

The Democrat

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

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue #6 — June 2011

Did you know?

Precinct Profile

Opinion

Coming Events

Test yourself! See how your knowledge of current news and politics compares to others'.

Precinct 201, by Kevin Winchell.

Let's Talk Accountability, by Joel Davis.

Note: Deadline to register for the Democratic State Convention is June 27!

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A Word from the President

Jeff Shepherd

The Florida Legislature consists of 40 Senators and 120 State Representatives. Twenty years ago Democrats held majorities in these bodies. The balance has swung. In both houses Republicans now hold at least two-third majorities. On top of this the executive branch is headed by a Republican Governor, Rick Scott. In fact at the finish of Scott's first term it



will have been 16 years since Lawton Chiles, our most recent Democratic Governor held office!

Florida's state government is out of balance.

There needs to be a healthy debate on the issues, the kind of debate that has not been heard recently in Tallahassee. With such weak numbers in both house chambers, Democrats have not been able to rely on procedures or build coalitions that may slow or stop bad bills, so the House Speaker and the Senate President can pretty much ignore the minority party.

This is very much the picture State Representative Dwayne Taylor, a Democrat from Daytona Beach painted when he spoke at the May meeting of the *Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia*.

He explained how the legislative leadership exercises absolute power over day-to-day things like where a member parks or where he or she sits. He gave examples of how the leaders hold committee appointments as a carrot, compelling a member to stay in-line on particular votes. The stick Taylor said is the prospect of a lost committee chair position, and a member's preferred parking spot and seat on the floor! The result is party-line compliance on votes that are priorities for the Republican majority.

This has been a very busy year in the state capital. And with the Republicans so freely wielding their political power, this business has yielded what most Democrats (and Independents and reasonable Republicans!) would agree are undesirable results.

The 2011 Florida Legislature enacted many measures, including one that cripples community control for school districts, one that cracks down on voting, and yet another that throws out the Growth Management Act of 1985.

This year's state budget reduces funding for public education, and *Healthy Start* (a program for women and infants), while increasing tuition for students at state universities by eight percent.

There is not enough room in this news letter to cover even half the damage done by our state leaders. The Republican dominated legislature and Governor Scott also slapped a 3-percent income tax on teachers, and other state employees, including police officers, and firefighters.

Florida lawmakers also privatized *Medicaid*, which in coming years will give \$20 billion-plus in plum contracts to corporations for managed care.

This is just the tip of the mess. The Governor issued an executive order making it mandatory that state employees and adult welfare recipients be drug tested. (Fortunately, the order was immediately challenged in court, and only a few days ago Scott suspended plans to implement the flawed policy.)

He also turned down a \$2.4 billion federal grant to fund high speed rail along an 85 mile segment of I-4 connecting Tampa and Orlando. This was to be a showpiece for the Obama Administration's initiative to create a nation-wide high speed rail system that would be accessible to 80 percent of Americans in 25 years. And that's just the reason for the Governor's action according to Taylor.



"It's pure politics," Taylor said of the Governor's decision to reject the federal funding for the rail project.

On November 6, 2012, it will be politics. That's when every seat in the Florida House of Representatives is up for reelection, and half the seats in the Florida Senate are up. That's when the people of Florida will have an opportunity to say "enough": Enough fear of the Federal Government when it implements laws to make health care available to all Americans. Enough misguided budget priorities that protect tax breaks for the wealthiest, while placing additional burdens on lower and middle income citizens.

We need to bring some balance back to Florida's State Government.

Jeff Shepherd is President of the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County. He can be reached at [Jeff.Shepherd](mailto:Jeff.Shepherd@stetson.edu).

Precinct in the Spotlight



Precinct in the Spotlight is a periodic column highlighting a particular voting precinct in Northwest Volusia County. It will highlight trends in demographics, voter registrations, voting history and other pertinent data, then use that data to inform our election strategy.

PRECINCT IN THE SPOTLIGHT - JUNE 2011

Precinct 201

Geographic Location - DeLeon Springs

Polling Location - 1st Baptist Church of DeLeon Springs (4995 Central Ave., 32130)

Demographics

Race/Gender	Democrats	Republicans	Other	Total
White total	456	504	296	1256
Black total	24	2	3	29
Hispanic total	57	24	60	141
Other race total	16	22	31	69
Male total	214	295	188	697
Female total	336	251	191	778
Other gender total	3	6	11	20
Grand total	553	552	390	1495

Turnout

Election	County Turnout	Precinct Turnout	Dem. Candidate	Rep. Candidate
2010 Governor	40.20%	33.92%	226 votes (45.75%)	249 votes (50.40%)
2008 President	59.29%	38.92%	235 votes (40.80%)	331 votes (57.47%)
2006 Governor	38.22%	36.07%	252 votes (46.75%)	265 votes (49.17%)
2004 President	59.74%	51.49%	318 votes (45.17%)	380 votes (53.98%)

*Turnout numbers do not include Absentee Ballots, due to some data not present on Supervisor of Elections website for every cycle.

Analysis and Conclusions

Precinct 201 is located in "downtown" DeLeon Springs, mostly the area immediately surrounding and to the East of U.S. 17. Although it is a relatively rural area, there is still some population density around U.S. 17, and most of the actual rural areas of DeLeon Springs vote in a different precinct - precinct 109.

On first glance, it appears that this would be a toss-up precinct for Democrats and Republicans: Democrats have a micro-thin vote advantage of 553 versus 552 registered voters in this precinct. The "Others", too, seem to split the difference between demographics that favor either Democrats or Republicans: there are more white voters, but a huge percentage of Hispanic voters, too; further, there are more female voters, but only three

more than the number of male voters.

When looking at the turnout history, though, we can see some patterns that show the Republicans' edge in this district. Democrats have never earned more than 46.75% of the vote since 2004, and Republicans haven't earned less than 49.17% of the vote in that same time. From 2004 to 2010, Republicans won this precinct by a margin of 62, 13, 96 and 23 votes, respectively. While those margins aren't huge when comparing them to the overall turnout in the county or even the state, those turnouts are huge for that precinct when only about 500-700 people vote in a given election.

For some reason, this precinct's Democratic turnout is inverse to what we would expect from normal turnout. In presidential

election years, turnout is supposed to jump almost 50% from non-presidential years. In precinct 201, however, turnout actually decreases in presidential years. In fact, our lowest turnout (40.80% in 2008) came at the time that we actually won the race in question, electing President Obama in 2008.

What does this all mean for us politically? First, it tells us that we need to focus heavily on voter registration - especially within the booming Hispanic population that is becoming a stronger constituency within the Democratic Party. If we could register 20 young Hispanic voters in this precinct each year, we'd have enough votes to win this precinct in non-presidential years by next year, and enough votes to win this precinct in presidential years by 2016.

Second, it tells us that we should not expect President Obama to win this precinct in 2012 (as he lost it by 16.67% in 2008), but if we can get him to narrow the gap to the single-digits (like Kerry was able to do in 2004) then he should be in excellent position to repeat his

2008 success county- and state-wide. To that end, it sets up a goal for us: assuming a turnout that mirrors the 36% range we've seen in the past three cycles, to squeeze 300 votes for Obama out of this precinct in 2012. Let the voter registrations, calling and door-to-door

canvassing begin on our quest to 300!

Kevin Winchell is the Vice President of the DCNWVC. He can be reached at kwinchel@stetson.edu.

Demographics:

http://www.voterfocus.com/ws/Pfinder/Pl_county.php?op=loc&search=Search%20Now&p=6&s=1&county=VOLUSIA&suppr=1&name_and_zip=N

Turnout:

<http://www.volusia.org/elections/results.htm>

Member's Opinions



Let's Talk Accountability

Joel Davis

Governor Rick Scott recently signed into law a bill requiring welfare recipients to undergo drug testing, commenting that "This new law will encourage personal accountability and will help to prevent the misuse of tax dollars," according to his

May 31 press release. Like our previous governor, Scott would like us to believe he's holding "government bureaucrats" accountable, too. He even seems to have taken a wee drop of his own accountability medicine in recently reversing his opposition to the prescription drug database. But I think we Democrats should be talking with our friends and neighbors and people we meet

around town about accountability.

"Accountability" is a key word in Republican rhetoric, but they don't own it. It's true, Republicans like to use the term "personal accountability" in attacks on social programs. They claim the poor have to learn the lessons of personal accountability that the rich exercise every day. "Teacher accountability" is another

darling of those who have been dismantling our public schools.

But accountability cuts both ways. We Democrats advocate corporate accountability: multinational corporations should be held accountable for shipping jobs overseas, for the damage they have done to our environment, for the taxes they avoid paying through lobbying and cutting sweetheart deals, and so on. And almost everybody, Republican and Democrat alike, would agree that holding legislators accountable for their votes is a good thing – we just differ on which votes they are to be held accountable for.

That's why I think accountability is a great way to start conversations with people who haven't entirely made up their minds politically. Everybody wants somebody to be held accountable. If you're waiting at the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), you can grumble loud enough for your neighbors to hear, "they ought to be held accountable for all the time they waste." A few kindred spirits will nod or harrumph approval, regardless of political stripe. Maybe the DMV is understaffed, or maybe there's another problem, but Something Should Be Done!

But what's the point of making small talk about accountability



with fellow-sufferers at the DMV? The point is to counter the prefabricated Republican harangues that inundate all of us very day. How could friendly conversation about accountability even begin to counter the Republican spin machine? The answer lies in the nature of that

machine. The Republican spin machine is effective because it gets people all across the nation repeating the same sound bites like an Orwellian Ministry of Truth. And conservative organizations are really good at using divisive social issues to stoke people's fears and prejudices.



Radio "Talker" Rush Limbaugh

Turn on the TV any given day and you'll hear the same pundits and the same operatives pounding their themes: "Obamacare death panels," immigrants stealing American jobs, and so on. But you'll notice that most of the topics in their arsenal are national, not local. A centerpiece of Republican Representative "Ric" Keller's failed campaign to keep Florida's 8th Congressional District seat before Democratic Alan Grayson won it was building a fence along the U.S.-Mexico border.

A conversation with your neighbor, on the other hand, can be a lot more specific and local. There is still some truth to famed Democrat and former House Speaker Tip O'Neill's axiom that "all politics is local." Conversations with our neighbors are the bedrock of civic discourse, and when people are talking with each other about accountability locally, they have a much better chance of finding common ground because each is more likely to know and feel what the other is talking about.

Joel Davis is Associate Professor of English at Stetson University. He can be reached via email at jdavis@stetson.edu.



Did you know?

What's your knowledge of our state?

This month's quiz deals with basic facts about Florida.

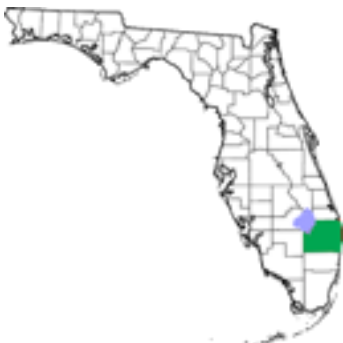
[Take the Quiz!](#)

Sample Question

Which is Florida's largest county in area?

- Duval
- Dade
- Monroe
- Palm Beach
- Orange

[Answer: Palm Beach.]



Coming Events

Next Club Meeting

Thursday, June 23rd, 7:15pm,
DeLand Police Dept. Community Room on W. Howry Ave.

Agenda:

Lisa Walker, President of the *Democratic Club of Southwest Volusia County*, will talk about the changes to voter registration laws and how that will impact us going in to 2012.

Democratic State Convention

Make plans to attend the *Florida Democratic Party Convention* taking place October 28 - 30, 2011, at the *Disney Contemporary Resort* in Lake Buena Vista near Orlando. Meet with the leaders of the *Florida Democratic Party* and many important candidates. It is rumored that even President Obama may attend!

[To learn more and register, click here.](#) Remember: Registration deadline is June 27th!

Links

[Northwest Volusia Democratic Club](#)

[National Democratic Party](#)

[Florida Democrats](#)

[Blog for informal Democratic conversation](#)

[livepage.apple.com](#)