



From the President's Desk:

By *Mary Lou Ambrose*



I ordered a copy of *The Mueller Report* from Amazon for under \$8.00. Reading it is an exercise in frustration. The redactions seem ridiculous.

One thing is very clear, however. Our Attorney General lied, or at the very best, obfuscated what is set out plainly in the Report. His observations that the Report

completely resolved any charges against Donald Trump were purely fictitious and ridiculous, if one reads even the summaries of parts one and two. It seems that Robert Mueller was handcuffed by the Department of Justice's informal finding that a President cannot be indicted while s/he is serving as President. He was very careful throughout to bend over backwards to allow cover for Trump. However, he refers to the Department of Justice finding and states specifically that while he cannot indict the President, he cannot absolve him either. The Attorney General's statements in his four-page letter, and at the press conference just before releasing the redacted version of the report, gave Trump cover for claiming that he was "completely exonerated" in the Report. He states that to this day, and those who want to believe him do so in spite of the truth.

This all brings me to wondering why a person like Attorney General Barr would lie for Donald Trump. He had a decent reputation

as a

former attorney General. He has always been very conservative. Rather than retire with that good reputation, Barr chose to write to

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meeting
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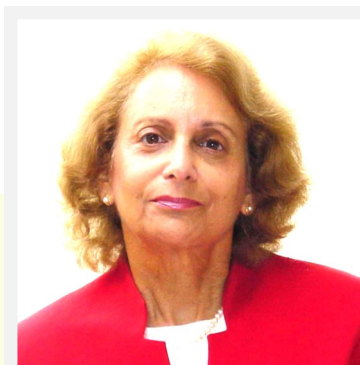
Monday, May 20 —

6:30—8:45 pm

Linda Lerner, one of Florida's longest-serving school board members was elected to the Pinellas County School Board in 1990 and has served six terms. An early champion of LGBT rights, Lerner said she was proud to be the first board member to use the term "gay" in a School Board meeting. She also voted against accepting state funds for a Boy Scout-inspired curriculum, which at the time discriminated against gay leaders and scouts, and won over board members who eventually voted with her. Ms. Lerner now serves as the President of the Board of Directors of Daystar Life Center. [Continued on next page]

Linda Lerner
President, BOD
Daystar Life Center

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Linda Lerner from page 1

Daystar Life Center was founded in 1982 by Monsignor John P. McNulty as an outreach ministry of [Saint Mary Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church](#) in St. Petersburg, FL. Monsignor McNulty's compassion for the poor and his belief that we are called to serve compelled him to take action in a bad economy with high unemployment rates and more and more people unable to meet their basic needs. Daystar has grown into a major non-profit organization serving all residents of Pinellas County. We provide the necessities of life to our neighbors in need in order to alleviate hunger, homelessness, and hopelessness.

Most of our clients live below the federal poverty level. They are the working poor or unemployed. We help individuals and families who are food-insecure; struggling to stay in their home, in transitional housing, or homeless. They may be elderly, veterans, or recently released from incarceration.

Daystar Life Center has earned Charity Navigator's Highest Rating.

Florida's economy is growing stronger but tourism remains the state's main business. Many workers in that sector are employed seasonally and receive no health insurance, pension, or other benefits. Our clients may work multiple jobs but still find themselves short at the end of the month.

We are responsible stewards of our resources. Thanks to our committed core of over 200 volunteers, we have a very small paid staff and were able to devote 94% of our income last year to program services. We have only 4 full-time employees. We spent only 6% on fundraising and administration. At Daystar we are com-

mitted to continually improving our services. These are our core values.

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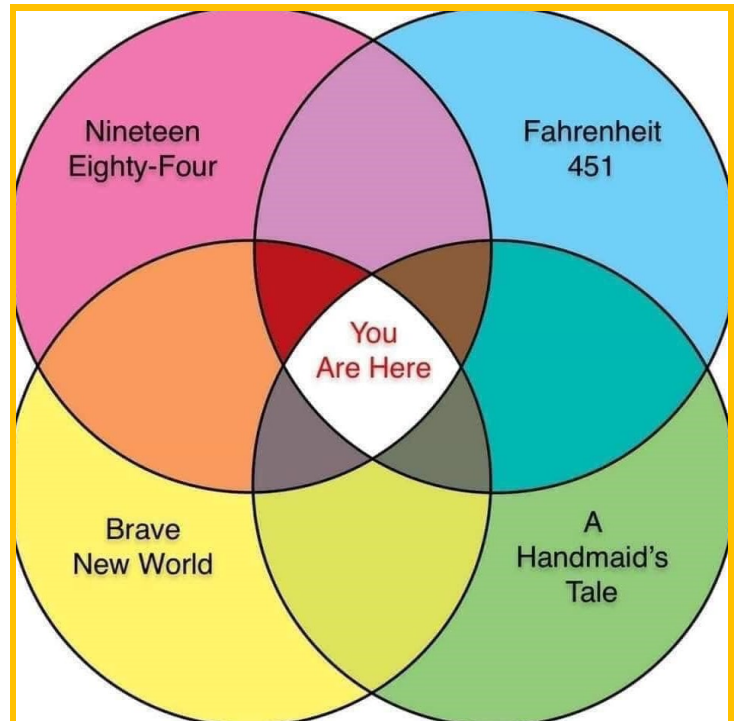
Trump basically asking to be appointed as Attorney General and stating his belief that a President could not be indicted for just about anything. That got him the job.

But it is not only him. The real problem is the Republicans in the US House and Senate. In spite of videos where they stated their beliefs about the behavior of President Clinton, they state the exact opposite about Trump. While I don't exonerate President Clinton's actions, certainly they pale in comparison with Donald Trump's. Clinton did not undermine our Constitution as Trump has done. Trump is a danger to the rule of law and to our Democracy. On the surface, we know that they like the fact the Trump is getting rid of Regulations and is packing the

courts with ultra conservative Judges who ignore precedent. They understand that and have decided to allow Trump to act in direct opposition to what our country is supposed to believe in.

And then there are his followers who watch only Fox News and believe every lie Trump utters. They are the ones the House and Senate members fear. They vote Trump.

So here we are with 20+ people running for the Democratic nomination. They are all good people who believe in a different future. How do we decide who can beat Trump with his lies and nasty schoolboy names? This will be an interesting and vital time. I hope this country makes it through.



For a bonus, check out his website. The ADL H.E.A.T. Map is the first-of-its-kind interactive and customizable map detailing extremist and anti-Semitic incidents around the nation.

[ADL HEAT Map—tracking extremist incidents around the nation](#)

UPCOMING SPEAKERS

JULY— Representative Jennifer Webb, HD 69, will give us some insight on what it was like being a freshman in the Legislature and some highlights of the 2019 legislative session.

We still want to get Rep. Ben Diamond to speak about the 2019 Legislative session. If possible, we would like to have his wife, Christina Diamond, speak as well. Christina is a Senior Advisor for the Florida Democratic Party and owner of Diamond Strategies LLC.

Thank You

I have already said "Thank You" in this Newsletter to those who contributed Sponsorships for the Picnic. As you know, that money goes into the PC to help candidates, and we are always working to accumulate funds for our candidates. We are very grateful to those who contribute.

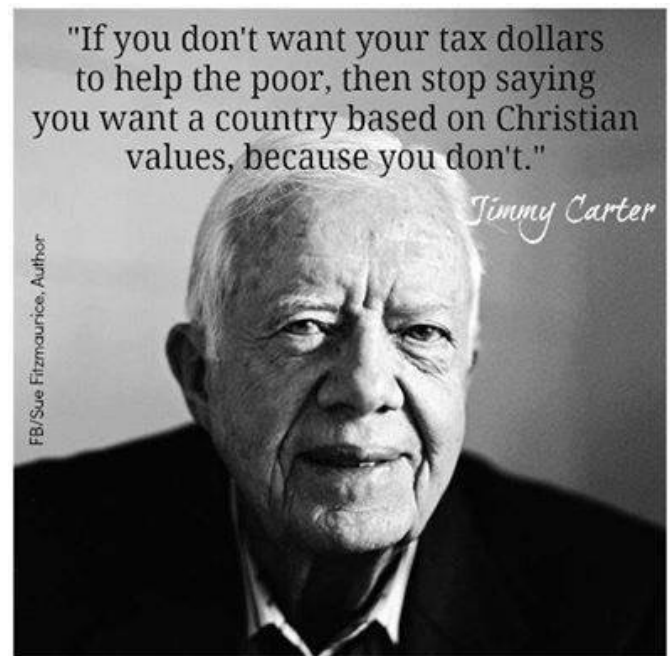
However, I want also want to send out a grateful "Thank You" to those who came early to the picnic and who stayed late to clean up. This year, since we were dedicated to going "Green" we had people bringing dishes, flatware, tablecloths, cups, and other things to follow through on the Green pledge. I started to try to name all the people but knew I would fall short and leave someone out by accident. (It was a lot easier to name contributors since we had a list from our Treasurer.) Therefore, I am sending a grateful "Thank You" to all those who gave so much of their time to help. You know who you are, and we do too. I particularly want to thank those members of Ginny Nelson's Tuesday Morning Game Changers who participated.

I think the Green effort was a success, largely thanks to this group of volunteers. First and most important thing was that they allowed no disposable plastic! They brought table cloths.) They brought dishes. The same with flatware. I had a lot of positive feedback about our first attempt at be-

ing GREEN. There are a lot of changes we are going to need to make concerning the horrible things Climate Change, and the people who deny it, are doing to the world. We took a first step small step toward recognizing the need.

I also want to thank Pastor Andy Oliver for sharing his amazingly professional children. Listening to the two Oliver boys, if they are representative, we can feel positive about the next generation of Democrats.

Mary Lou Ambrose



Politics in the Park

Page 1



Lois got a birthday surprise!



Politics in the Park

Page 2



Thank you to all who attended. All proceeds go into our Political Committee; from which funds we make contributions to our local/state candidates.

Thank you to everyone who brought their own water bottle and utensils. We created so much less waste than in prior years.

And a special thank you to those who received a reusable water bottle for your contribution to our PC. **Bottles will continue to be available at our monthly meetings while supplies last.**



Thank you!

To our generous sponsors!

Joe Barkley & Mary Lou Ambrose

Donna Dennis

Bob & Delores Glass

Lorena Grizzle

Judy Sellers

Ron & Wanda Schwerer



Florida Legislature 2019: What passed and what failed

Lawmakers passed about 10 percent of 1,861 bills that were filed.

Tampabay.times <https://tinyurl.com/yxavnjka>

When the [dust cleared Saturday afternoon](#) in the Florida Legislature, lawmakers had passed 195 bills. Most now await the signature of Gov. Ron DeSantis.

The highlights of the Republican-led Legislature's work include [a ban on "sanctuary cities,"](#) several [rollbacks of health care regulations,](#) a controversial [roads project](#) and a [narrow interpretation of Amendment 4.](#)

In all, slightly fewer bills were passed than the prior year, [when the body passed just 200](#) (excluding one-chamber resolutions), the [low point in a 20-year trend of fewer and fewer bills.](#) Of 1,861 bills filed (excluding local appropriations projects), lawmakers passed about 10 percent.

HIGHLIGHTS:

[One highlight is the] expansion of the "Guardian program" to [allow teachers to carry guns in school,](#) if their district opts in to the program.

RENEWABLE ENERGY (FAILED): Directs state to develop unified statewide plan to generate state's energy from renewable sources by specified dates; requires state & public entities to cooperate as requested; provides plan requirements; requires office to submit plan & updates to Governor & Legislature. ([HB 1291](#) / [SB 1762](#))

UNDERGROUND POWER LINES (PASSED): Creates a new process for utilities to pass along costs to customers for storm protection projects, such as installing underground power

er lines. ([SB 796](#))

LOCAL TAX REFERENDUM (PASSED): Makes it harder for local governments to pass increases of sales tax via local referendum by requiring a two-thirds vote and approval only in a general election and not a primary. ([HB 5](#))

AMENDMENT 4 (PASSED): Requires felons to pay restitution, fine and fees before they can register to vote after the passage of last year's Amendment 4 ballot measure. ([HB 7089](#) / [SB 7086](#))

PETITION DRIVES (PASSED): Requires citizen-led attempts to change the constitution to use only Florida residents on petition drives and to register with the Florida Secretary of State, which would prevent the in- [Continued next page —>](#)



From prior page

PERSONAL INJURY PROTECTION (FAILED): Eliminates Florida's no-fault auto insurance system, where drivers are required to carry personal injury protection coverage to help pay medical bills after accidents. ([HB 733](#) / [SB 1052](#)).

SANCTUARY CITIES (PASSED): Prohibits local governments from not cooperating with federal officials, which would require local law enforcement to hold undocumented workers at least 48 hours past their detainer sentences while awaiting federal authorities to pick them up for deportation. Gives the Florida attorney general the power to pursue civil action against governments that don't cooperate. ([SB 168](#))

AID AND TASK FORCE (FAILED): Pumps \$315 million into helping the Panhandle after Hurricane Michael. Establishes a task force to consider changes to local, state and federal response policy. ([SB 1610](#))

DISCRIMINATION (FAILED): Provides that sexual orientation and gen-

der identity are impermissible grounds for discrimination in public lodging establishments and public food service establishments; revises provisions of Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992 and Fair Housing Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity; provides exception for constitutionally protected free exercise of religion. ([HB 485](#) / [SB 430](#))

DRUG IMPORTS (PASSED): Allows drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to be imported into Florida by Canada and other countries. ([HB 19](#))

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (FAILED): Revises prohibition on sale or transfer of firearms to persons convicted of misdemeanor or domestic violence offenses; prohibits persons convicted of misdemeanor or offense of domestic violence from possessing firearm or ammunition; requires persons convicted of misdemeanor offenses of domestic violence to surrender all firearms & ammunition. ([HB 941](#) / [SB 1206](#))

ASSAULT WEAPON BAN (FAILED): Prohibits sale, transfers, or possession of assault weapon or large-capacity ammunition magazine. ([HB 455](#) / [SB 466](#))

BLIND TRUST (PASSED): Prohibits public officials from placing their assets in blind trusts. ([SB 702](#))

WASTEWATER (FAILED): Prohibiting the construction of new deep injection wells for domestic wastewater discharge or the expansion of existing wells. ([SB 1568](#))

WELLS (FAILED): Allow anyone fearing contamination to request the health department test their water source, requires samples be analyzed no more than three business days later. ([SB 1100](#))

PLASTIC BAGS (FAILED): Authorizes coastal municipalities to establish pilot programs to regulate or ban disposable plastic bags; collect data and complete a report by April 1, 2022 about the effectiveness of the ban. ([SB 694](#))

Continued on next page —>



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PLASTIC STRAWS
(PASSED): Prohibits local government entities from adopting or enforcing ordinances and regulations relating to single-use plastic straws. (HB 771)

RECYCLABLE MATERIALS (PASSED): Require municipalities to address contamination of recyclable materials. ([HB 771](#))

RED TIDE (PASSED): Investments of \$3 million per year for six years in red tide mitigation. ([SB 1552](#))

FRACKING (FAILED): Bans fracking, a process where water, sand and chemicals are injected underground to loosen, or fracture, rock layers in the crust to release trapped natural gas and oil. ([HB 239](#) / [SB 146](#))

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS (FAILED): Increases the number of votes required to approve a constitutional amendment from 60 percent to 66 and two-thirds percent. ([HJR 57](#) / [SJR 232](#))

WORKFORCE EDUCATION (PASSED): Requires middle school students to take a course in career edu-

cation planning, allows certain course substitutions for high school graduation requirements, requires high schools to offer a financial literacy elective course, create a career and technical education high school graduation pathway, establishes degree articulation agreements between colleges and universities.

BRIGHT FUTURES (PASSED): Raises the requirements for the merit-based Bright Futures scholarships. For students an “Academic” scholarship, which covers full tuition and fees at state universities and colleges, the required SAT score would rise from 1290 to around 1330. For the second-tier “Medallion” award which covers 75 percent of tuition and

fees, the benchmark would climb from 1170 to about 1200. ([SB 190](#))

FELONY THEFT THRESHOLD (PASSED): Increases the amount of a theft that it would take to be charged with a felony from \$300 to \$750, the first time it has been raised since 1986. It also eliminates or reduces driver's license suspensions as a criminal penalty ([HB 7125](#))

Janet Cruz Rifkin

Loser of the week: Florida voters.

It's a sick sport in Tallahassee . Lawmakers subvert the will of the voters by refusing to follow the intent of voter-approved constitutional amendments. You don't have to tell those behind Amendment 1, which passed in 2014 with 75 percent of the vote and was intended to force lawmakers to spend \$300 million a year on land preservation. This year, lawmakers propose only \$33 million for land buys. And Amendment 4, which won 65 percent of the vote last year? Lawmakers subverted its intended goal of allowing more than 1 million felons to register to vote with legislation requiring that they pay court costs, fees and restitution. This financial burden will disenfranchise all but a fraction of those who thought their rights were restored in November.

—Times



Pinellasdemocrats.org



[Pinellas County is
IN IT TO WIN IT!
CLICK here for train-
ing opportunities!](https://pinellasdemocrats.org/events/)



CONTACT US

2250 1st Avenue North

St Petersburg, FL 33713

Office hours vary based on volunteer ability.

Please call or email for more information.

office@pinellasdemocrats.com

727.327.2796

<https://pinellasdemocrats.org/events/>

A Tribute to Bill Nelson

Friday, May 17—Fenway Hotel, Dunedin



Sen. And Mrs. Nelson



John Ford, Ch Pasco,
Lone Townsend, Ch Hills-
borough
Barbara Scott, Ch Pinellas



Mary Lou got some
one-on-one time with
the Senator



Photo Op, Sen Nelson,
Char Tanner, Renee
Lee & Wanda
Schwerer



Commissioner Charlie & Kathleen Justice



District 66 News

Democratic District 66 Meeting Minutes Thursday, March 28, 2019

Speaker: **KNOW YOUR STORY:** TED Talk—Simon Sinek, “Start with Why. How Great Leaders Inspire Action.”

People don’t buy what you do, but they buy WHY you do it. Talk about what you believe. We all used a worksheet to determine our own story and shared it with each other. It’s part of the process of working as a volunteer on Adopt-A-Block and becoming motivated to engage others in the process as well. Thanks to Alex Heeren for leading the discussion.

Speaker: **MEET YOUR DISTRICT 66 VOLUNTEERS:** Becky Heeren and Judith St Onge: They will help each of

us with cutting our turf of 30-50 voters in our area. We are currently contacting warm Democrats and NPAs. They’ll also help us with the script. Our goal is to make these contacts by our next meeting so we can share feedback. Each person needs to download MiniVan to our phones and update info as we make contact.

Judith St Onge
Stonge756@aol.com

Becky Heeren
bheeren49@gmail.com
573-291-3372

There was some discussion of getting together once a month or so for a



District 66 and the Tuesday Morning Game Changes had a beautiful display at the Politics in the Park Potluck. What a great way to attract a new participants.

Beer Night. This will be discussed further—and several volunteered to do recon and check out the West Bay Tap House and other establishments. Stay tuned!

Announcements: Next meeting:

Thursday
May 23, 2019,
6:30 -8:00 pm
at the
Seminole Library



From the Chair's Desk: Weekly Update

Dear Florida Democrats:

This week I was thrilled to see so many Democratic stars rise into the spotlight. We saw Representatives Bobby DuBose, Evan Jenne and Ben Diamond tapped to become leaders of our House caucus and this last Tuesday, we saw Jane Castor make history when she won her runoff election to be the next mayor of Tampa, and become the first out LGBT person to lead Florida's third largest city.

And I was proud to finish the week by joining the Duval County Democrats for a happy hour featuring Lisa King and Sunny Gettinger, two excellent candidates for City Council.

From new stars rising, to our party laying the groundwork for 2020 by supporting our DEC's, the Florida Democratic Party continues to grow and strengthen. Together we will achieve the victories we are all working so hard for in 2020.

Forward,

Chair Rizzo:
Democrats working to protect Florida voting rights [Orlando Sentinel]

Florida has a history of razor-thin elections. Unfortunately, it also has a long history of voter suppression. With more than 8 million votes cast in 2018, only 10,033 votes separated Rick Scott and Bill Nelson in the race for the U.S. Senate. In that same election, fewer than 33,000 votes separated Andrew Gillum and Ron DeSantis for governor. Barack Obama won the state by less than 1 percent in 2012, and after

almost six million votes were cast in 2000, the final vote difference between Al Gore and George W. Bush was 537 votes.

In Florida, when we say every vote counts, we really mean it. Protecting the right to vote and increasing voter participation should have broad bipartisan support. Yet, a divide has emerged in Florida: on one side, Republican politicians are trying to make it harder for Floridians to vote; while Democrats are registering voters and working to protect voting rights.



Highlights of April Meeting

April 15, 2019 Club Meeting Speaker

Dr. Susan

MacManus

It was a very interesting talk and aQ & A by Dr. Susan McManus.

Here are some of her main points on voter trends:

- Our state is so closely divided, that there is generally less than a 0.5% difference between winners and losers
- Population change trends include (1) 53% rise in young voters in last election, including Millennials (or **Gen Yers**), and **Gen Zers**, and (2) Very large increase in "Brown" (Hispanic) voters, as opposed to Black or White. These voters are not monolithic. They vote by country of origin.
- Asians are the fastest growing group.
- There are 18% more registered women than men.
- Fastest growing affiliation is none – or NPA.
- 50% of **Gen Z (born between 1995 and 2005)** are non-White.

We need to keep new registrants engaged, realizing that only 6% get their news from print media, 40% from TV news, and 40% from online and social media.

In the general voting population,



opinions about news media are:

- 46% have no confidence in the press
- 50% believe there is gross media bias
- 60% believe reporters are paid by sources
- 59% believe media

are more interested in money than truth

- 68% believe the reporters write articles before learning the facts.

Other main points of the discussion:

- People don't know where to go to get the news, but the following are the most truthful: 1. PBS (Public Broadcasting), 2. A.P. (Associated Press), 3. NPR (National Public Radio). The Wall Street Journal was noted for its research.
- Twitter is the Journalists' news site, and that Twitter is **far to the left** of the majority of Democratic voters.
- News saturation: One issue dominates and then changes very quickly, making it hard to predict future votes.
- Suburban Moms went Democratic in Florida, because looking at Kavanaugh, they worried about their kids doing something wrong, and it being recorded in their Yearbooks.
- Of all forms of communication,

Social Media have the most "fake news," but young folks go there for their news.

- In June 2019, there will be 2 nights of Democratic debates in Florida.
- Millennials and Gen Zers are the "Environmental" generations.
- Presidential elections include young and old voters. Midterms are dominated by 50 – 65 age range.
- Mail ballots can get lost and are more dangerous than software problems.
- Ages 75+ drop off in voting because of infirmity or "move to kids."
- School choice and gerrymandering are highly influenced by the fact that folks want to live with others of a like mind.

After the destruction of recent Citizen Petitions by the legislature, it is imperative that Implementation of petitions be included in the petition itself. In other words, the "how" is as important as the "what". 🐦

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Environmental News



Denise Gerlach Housberg

Indian Rocks Beach Garden for Free

A small group of thoughtful individuals decided to launch a new free garden concept aptly named, Garden for Free IRB. This group will be planting and maintaining garden boxes that will be open to the public where locals can find fresh herbs and vegetables they can snip and take home for their own use.



Denise Gerlach Houseberg

Admin · 6 hrs

WTSP Channel 10 came out to interview this morning! Watch for us in this evening news! How exciting!



Here are the planned locations!



Opinion & Letters



Robert Kuttner is co-founder and co-editor of *The American Prospect*, and professor at Brandeis University's Heller School. His latest book is *Can Democracy Survive Global Capitalism?* In addition to writing for the *Prospect*, he writes for *HuffPost*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The New York Review of Books*.

Socialism Rears Its Ugly Head

ROBERT KUTTNER

APR 09, 2019

The he right-wing organs are aghast that socialism is ceasing to be a dirty word and that other Democratic candidates besides self-described socialist Bernie Sanders are embracing a major role for public institutions. Fox News has been **obsessing** about this, and *The Wall Street Journal* **ran** a lead editorial Tuesday ("All Bernie's Socialists") that is suitable for framing.

One of the right's standard themes is to conflate Swedish-style social democrats with thugs like Venezuela's Nicolás Maduro.

The *Journal* thinks it has nailed Sanders because it unearthed an op-ed from 2013 written by Sanders's recently hired staffer, David Sirota, that said some kind things about Hugo Chavez's economic program.

In fact, Sirota was careful to add that Chavez had failed to respect human rights and basic democracy. In this, the late Venezuelan strongman Chavez and his protégé Maduro have a lot more in common with Donald Trump than with Bernie Sanders.

Keep in mind a couple of things about social democracy, which is what Bernie Sanders actually has in mind when he embraces "socialism."

First, as the recent American experience

with hyper-capitalism has demonstrated, there are several functions that the public sector actually does more efficiently and more equitably than the private sector. The public sector works especially well when it is run by people who actually believe in it, as opposed to Trumpians who would destroy government, either by design or by incompetence.

Medicare for All really is a lot more efficient and a lot less wasteful than the current medical mess. The VA delivers much higher-quality care at less cost than proposed privatized substitutes. Public schools, though they have their problems (especially when there are high concentrations of poor kids), do

better than voucher schools. Social Security, our most socialistic (and most popular) government program beats any private competitor cold.

Second, the monopolistic tendencies of the recent mutant form of American capitalism cry out either for regulation or for public options. Banks have become so concentrated and so corrupt that basic public banking would be more cost-effective for small customers. Fannie Mae worked much better as a secondary mortgage market and was less prone to corruption when it was a straightforward public agency.

The drug industry is especially predatory. Economist Dean Baker has **calculated** that it would be more cost-effective and more conducive to genuine innovation to have public agencies sponsor all drug research and put

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all drug patents into the public domain.

In Chattanooga, the local public power company, a legacy of Franklin Roosevelt's TVA, offers public internet service. It is **cheaper and faster** than anything on offer from private utilities, and has helped make that city a tech leader.

Polls show that 49 percent of all millennials have a **favorable view** of socialism. That's because they have been experiencing American capitalism, up close and personal—meaning unreliable jobs, expensive housing, vanishing health and pension coverage, and of course student loans.

With little direct memory of pre-1989 communism, which collapsed before they were born, young people are not intimidated by old Cold War shibboleths. This is not good for *The Wall Street Journal* or

Fox News.

Face it, conservative comrades: The New Deal or the Swedish or the Sanders brand of social democracy is increasingly popular today for very good reasons. Capitalism has demonstrated its penchant for inefficiency, corruption, and simple greed.

The right is correct about one thing. Most of the Democratic field does indeed embrace major public options, whether or not they embrace Sanders's socialist label—and it's about time.

Hauling out the ghost of Hugo Chavez doesn't cut it. The ploy is a confession of just how weak is the right's story. 🍷

A Revolutionary Idea to Close the Racial Wealth Divide

"Baby bond" accounts for all American kids would bridge the racial wealth gap while providing security to Americans of every color.

Institute for Policy Studies

April 17, 2019 | [Jessica Pierre](#)

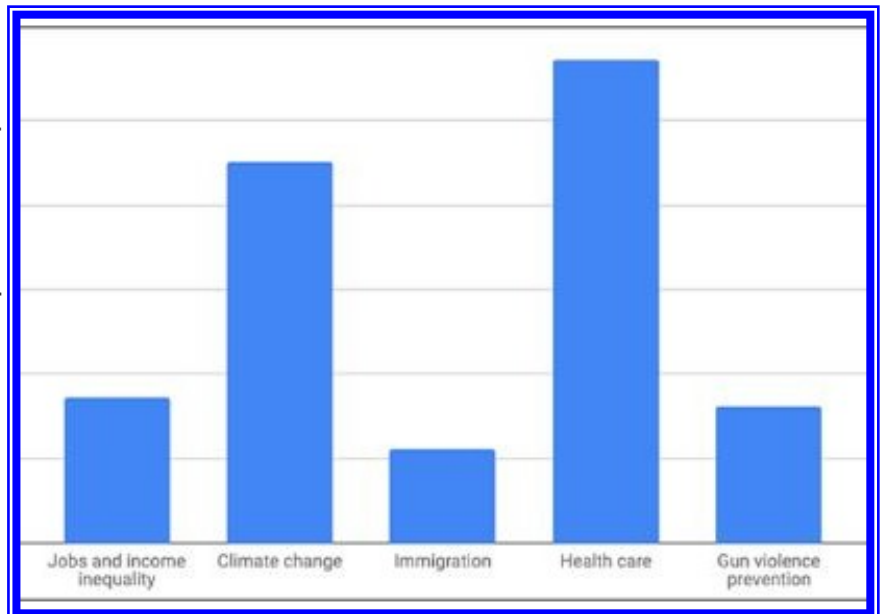
The gap between America's ultra-wealthy and the rest of us is growing dramatically as wealth continues to concentrate at the top at the expense of the rest of us. One major symp-

tom of this economic rift is the racial wealth divide, which is greater today than it was nearly four decades ago.

The [median Black family today](#) owns \$3,600 — just 2 percent of the \$147,000 of wealth the

[Cont'd next page —>](#)

With the first Democratic debate edging closer each day, we reached out last week to see exactly where Democrats like you who took the Official 2020 Issues Survey are at. Here's what we heard:



Opinion & Letters

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median white family owns. At the extreme top, the Forbes 400 richest Americans own more wealth than *all Black households*, plus a quarter of Latinx households, combined.

When analyzing the racial wealth divide, it's important to note that this is a systemic issue — a result of policies, not individual behavior.

Darrick Hamilton, the executive director of the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State, emphasizes that the key ingredient of how successful you'll be in America isn't how hard you work individually — it's how wealthy your family is.

For instance, the racial wealth gap continues to grow [despite rising rates of Black employment and education](#). These other things simply can't

make up for enormous, systemic disparities in family wealth.

Hamilton's proposed solution? "Baby bonds."

Baby bonds are federally managed accounts set up at birth for children and endowed by the govern-

One recent study shows a baby bond program has the potential to reduce the current black-white wealth divide more than tenfold.

ment with assets that will grow over time. Neither the

child nor their parents would be able to access these funds until the child reaches adulthood, at which point they could use the money to get an education, purchase a home, or start a business.

Baby bonds could play an essential role in balancing the historical injustices that created the racial wealth divide.

One recent study shows a baby bond program has the potential to reduce the current black-white

wealth divide more than tenfold. Another shows that had a baby bond program been initiated 40 years ago, the Latinx-white wealth divide would be [closed by now](#) — and the black-white wealth divide would have shrunk by 82 percent.

Baby bonds are an essential, universal, race-conscious program to provide everyone with an opportunity to start life off secure, irrespective of their race and the financial position in which they're born.

And they're just one of 10 bold solutions offered in a [new Institute for Policy Studies report on closing the racial wealth divide](#), which counts Hamilton among its coauthors.

"Large scale policy change," it concludes, "is the most promising path to addressing the racial wealth divide and many asset poor whites as well." The report also recommends solutions ranging from Medicare for All and higher taxes on the

wealthy to setting up a congressional committee to study reparations.

Just like all other issues of inequality in America, the racial wealth divide is a structural problem that requires structural solutions. In order to create economic prosperity for every American, we must start with taking bold action to close the racial wealth divide once and for all. 🦋

Jessica Pierre is the inequality media specialist at the Institute for Policy Studies.

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Daily Kos Elections Voting Rights Roundup

May 4, 2018

Leading Off

• **Ohio:** On Friday, a federal district court delivered a major win against Republican **gerrymandering** when it [struck down Ohio's congressional map](#) for violating the constitutional rights of Democratic voters. The court [ordered legislators to devise a new map by June 14](#) for the 2020 elections that would be much fairer than the existing lines. If lawmakers don't pass a new map, or if the Republicans—who have total control over state government—simply pass a new replacement gerrymander, the court itself could draw its own districts.

Unlike its longtime status as a swing state, Ohio is home to one of the most extreme GOP gerrymanders of any state in the country. These tortured lines have ensured Republican control of 12 of the state's 16 congress-

sional seats this entire decade, even when Obama carried Ohio in 2012. By contrast, a nonpartisan map, [such as the one we've drawn](#), likely [would have seen Democrats win three or four more seats](#) in the 2018 elections—a far more equitable distribution.

This ruling could also have major consequences for redistricting after the 2020 census, when Ohio, like every other state, was already set to draw a new map beginning with the 2022 elections. Although Ohio legislators passed a "compromise" constitutional amendment in 2018 to reform congressional redistricting in an ostensibly bipartisan manner, that supposed reform [was actually a cunning Republican scheme](#) to thwart a 2018 ballot initiative effort that was aiming to create a more fair and independent process.

Multiple analysts have demonstrated the weakness of the amendment that did pass by drawing maps that would conform to the state's new rules on the surface yet in reality [would be almost as egregiously gerrymandered as the current lines](#). However, if Ohio is required to use fairer districts for 2020, that would set a new baseline for the 2020 map and make it harder for Republicans to get away with drawing another extreme gerrymander, since they would be subject to judicial review and additional political pressure from the public.

Unfortunately for Democrats and fair redistricting, there's a very strong chance that the partisan Republican majority on the U.S. Supreme Court will quickly block the lower court from requiring a new map and ultimately overturn its decision in response to the

GOP's [planned appeal](#). The high court has repeatedly refused to limit partisan gerrymandering, which overwhelmingly favored Republicans this decade and [is poised to do so again after 2020](#). Experts expect the justices will [uphold the practice of gerrymandering](#) in 5-4 rulings in two key cases in Maryland and North Carolina in June.

However, there's a silver lining to this ruling, even if the U.S. Supreme Court overturns it. That's because [the same evidence and principles](#) the plaintiffs used to get the map struck down could be used to persuade Ohio's state Supreme Court to put limits on gerrymandering under the state constitution. Indeed, practically [every state constitution has provisions that could invalidate gerrymandering](#).

Republicans hold a 5-2 majority on Ohio's

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Supreme Court, but Democrats [have the chance to gain a 4-3 majority](#) if they defeat two Republican incumbents who are up for election in 2020 (the contests are officially nonpartisan). While the chances the U.S. Supreme Court will uphold this ruling are slim, 2020's state Supreme Court races are a critical opportunity for Democrats and voters to enforce fairer redistricting.

Voter Suppression

• **Arizona:** In a win for voting rights, Arizona Republicans [have adjourned the 2019 legislative session](#) without enacting three bills to restrict voting that had advanced through the legislative process earlier this year. [One of those bills](#) would have purged infrequent voters from the state's Permanent Early Voting List, which mails absentee ballots every election to registered voters who have opted in to the program. [Another bill](#) would have added criminal penalties that would have made voter registration drives more difficult. The [last](#)

[bill](#) would have banned voters from turning in their mail ballots in-person.

• **Tennessee:** Tennessee Republicans [just passed](#) a widely condemned [new law](#) that aims to stifle voter registration drives by creating new criminal and civil penalties that may intimidate groups into not conducting them at all for fear of prosecution. This law likely comes as retribution against those who registered tens of thousands of new black voters in 2018, since black voters are more likely to be registered through such drives.

For those who register 100 or more voters, the law [makes it a crime](#) to do so without completing a state training course. It also makes it a crime to fail to submit completed forms within 10 days. At the same time, groups that submit 100 or more incomplete or inaccurate registration forms would face civil fines, which could reach a steep \$10,000 per

county (Tennessee has 99 counties) if more than 500 such forms are found to have been submitted in a given county. Furthermore, it bans people from out-of-state from serving as poll watchers.

Finally, the law includes a measure to make registration drives less effective by [making it a crime](#) to pay workers based on the number of registrations they gather. Instead, organizers would have to pay hourly or rely on volunteers, which would eliminate the financial incentive for registration drive workers to register as many voters as they can during their shifts.

Immediately after Republican Gov. Bill Lee signed this law, civil rights groups [filed a lawsuit](#) arguing that it violates the 14th Amendment and has a "chilling effect on the exercise of fundamental First Amendment rights." It's unclear, though, how successful the case might be if it ultimately reaches the Supreme Court, given

the conservative majority's abysmal record on voting rights. However, a lower court struck [down similar legislation in Florida](#) in 2012 after the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan civic group, argued it had pressured the organization into giving up on registration drives.

The outcry over this law doesn't end there, though. In a new investigation, local News-Channel 5 reports that the office of Republican state House Speaker Glen Casada [tried to frame and imprison](#) student activist Justin Jones, who had joined in protests against the legislation earlier this year. Jones was charged with assault after allegedly throwing a cup onto the speaker's elevator during a protest in February, and a condition of his pretrial release was to have no contact with Casada.

Reporters, however, found that the speaker's office [had doctored the date of an email](#) to Casada in order to frame Jones for violating that condition, then gave the infor-

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mation to Nashville's District Attorney Glenn Funk's office, which filed a motion to revoke Jones' bail. However, actual records showed the email came from before the start of the no-contact period. Furthermore, reporters obtained racist texts involving the speaker's chief of staff, who used racial slurs and wrote "black people are idiots." Consequently, Funk has asked for a special prosecutor to look into the case.

• **Texas:** In late February, a federal judge [temporarily blocked](#) a Republican-led effort to [purge nearly 100,000 voter registrations](#) using a badly flawed list of registered voters who were supposedly not citizens. Now, Texas Republicans [have reached a settlement](#) with the numerous civil rights groups who had filed multiple lawsuits to stop the purge.

Republican Secretary of State David Whitley had flagged voters who at some point over the years had told a state government

agency that they weren't citizens. However, further scrutiny revealed the overwhelming majority of those individuals had become naturalized before registering.

Following the lawsuits and public backlash over what the court called a "ham-handed" voter purge, Republicans have [agreed to scrap their flawed list of non-citizens entirely](#). Furthermore, state officials will have to coordinate with Latino voters and civil rights groups to avoid improperly targeting naturalized citizens again.

Felony Disenfranchisement

• Florida:

Floridians voted by a 65-35 landslide to approve a 2018 constitutional amendment to [restore voting rights to up to 1.4 million citizens](#) who had fully completed their felony sentences, but Republican legislators just sent GOP Gov. Ron DeSantis [a bill](#) that would try to keep the vast majority of those citizens disenfranchised

by [imposing a measure straight out of the Jim Crow play-book: poll taxes](#). This measure would require the payment of not only court-ordered restitution but also all court-related fines and fees before voters could regain their rights.

Imposing a requirement to pay off all court costs is especially draconian because of the predatory ways in which Florida courts and law enforcement [derive funding from harsh fines im-](#)

posed on criminal defendants, above and beyond restitution to crime victims. Even worse, it requires the [payment of fines that have been converted into civil liens](#), meaning even some who have paid all of their criminal penalties still wouldn't have the right to vote. Those affected

could regain their right to vote if a judge converts such debts into community service hours or if the owed party waives them, but a former judge told the *Miami Herald* that doing so could create a massive backlog if hundreds of thousands apply for such waivers. It's unclear just how many citizens would be affected by this bill. One analysis estimates it could be up to 1.1 million, or roughly four-fifths of those who were supposed to regain their voting rights. Black defendants in particular [are considerably less likely](#) to be

able to pay off court costs than white defendants, according to one study.

But despite this racially disparate impact, the success of an all-but-guaranteed lawsuit is in doubt thanks to conservatives' dominance over both the U.S. Supreme Court and Florida Supreme Court.



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Additional contact information is available on

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Why Join the Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club?

The club provides a variety of ways to stay informed and involved in local, county, state and national political discussions. But we're not just about talk. We will be part of the action in finding the best candidates and getting them elected, as well as supporting the most important causes. We will write letters, make phone calls, knock on doors, register voters, and whatever else it takes to bring change to our communities, our county and our state. But, just as important, we also want to make time to enjoy each other's company and celebrate each other's efforts at social events throughout the year. Grassroots politics is effective and fun!

As a member of the Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club you can:

- Meet other active Democrats
- Meet and get to know your elected officials and potential candidates
- Raise funds and work for candidates
- Participate in community service projects
- Hear speakers and discuss issues of local, state and national importance
- Attend special events and monthly meetings.

