Style

Why I Am a Democrat

By Susan McGuire

I am a Democrat because I believe in democracy.

Democracy means power is vested in the people, exercised by majority rule by their elected representatives. In a democracy, there is no gerrymandering, no voter suppression, no electors exercising a vote worth any more or less than that of any other vote. True democracy begins with equality in the vote.

I am a Democrat because of our legacy.

Greatness is measured by the wellbeing of the people. Democratic achievements are many and laudable - Social Security, Medicare, G.I. Bill,

Abortion Ban" in Florida and will feature Rep. Anna Eskamani. (You can get the zoom link by contacting Sandra McClinton at sandra.mcclinton@comcast.net or 239-471-7704).

Grassroots. In March, Marie Garnes & Mary Lou Woods spoke on "2021 Q1 DWCF Grassroots Campaign." In the past, postcards have been sent out to encourage people to vote by mail. The Club welcomes newly registered Democratic voters and invites them to join with the positive, powerful, progressive DWC women by checking out our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/DWCLeeCounty) or emailing joyceramay@comcast.net to get on our mailing list.

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Beatrice Jacquet-Castor, Carmen Negrón, Betsy Vaughn

Civil Rights Act, the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote, rural electrification, Peace Corps, NATO, unemployment benefits, Fair Labor Laws, the Voting Rights Act, and myriad other accomplishments that daily improve American lives.

Lately, it's common to hear Democrats define themselves by what they are not, often with a note of outrage. Although this is a satisfying way to assert our moral superiority, outside of our circle, it doesn't pass muster. Democrats are not the party of "better than they"; we are the party of the people. We are affirmative, not negative.

I am a Democrat because of our Plan to grow our legacy into a brighter future.

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First Annual Liberty Golf Tournament

The Lee County Democratic Party held the Liberty Golf Tournament and Luncheon on Tuesday, October 26, at the San Carlos Golf Club. With 42 total golfers--9 foursomes, and 2 teams of 3 as well as many "lunch only" folks, the event was deemed so successful that it will become an annual event. Thanks go to event sponsors including Prather Productions, SW Florida AFL-CIO, Victoria Yereance's ReMax Realty Team, and Lee Pitts Live After Work.



Outgoing County Chair Gabe Spuckes in foursome with Chris Nolan, Bev Cramer and Lynn Robins.



Fore!!!



More than a Fashion Statement!!!

Democratic Women's Club

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We encourage people to make plans to vote by mail. In addition, the Lee DWC has always supported local candidates. We invite them to speak at meetings and ask for donations. One year the DWC divided the sixteen candidates into 4 groups and had fundraisers for each group. On election night, we were thrilled when the school board candidates – Jordan, Vaughn and Gittens – won their race for school board.

Charity. The Lee DWC collected feminine hygiene products in March and delivered them to the Pace Center for Girls.

It has been a tradition of the Lee DWC to donate monies from the annual Christmas auction to a couple of needy girls for summer camp at Quality Life Center.

In summary, this club has a healthy balance between issues, grassroots, and charity bringing together in common purpose all Democratic women of Lee County. VOTE DEMOCRATIC!

Why I Am a Democrat

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The American Rescue Plan Act is only the beginning of our proposed investment in America. The Build Back Better Plan strives to deliver on the promise to make our nation better, fairer, and more prosperous. We can stop rewarding wealth over work, increase the minimum wage, invest in clean energy and high paying jobs, protect labor unions, make it easier for workers to organize, and invest in working families through affordable childcare, paid family leave, and universal preschool paid for through targeted tax increases.

I am a Democrat because I believe diversity is our strength.

On the great seal of the United States is this motto: "E Pluribus Unum", or "out of many, one". With our roots in cultures from around the world, our great and diverse people create the one United States of America, a land of limitless potential and possibility.

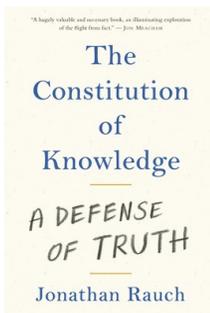
Susan McGuire is a retired businesswoman from the Washington DC area. She is a founding member and on the leadership board of Pine Island ROAR (Rise Up, Organize, Advocate, Reform), a 600-member local grass roots advocacy group active in Progressive causes, a former Board of Directors member of Women's March Ft. Myers, and a precinct committee member of the DEC.

Book Review

Jonathan Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth* (Brookings:2021)

By Melissa Butler

In the era of Fake News, Alternative Facts, and The Big Lie, Jonathan Rauch sticks up for Truth. No, not "Truth" as in Donald Trump's new social media app, "TRUTH Social," but truth (and the search for it) as the shared commitment of what Rauch calls "the reality-based community," and, as a vital component of American democracy.



For much of history, truth was what the powerful--priests or rulers--said it was. Truth came from above; the preserve of some higher authority. But something revolutionary happened in the 17th-18th centuries. A

new, liberal, worldview unfolded seeing individuals as endowed with reason, and empowered to make their own choices--about who should rule, and what to believe. But, individuals are also passionate, biased, and self-interested--if each makes their own choices, isn't chaos inevitable?

American Founders tried to solve this problem with a Constitution with a system of checks and balances that used ambition to counteract ambition. Analogously, Rauch looks to a "Constitution of Knowledge, liberalism's epistemic operating system" to do for knowledge what the Constitution did for politics, that is, set out rules of the games, but also create a community where rules and norms would be applied, and order maintained.

Specifically, the Constitution of Knowledge (CoK) offers the "reality-based community" a public system for reaching judgments about truth, relying on intellectual honesty and openness. No one has a final say; ideas must withstand efforts to disprove them. There's no personal authority to settle matters. The CoK is rooted in freedom; but, it requires toleration. No one can use force

or intimidation to control what others say or believe. The goals are peace and the growth of knowledge. The CoK embraces a willingness to agree to disagree, but depends on evidence, checking, and a marketplace of ideas where bad ideas wither away.

Unsurprisingly, Rauch finds the CoK undermined by technological developments, social media, trolling, and disinformation. Yet it is also threatened by "epistemic tribalism" on both left and right. While the "troll epistemology" of the Trumpian right destroyed the line between truth and falsehood, Rauch is liberal, not "woke," and worries that "cancel culture" on the left is also dangerous by forcing conformity, rejecting toleration, and "viewpoint diversity."

Nonetheless, Rauch finds glimmers of hope in Wikipedia, an embodiment of the principles of the CoK, as well as in a "flight to quality"--old media!--by younger consumers, and in groups like the Foundation for Individual Rights (FIRE) that promotes free speech rights on campuses. Ultimately, he argues that the Constitution of Knowledge needs defending--by institutions committed to pluralism and objectivity, including universities, newsrooms, government; but, it also requires the support of individuals with thick skins (no snowflakes!), reverence for facts, and a commitment to truth over "truthiness." For the reality-based community to preserve a commitment to truth and save democracy, he advises us "stand your ground, but also stand corrected. Check your facts, not your privilege. Stay civil and speak up."

November Days of Action

Ft Myers, Nov 14 <https://www.mobilize.us/leecountydec/event/424271/>

Cape Coral, Nov 20 <https://www.mobilize.us/leecountydec/event/424675/>

Lehigh, Nov 21 <https://www.mobilize.us/leecountydec/event/424679/>

Pine Island, Nov 27 <https://www.mobilize.us/leecountydec/event/424680/>

No Experience Necessary. We will train and partner people to knock these very friendly Dem Doors.

Please join us!

