

# The Democrat

A roundup of events, ideas, and opportunities for area Democrats and their friends.

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue #1 — January 2011

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## A Word from the Club President

By Jeff Shepherd

Happy New Year Democrats!

**Today's headlines:**

Democrats suffered losses of historic proportions in recent midterm Congressional elections.

The *Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia* mobilizes, stepping up



efforts to increase its membership and treasury, and begins publication of a newsletter.

Most of you probably thought these were 2011 headlines. They

weren't, though. They refer to 1995, and they're all true!

It's *déjà vu* all over again! If history continues to repeat itself, in 2012 the American people will reelect their incumbent President, and Democrats will win back some Congressional seats too!

At the local level Democrats knew then that we had to work hard to stem the national tide, and we did. Frank Bruno, Chairman of the *Volusia Democratic Executive Committee*, and DEC members made a concerted effort to ensure we

would have Democratic Clubs in every corner of the County.

By May of 1995, folks interested in starting a Democratic club in the the DeLand area organized and elected Keith Allen the club's President. By the end of 1995 the club was building its treasury, attracting dozens of new members, and publishing a monthly newsletter called *The Democrat*. The next year, President Bill Clinton was re-elected and Democrats gained several seats in Congress.

Fast forward 16 years: the *Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia* has remained strong, establishing itself as a perennial grass roots power in West Volusia politics. During each election year the club operates a headquarters where hundreds of volunteers come to work, meetings are held, and campaign material is stored and distributed. The headquarters is usually located in a prominent store front, where it serves to remind the community that we are actively working to fulfill our mission of electing good Democrats.

Many folks looking at the results of the 2010 election might offer condolences to the Democratic club. But if one looks at the national political landscape of the midterm election, then at the local

outcomes, we in west Volusia did pretty well. Among this year's winners we elected three Democrats to the County Council, re-elected one Democratic Congresswoman, kept one State Representative and two School Board seats, and helped the state-wide passage of amendments 5 & 6, Fair Districts.

The club has developed a new web site and is once again publishing its newsletter, *The Democrat!* We have increased participation by inviting members at-large to attend board meetings to offer input, and work on special projects. One of those special projects is the work of a group of volunteers we call "base



builders." They are busy contacting our members and friends to encourage them to give.

Historically one of the club's basic sources of income was membership dues. An individual general membership is \$20. We also offer higher levels of membership, encouraging larger donations.

The "base builders" are asking people to consider becoming "sustainers." Sustainers will make a monthly contribution of as little as \$5- \$10. We are still refining details of the project, and will be looking for approval from the members at the club's January 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. Once this new way of giving is implemented it will really strengthen our financial status. We all know how important fund raising is in politics, especially since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision!

Plans are also in the works to develop our neighborhood volunteer and precinct committee participation, and we continue to work on automating and improving our voter lists and other documents. 2011 is not an election year but your *Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia* is not resting. What we do now will help determine what happens in 2012!

# Precinct in the Spotlight

By Kevin Winchell

The monthly *Precinct in the Spotlight* column will highlight trends in demographics, voter registrations, voting history and other pertinent data, then use that data to inform our election strategy.



## PRECINCT 215

January 2011

Geographic Location - Southeastern DeLand

Polling Location - Wayne G. Sanborn Activities Center (751 S. Alabama Ave., 32720)

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Race/Gender	Democrats	Republicans	Other	Total
White	1058	1664	824	3548
Black	205	16	48	269
Hispanic	101	51	92	244
Other Race	59	45	91	195
Male	537	844	488	1869
Female	870	914	531	2315
Other Gender	16	18	36	70
Grand Total	1423	1776	1055	4254

TURNOUT

Election	Precinct	County	Democratic	Republican
2010 Governor	1058	1664	824	3548
2008 President	205	16	48	269
2006 Governor	101	51	92	244
2004 President	59	45	91	195

\*Turnout numbers do not include absentee ballots.

CONCLUSIONS

There are 353 more Republicans than Democrats registered in Precinct 215, giving them a 24.81% advantage. This should be compared to the 18,039 voter, 16.46% advantage Democrats have over the Republicans county-wide.

At the time of the November general election, its 4171 voters were the most for any precinct in the county, beating out second-place Precinct 729's 3794 voters. (The latter is located in Port Orange.) Precinct 251 also has one of the largest total number of registered Democrats of any precinct in the county.

What does this mean? Given the diffuse residency patterns of Democrats in the precinct, it would probably not be the best area for active campaigning (e.g., door-to-door canvassing).

Our efforts would probably have more impact in a different precinct, one where we could reach more voters in a shorter amount of time.

However, if we wish to identify precincts for passive campaigning (e.g., placing signs at polling locations, assigning poll watchers and poll greeters), then the high total number of Democrats, regardless of where they live, suggests this would be an excellent target. Our efforts could be concentrated at places where voters would gather naturally.

Turnout in this precinct is historically much lower than in the rest of the county, though it has improved slightly since its abysmal 17.85% turnout in 2004. This means many

Democrats are staying home on election day.

To understand the significance of this, consider the following: *All else remaining equal*, if we had had the same turnout percentage of Democrats in 215 as in the county as a whole (40.20% instead of 27.43%), Alex Sink would have beat Rick Scott by three votes (572 vs. 569).

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*Kevin Winchell is Vice-President of the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County.*

# Member's Opinions



## A Civic Ethic for the New Year

By: [Paul Lachelier](#)

In his autobiography, famed “founding father” Benjamin Franklin enumerated thirteen virtues which he believed led to a morally more perfect life if systematically mastered: temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, humility. Franklin’s virtues are considered a classic expression of the so-called “Protestant ethic,” a disciplined lifestyle and set of cultivated habits which sociologist



Max Weber argued nurtured capitalism.

To my knowledge, remarkably, no corollary personal ethic has so succinctly been proposed to nurture democracy. Yet if democracy, as popularly defined, means government of, for, and by the people, then the disposition of the people toward their government is critical to democracy. That democratic disposition, or civic ethic, does not simply mean belief in representative government and individual rights. Nor is it simply a willingness to pay attention and vote once every one to four years when an election rolls around. The civic ethic is an ongoing lifestyle, a set of everyday actions and attitudes that allow democracy to flourish the more citizens practice them.

With a new year upon us, with its ritual reflection on how we can become better persons, here are three components of a civic ethic

ever more needed in an ever more dangerous world:

### A Democratic Disposition

First and arguably foremost, democracy demands citizens disposed to engage with each other to pursue common goods, from a local dog park to world peace. This engagement ethic must be as strong if not stronger than the tempting disposition to withdraw from public life into what political scholar Alexis de Tocqueville called our “small, private circles” of family and friends. Furthermore, in a country and a world often deeply divided, engaging those different from us in ongoing ways is far more important than engaging the like-minded. Engaging those like us may be more comfortable and easy, but engaging those different from us can be all the more rewarding and politically significant when such engagement succeeds in bridging social divides. Yet precisely because such bridging engagement is

difficult it develops less easily, and hence needs patient nurturing.

### **A Sociological Imagination**

Perhaps one of the most effective way to nurture the engagement ethic is to develop citizens' "sociological imagination," a term sociologist C. Wright Mills coined to refer to the ability of individuals to connect their private troubles to public problems. The connections are countless and profound, including personal debt and the vast credit economy, obesity and food industry practice, work-family pressures and employment policy, teen delinquency and the modern segregation of youth from adults, alcoholism and unemployment rates, to name just a few. The more inclined we are to grasp these connections, the more inclined we may be to engage with public issues.

### **Ambivalent Passion**

Passion for an ideal – whether that ideal be conservative, moderate or liberal – likewise moves citizens to engage more than does the dispassionate reason some political scholars advocate. But citizens also need ambivalence to temper their self-righteous passion. Ambivalence entails a number of virtuous dispositions, such as the disposition to recognize the limits of our ideals and the strengths of competing ideals, the disposition to question rather than demonize or deify, and the disposition to consider the consequences of the means we

pursue to achieve our ideals. Passion and ambivalence can and do often conflict, and so being ambivalently passionate is an ongoing, self-critical balancing act.

These civic virtues need not be learned in school. Indeed, much of what we know and believe we do not learn in school. To the extent that citizens learn any civic virtues, as well civic skills (effective public speaking, media outreach, meeting facilitation, volunteer recruitment, fundraising, etc.) and the workings of democracy, they learn them through practice, not in political science classes.

Accordingly, it behooves governments, local to national, to promote the practice of democracy among their citizens just as energetically as companies market their products to these same citizens (but without the cynical manipulation business marketing too often entails). As sociologist Herbert Gans once said, if citizens will not come to democracy, then democracy must come to them. Democracy comes to citizens not only when governments make it

easier to vote, but when governments encourage more substantial citizen engagement in the decisions that affect their lives. There is no lack of ideas for broadening citizen engagement – from policy juries to televised democracy in many forms to fully publicly financed elections – but there has been a lack of political will, especially when so many view government as an impediment to, rather than a tool for, citizens' development.

Perhaps the best point of departure for opening discussion about the role of government in nurturing citizens' civic ethic is this one: representative democracies need direct democracy to best function. For our representatives to be accountable and responsive to citizens, citizens need to be continually, not episodically, engaged in the public decisions that affect their lives, regarding everything from local zoning to global security. Practice nurtures vigilance. Otherwise, we get what we have: representatives who respond more to the engaged and well-heeled minority than to the less engaged majority.




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*[Paul Lachelier](#) is a member of the Executive Board of the DCNWVC, and a political sociologist at Stetson University.*



**Did you know?**

**What's your political news IQ?**

To test your knowledge of prominent people and major events in the news, [the *Pew Research Center*] invites you to take our short 12-question quiz. Then see how you did in comparison with 1,001 randomly sampled adults asked the same questions in a national survey conducted Nov. 11-14, 2010 by the *Pew Research Center*.

[Take the Quiz!](#)

**Sample Question**

Compared with the 1990s, is the current federal budget deficit:

- Larger
- Smaller
- No different

**Coming Events**

- Club Meeting: Thursday, January 27, 7:15 PM, DeLand Police Department Community Room, 219 W. Howry Avenue. Our guest speaker will be Volusia County Democratic Executive Committee Chairman Phil Giorno.

**Links**

- [Northwest Volusia Democratic Club](#)
- [National Democratic Party](#)
- [Florida Democrats](#)
- [Civil Discussion in N.W. Volusia County](#) (A private blog intended for local Democrats and their friends.)

**Help us base build!**

We are looking for volunteer "Base Builders" to: (a) help make calls to our members and fellow Democrats in Volusia County to grow our party and build our strength, and (b) enter the data we gather from our calls into our database. We will be making calls typically every second and fourth Thursday of the month at 5:30-7:00 PM, before our club executive board and membership meetings, respectively. Please volunteer for our bi-monthly calling parties by contacting Paul Lachelier at [sociopolifrance@hotmail.com](mailto:sociopolifrance@hotmail.com). Thank you!

