

# The Democrat

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

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue #11 — October 2011

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# roy Zimmerman

**FUNNY SONGS ABOUT  
IGNORANCE, WAR,  
AND GREED!**



**SEE PAGE 9, "COMING  
EVENTS," FOR  
DETAILS!**

**Don't forget to mark our November 15th fundraising event on your calendar!**

## An update from the President

Jeff Shepherd

It is nearly that time again. In a few short months it will be campaign season.

In some ways the calendar has already turned from the off season, and we are already slipping from preseason into full campaign mode. The Republican presidential debates are underway; this weekend, October 28 through 30, Democrats from across the state will meet in Orlando at their biennial Florida Democratic State Convention; and candidates are beginning to file with the elections office and gather signatures to qualify by petition for a spot on the ballot.

In other words, 2012 is already upon us. Our Democratic Club has much work accomplish, and it will be a long time before we can look back at weekends free from such tasks as canvassing for votes and searching for an empty store front suitable for our campaign headquarters. Among our immediate tasks, a key to success with most of the others, is recruiting and training precinct committeemen and committeewomen.

The piece from the 1993 Volusia County Democratic newsletter,

which we've republished in this issue of *The Democrat* (p. 7) lays out the duties of a precinct captain. ("Precinct captain" is a term used loosely for precinct committeeman or committeewoman.) These persons have a seat on the Volusia County Democratic Executive Committee (VCDEC), which is an arm of the Florida Democratic Party. Members of the committee must qualify the same as any other candidate for office. If more than one qualifies, the candidates' names appear on the official ballot, and Democrats in that precinct elect the committeeman or committeewoman.



The main role of a committeeman or committeewoman is carrying out the duties of a precinct captain, much as outlined in the piece from 1993. Election for DEC seats is held the same year as presidential elections. Typically there are few contests for these seats, however, and it is not unusual for a large number to remain vacant. To

qualify for membership on the VCDEC one must attend 3 monthly meetings, obtain the approval of the membership committee, and take a loyalty oath. Required for continued participation on the committee is attendance at the monthly meetings, and joining at least one subcommittee.

The huge advantage that a VCDEC member has is access to *Votebuilder*® also known as the VAN (Voter Activation Network). This is an on-line database that enables subscribers to access, input, and share valuable information on voters. For Volunteers who wish to enhance their effectiveness as a member of our Democratic club and and the club's campaign organization, joining the VCDEC and taking charge as precinct captain is a top priority.

Bill Hall has agreed to take a lead role in an effort to recruit members of our Club to join the VCDEC, so you may be getting a call or an e-mail from him. Please consider joining the ranks of Democrats who have made this commitment to do something more to elect the best candidates from the courthouse to the *White House*!

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*Jeff Shepherd is President of the Democratic Club of Northwest Volusia County.*

# Member Profile

*Melody Dimick*



## 1. What is your current occupation(s)?

After teaching for over thirty years, I am pursuing my dream career—writing. Recently, my short story “Sorry!” was selected for inclusion in the Florida Writers Association Anthology. I am working on a collection of spoken word poems and a young adult novel.

## 2. Why are you a Democrat?

I became a Democrat because President Nixon and Vice President Agnew represented ideas and ideals I abhorred. Nixon and Agnew were in office when I turned twenty-one and became eligible to vote. Both resigned in disgrace, but not before Agnew had made such offensive statements as, “Three things have been difficult to tame: the oceans, fools and women. We may soon be able to tame the oceans;

fools and women will take a little longer.” The words and actions of these two hawks were also responsible for my husband being drafted and sent to Vietnam.



I remain a Democrat today because Democrats favor labor and have a social conscience. Since 1972, I have fought for an Equal Rights Amendment. Past civil rights legislation indicates Democrats will continue to support this amendment. I paid into Social Security for over forty years; I care about that! The gap between the rich and the poor exploded during Republican times. This is

offensive to me. We do not live in a plutocracy, yet recent events and the decisions of Republican-appointed Supreme Court judges indicate they believe businesses have the same rights as citizens. I disagree. While we tout capitalism as a means of achieving the American Dream, greed is offensive in the face of joblessness, homelessness, poverty, downsizing, and the decline in funding for education.

## 3. What are some things you have done to help elect Democrats and support our party?

I have made phone calls, sent emails, attended speeches, written articles, donated money, and talked to friends to help elect and support Democrats.

## 4. What is one issue you care a lot about and why?

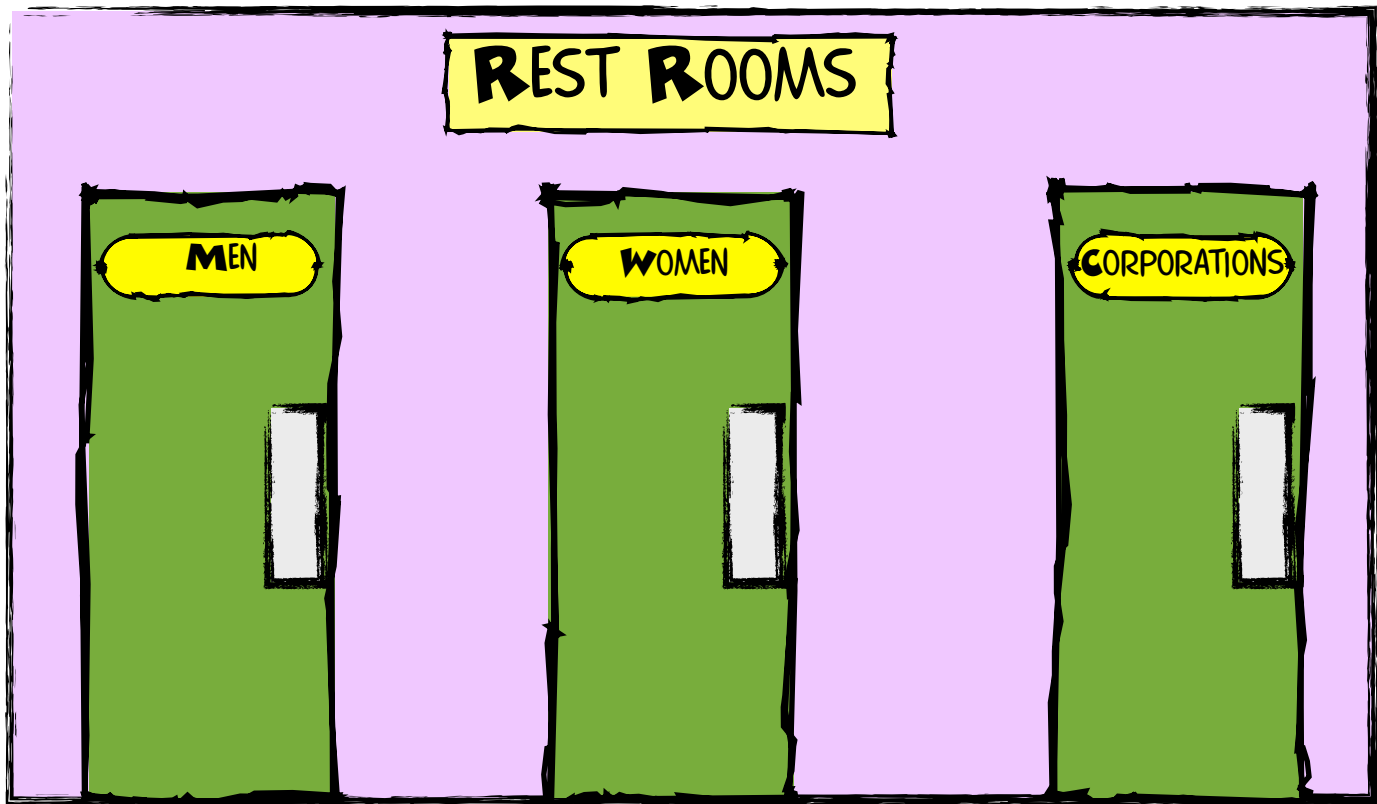
One should not vote based upon one issue alone; that is

precisely the strategy Republicans have used to get pro-life candidates elected regardless of their stand on other issues. I care equally about Social Security, labor, women's rights, education, ending our involvement in wars and wasting dollars in the money pit of nation building. However, the issue that troubles me most is that many Americans embrace sending young men to war as a price of freedom, but do not seem to feel that paying taxes is a legitimate price for living in a democracy. Will Rogers once said, "The income tax has made more

liars out of the American people than golf has." This joke has become a truth threatening to destroy our nation more than terrorists. Bush's tax cuts created our deficit. Rather than cutting spending, Congress should spur job growth by increasing revenues, by funding repairs to infrastructure damaged by recent disasters and by passing the President's jobs bill.

5. **If you could wave a magic wand, what are 1-2 government policy changes you would prioritize, locally, statewide, or nationally?**

*Expelliarmus!* Citizen's United vs. Federal Election Commission overturned — businesses not afforded the same rights as individuals. Abracadabra! Representation without taxation ends! The rich and big businesses are denied the ability to manipulate tax codes that enable them to escape taxation while being represented by hand-picked-loyal-to-the-bone-union-busting-best-money-can-buy representatives at all levels of government.



*Cartoon by Wayne Dickson.*

# Member's Opinions



## Reconnecting with America's Invisible Democracy

*Paul Lachelier*

Ask Americans to tell you whatever comes to mind when they think of the word "politics," and, to no one's surprise, a lot of what they say will be negative. But beyond the negative association with politics, there is another pattern less often noted yet perhaps just as significant for democracy in America: when most Americans think of politics they think of national politics, and particularly presidential politics – not state politics, not county politics, not municipal politics.

Ask Americans whether they vote, and many will claim they vote always or most of the time. Then ask those supposedly avid voters whether they vote only in presidential election years. If they are honest, many will admit that they will vote only when there is a presidential election, and this does not mean

that they vote for all offices down the ballot. Many voters simply do not know who their U.S. Representative or U.S. Senators are, let alone where they stand, let alone who their state, county, or municipal representatives are, or what they do.

Of course, none of this is new to anyone paying attention to political statistics. But there are political statistics, and then there is political culture. Political culture can help explain the statistics.

For a couple of years now, I have been asking such questions while researching a book I am writing on how Americans think about politics, community and citizenship. What has been striking in their answers is not so much the bare statistics about turnout and knowledge as the political imagination they reveal.

What questions like these indicate is that when Americans are prompted to think about politics, the vast majority of democracy below the U.S.

president does not even occur to them. And when prompted to think about that vast majority of democracy, many Americans not only know little about it, but refer to it, often dismissively, as "local politics."

Here are a few facts to give a sense of the magnitude of that "local politics" many Americans dismiss or simply don't see:

There is just one federal government, but there are 50 state governments, 3,034 county governments, 35,933 city, town and village governments, and 13,506 school districts across the United States. That's 1 federal government, and 52,523 "local" governments.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the federal government employs 4.9 million people, including full-time, part-time, and full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, civilian and military. In contrast, our fifty state governments employ nearly double that number: 9.5 million people. Our municipal governments employ over five

times the federal number: 26.4 million. That's 5 million employed at the federal level, and 36 million at the "local" level.

Dogmatic conservatives, of course, cringe at so much government. They see nothing but inefficiency, failure, and corruption. I see opportunity, whether for good or bad, for engaged democracy or unaccountable bureaucracy.

Most of American government need not be invisible to Americans. Clearly, if newspapers survive the wrenching changes now going on in the media environment, they can and often do play a significant role, not only by reporting state, county and

municipal government news, but by engaging citizens in government, whether via newspaper-sponsored candidate debates, local and online forums, voter guides, or else.

Schools can, to a growing extent are, and should play a larger role in the political education of American citizens, from making registering to vote a seamless college campus routine; to getting more students to serve in city and county government as volunteers, interns, advisory committee members, and even elected officials; to ensuring all students take a course which engages students in the practice of government, local to global.

In turn, municipal, county and state governments can and

should invest more in political education. It is not enough for government to make information available. The harder but necessary task is to get more citizens to participate in their government as more than angry taxpayers.

As the famed political theorist Alexis de Tocqueville remarked long ago, local governments are schools of democratic freedom, sowing the seeds of engaged citizenship. In an age of political disengagement, it's high time Americans rediscovered local government.

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*[Paul Lachelier](#) is a political sociologist at Stetson University, and contributor to the local political blog, [thepolity.net](#).*

# Blast from the past!



## *Editor's note:*

*As noted in President Jeff Shepherd's statement on page 2, the following article originally appeared in a 1993 issue of the newsletter of the Volusia County Democratic Club. It presents ways to be an effective Democratic precinct captain. ("Precinct captain" is the casual way of referring to a county committeeman or committeewoman.)*

*As Jeff suggested, the precinct is the basic political unit in American democracy. Precinct captains are the vital base of a grassroots political party.*

*The VCDEC is the Volusia County Democratic Executive Committee, comprised in significant part of our county's precinct captains.*

*(I've lightly edited the 1993 statement for length and consistency of grammar and syntax.)*

## VCDEC TRAINING MODULE

### *Precinct Responsibilities*

#### *9 Steps to Being an Effective Precinct Captain*

*"I'm pleased to be a precinct captain in Chicago."*

David Wilhelm, Democratic National Committee Chair

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*"The most important job I ever held was that of precinct captain."*

Harry S Truman

If our Party is to be successful in the 1994 election cycle, the Volusia County Democratic Party needs to increase its visibility in neighborhoods throughout our community. A key role in making this happen will be played by our precinct captains. Your obligations, responsibilities, benefits and rewards should be clearly understood.

1. **You are obligated to attend the regular and special meetings of the VCDEC. You are expected to actively participate in the VCDEC structure of the local Party.**
2. **As a precinct committeewoman or committeeman, you need to work your precinct to the fullest extent possible.**
  - A. You will need to learn your precinct boundaries. It is your responsibility to make sure the literature of Democratic candidates is distributed to the Democratic and swing voters in your precinct.
  - B. In addition to delivering campaign materials, you need to get to know your fellow voters. One proven method of learning the concerns of your neighbors is to walk door-to-door. Listen to the issues about which they appear most interested.

Once this is done, locate a central meeting facility either in your precinct or very convenient for your neighbors. A school, church or community center can be an ideal meeting location.

Invite locally elected Democrats and members of the legislature to discuss some of the issues your neighbors identified.

**3. Recruit volunteers from your precinct to work with you on community issues.**

Always keep in mind you are the Party representative in your precinct. You probably will be the only such representative with whom your neighbors come in contact.

You need to present a positive and energetic image to your neighbors.

Any action you take on behalf of the Party must have prior approval of either the VCDEC or the County Chair.

**4. Be available to your precinct constituents to answer questions or to gather information about your community.**

**5. The VCDEC will provide you with a copy of all registered voters in your**

**precinct.** The Party's computer listings will include telephone numbers, voting history and demographic information.

If phone numbers are missing, you will need to look them up so you can call your neighbors about election issues.

**6. Determine whether or not there are members of your precinct interested in running for public office, serving on community boards or advisory committees, or in working the neighborhood.**

Our objective is to expand the pool of Democrats and broaden our base of support in each County. To do so, we must increase the active participation of Democrats in our communities.

**7. Organize your precinct.**

Appoint block or area captains. These individuals will walk a small portion of the precinct for you each election. They will distribute campaign materials and make calls so you will not need to contact every household in your precinct on your own.

Periodically you should reward your precinct

captains with a coffee, tea or other gathering at your house or a local establishment.

**8. If your subdivision regulations allow them, you should identify households willing to take Democratic yard signs.**

Once they're identified, you should provide the necessary yard signs and maintain them.

**9. Determine how many elderly or disabled voters may need either a ride to the polls or an absentee ballot.** You can either present a list of persons needing an absentee ballot to the Supervisor of Elections or you can pick up their absentee ballots for them.

In summary, the more active you are as a committeewoman or committeeman in your neighborhood the more visible the Democratic Party will be. Your reward will be a gradual improvement in Democratic performance each election, and a party our community can truly call its own.



## Ready for a Model-E?

Test your knowledge of electric vehicles and find out if you're a hybrid or a Hummer!

### Sample:

A key element needed to produce electricity in a fuel cell vehicle is:

- Vibranium
- Adamantium
- Hydrogen
- Dilithium

### [Take the quiz and learn.](#)

(As you can see from that list of elements, the questions might be a bit tongue-in-cheek. However, the info provided is important.)



## Coming Events

### Next Club Meeting

Thursday, October 27th,  
7:15pm, DeLand Police Dept.  
Community Room on W. Howry  
Ave.

Guest speaker Lake Helen City Commission (Zone 1) candidate Ryan Hannah will talk about his candidacy and current issues facing our community.



### Funny Songs about Ignorance, War and Greed!

Caffe DeVinci at 6:00-8:00, November 15th

*\$20 donation includes Bar-B-Q*



## Links

[Northwest Volusia Democratic Club](#)

[American Jobs Act](#)

[National Democratic Party](#)

[Florida Democrats](#)

[Blog for informal Democratic conversation](#)

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