From the President’s Desk

by Mary Lou Ambrose

The recent tragedies in Orlando, Louisiana, Minnesota and Dallas highlight the problems of race relations and gun control which are pervasive.

Not long ago, the US Supreme Court dismantled the Civil Rights Act in Shelby vs Holder. They took away the federal protections against discriminatory State actions. (Like passing laws which keep the poor, the young, the working class, from voting.) Chief Justice Roberts, writing for himself as well as Justices Scalia, Thomas, Alito and Kennedy actually found that we, as a country, had gotten past bigotry and hate, slavery, the Civil War, discrimination, and Reconstruction. Based on the progress he said we have made since 1865, based on having a black President, many black or Latino mayors, governors and Congress people, the Chief Justice actually found that we were now playing on a level playing field where race was concerned. He said that if pockets of discrimination were found, Congress could impose restrictions on those places specifically. Keep in mind that he was talking about the US House and Senate! Where has he been? What were they all thinking? Justice Ginsberg read a scathing dissent from the bench, showing how wrong this decision was, but it was a dissent, not the opinion.

This is the kind of decision we can expect from a politically conservative Court. As soon as the ink was dry on Shelby, Republican Legislatures were whipping out new laws which would keep those groups expected to vote Democratic from voting. We saw some of that with the primary with the removal of voting sites and the restrictions on voting hours. There will be more of the same in November and beyond. Clearly, the Republican Party believes it cannot win except by limiting the voting ability of those they fear will vote against them. After Romney lost to President Obama in 2012, the Republicans said they would work toward encouraging non-white voters to vote Republican. Obviously, that did not go over well with the party loyalists, so they returned to controlling who can vote. The Senate’s unconstitutional decision not to even consider President Obama’s nominee for the Court underlines their understanding of the battle for the Supreme Court. They know as well as we do that the next President will name as many as four Supreme Court Justices who will serve for life.

We all know that electing Donald Trump as President must not happen.

So, what can we do? We can elect good Democrats. A Democratic being elected President is vitally important. Those of us who are uninspired by Hillary have to become inspired if

Our next club meeting

Please mark your calendars for our next meeting, Monday, July 18 at 7:15 P.M. at the Acropolis Restaurant 1170 Starkey Rd., Largo.

WOW. Our speaker will be Pam Keith, candidate for US Senate from Florida. Please make an effort to come hear from your Senate candidates.
she is the Nominee. Democrats need to vote, not only for the President, but down the ticket. Since it is the Senate which gives “Advice and Consent” to the President in the appointment of Supreme Court Justices, it is tremendously important that we take back the Senate. Marco Rubio must be defeated, and Murphy, Grayson or Keith must be elected. Charlie Crist must win the House seat over David Jolly. Charlie Justice has been an extraordinary Commissioner, and he will need our help to win over a very well-funded Republican. It took us 50 years to get a majority in the County Commission. We can’t let Republicans take back that seat. Our Pinellas Legislators need to win. Once the Primaries are over, all of us need to work to replace Republicans in the House and in District 19. (Unfortunately, Jeff Brandes, D24, has not drawn a Democratic opponent.) Some offices are non-partisan but the people who run for them have Democratic or Republican values. The far right has been working on taking over School Boards through the Country. Here in District 1 which covers all of Pinellas, we must elect Joanne Lentino and Matt Stewart in the Primary to assure that two candidates who care about the children will go forward to the November election for the Pinellas School Board.

This is not the time to sit on the sidelines.

I hope you will join us at our Largo Club Meeting on July 18th. You all know that Patrick Murphy and Alan Grayson are running against “Little Marco” for the Senate. However, there is another Democrat in the race who has been ignored by the media. Come to meet and listen to Pam Keith. As always, we will meet at the Acropol Restaurant, 1170 Starkey Road in Largo. Pam has agreed to arrive about 6:30 to be available to speak to interested voters. See you there.

Pam Keith will speak at the Largo Club membership meeting on July 18th.

Please join us as this may be your only opportunity to hear one of our U S Senate candidates this up-close and personal. The daughter of Kenton Keith, a U.S. diplomat, Keith, 46, has travelled the world. Growing up, she at various times lived in Turkey, Morocco, Syria, Kentucky, Brazil and California. After graduating from Boston College Law School, she joined the Navy, serving as a JAG in Norfolk, VA and Bahrain. She achieved the rank of Lieutenant before leaving the service in 1999 for a position at Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, a high-powered Washington, D.C. law firm. Since then, her law career has taken her around the country. She settled in Florida in 2011 when she took a job as in-house counsel for Florida Light & Power, and energy company based in Juno Beach.

“I have spent a lifetime being exposed to, educating myself to the issues that we face,” Keith said, citing her law record, her military service and policy talks she held with her now-retired father. “I know what our military needs, what our veterans need. I have a lot of good ideas.”

Next Meeting, July 18 Please join us to meet and hear from Pam Keith, Candidate for U S Senate.

The meeting will be at 7:15 P.M. At the Acropol Restaurant

1170 Starkey Rd., Largo
MOMS DEMAND ACTION

by Rod Snedeker

On Wednesday afternoon, June 6, Rod and Elizabeth Snedeker, Diane Guthrie, Joanne Johnson, Kathy Ewing, Charlotte Maas, Faith Devitt from Largo and Donna Woods from Tampa went to Sen. Rubio’s Tampa Office, 5201 West Kennedy Blvd, Tampa. We met with Ashley Cook, Gulf Coast Regional Director, who dialed us through to the Washington DC office and we spoke with Sutton Trulack, one of his aides who focuses on social issues. Elizabeth shared with him the goals of Moms Demand Action. Rod mentioned that Sen. Rubio has consistently supported “Second Amendment rights” even though the Supreme Court has said regulation is constitutional. We voiced our concern that loopholes be closed and assault weapons with high capacity magazines be banned. Mr. Trulack said that after the Orlando shooting Rubio has been asking why can’t the Senate reach some agreement to move on reducing gun violence. He claimed that his staff are concerned and seeking to find a way for the Senate to take some action. He invited us to submit any information we have that would be helpful. We left with him a copy of the goals of Moms Demand Action, a brochure on the BeSmart Program for gun safety. We stressed that the right to life and to live safely is more basic than the right to carry a gun.

We had an opportunity to speak frankly about the need to reduce gun violence and we felt we were heard. We don’t know if it will help to lead for some action. We will have to wait and see.

DEMOCRATIC PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS CALLS FOR ACTION

“It’s time to end the NRA’s stranglehold on gun policy,” DPCF Chair says. Democratic Progressive Caucus of Florida President Susan Smith has released the following statement:

Today the Democratic Progressive Caucus is joining the Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence in calling for a special legislative session to consider an assault weapons ban as well as expanded background checks for gun purchases. It’s time to end the NRA’s stranglehold on gun policy and to make these sensible changes to our laws.

Last month’s mass shooting in Orlando should have been a wake up call for Governor Scott, Attorney General Bondi, Speaker of the House Crisafulli and Senate President Gardner. A special session is needed immediately to address the proliferation of military assault weapons and the ease with which they’re purchased. Our safety is in the hands of these leaders, and they are ignoring the obvious dangers of today’s gun culture while serving the interests of the National Rifle Association and weapons manufacturers.

Since the founding of our caucus, gun safety has been one of our top legislative priorities. Three years ago, we called on the Florida Legislature to revisit the Stand Your Ground law in a special session. Our calls were ignored. It is our hope that the slaughter in Orlando will finally force our leaders to put safety ahead of the interests of the gun lobby by calling a special session now.

We also urge voters to look at the records of candidates before casting their ballots this fall. Check campaign donations and NRA ratings to see which candidates care about you and your community, then please vote accordingly.
Jennifer Granholm’s speech to the Pinellas County Democratic Party wasn’t your typical political speech — it began with an ode, and ended with an admonition to the Democrats to “strap on your tuba.”

But the party activists whooped and hollered at the pep talk from the former Michigan governor, who’s developed a reputation for rousing speeches and is now an active surrogate spokeswoman for presumptive Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

She said her visit to the county party’s fundraising dinner Saturday night was a sign the Clinton campaign plans an intense effort in Florida and particularly the Tampa Bay area, which could swing the election nationwide. “You are the eye of the storm,” she said. “The nation is begging you in Pinellas County to save our country and save the planet.” Citing a professor who once told her, “You can’t answer a tuba with a piccolo,” she told the crowd, “Strap on your tuba, pick up your oar, pick your metaphor, but Uncle Sam needs you.”

Former Gov. Charlie Crist, now running against U.S. Rep. David Jolly, R-St. Petersburg, introduced Granholm, mentioning her attention-getting speech at the 2012 Democratic National Convention and saying he expects her to be a Clinton Cabinet member.

Three of the Democrats’ four prominent U.S. Senate candidates attended — Pam Keith, Rocky De La Fuente and Patrick Murphy — while the fourth, Alan Grayson, sent a representative.

De La Fuente, a wealthy Orlando businessman fighting for name recognition against his better-known competitors, got some podium time at the event after paying $12,000 to be the main sponsor.

Pinellas Democratic Party chairwoman Susan McGrath said about 260 people attended the $150-per-person event.

Following is Gov. Granholm’s Ode, with which she began her rousing speech:

ODE TO FLORIDA AND MICHIGAN FOR THE PINELLAS COUNTY DEMS

You from the south and us northern yanks,
We seem as different as stone crabs and franks.
But upon closer look, for what it’s worth,
You might think we were separated at birth.
Both states are peninsulas surrounded by water--
Granted your weather’s just a smidge hotter.
More than geography that connects us,
Our county names also intersect us.
We’ve got Calhoun and Jackson, and so do you,
You’ve got Monroe and Bay -- we’ve got them too!
Of course we also have towns named Hell and Bad Axe
Or tell folks for fun you’re going to Climax ... Michigan.
In politics the similarities don’t end:
Rs now control Florida and Michigan.
So Republicanism has taken its toll --
Here’s what Michigan got with GOP control:
They won’t fund infrastructure despite people’s gripes,
No new roads or bridges or underground pipes; They’re lead poisoning children in the City of Flint; They’re slashing the reach of labor’s footprint; They won’t pay to retrain our jobless folks; They say global warming is all a hoax; They’ve passed laws making it harder to vote, While trickle down theory gets jammed down our throat. They’ve made massive cuts to the business tax, While funding for schools goes under the axe. Legislating bathrooms and voter ID: That’s what you get with this GOP. Congressional panels up to no good, Obsessed over emails and planned parenthood; And if any of that sounds familiar to you Time to turn Michigan and Florida blue! So in this district Rs are shaking their fist-- They know Jolly is losing to Charlie Christ! So your federal candidates are on the right track, One of these Dems will help take the Senate back! Now, not to air your state’s dirty laundry, What’s up with Attorney General Pam Bondi? Thousands of folks facing adversity Were conned into plunking for Trump University. Is it true that she probed Trump U courses for sale ‘Til a certain donation arrived in the mail? Poor Republicans are just now coming to grips With the reality of the Trumpocalypse. I’m fascinated by Trump’s psychology -- Seems his whole rationale for running is : He! Why does his bluster seem so sure? Is it because he’s so insecure? His language is forceful, his words so bold-- He seems super strong ... for a seven year old. Now, we could care less that he’s twice divorced, But we do care ‘bout the jobs he’s outsourced. He boasts, he’ll “bring back the jobs that were let go!” But HE manufactures in China and Mexico! A scammer, a chiseler - some have called Trump a thief Do we want as our president a swindler-in-chief? His books say they’ll show you to profit heaven, So why do they all end at Chapter 11? Yes, Trump declared bankruptcy not 3 times but four-- Do we want him near launch codes for nuclear war? He insults our allies and when he’s done, He’s BFFs with Putin and Kim Jung Un. With such paper thin skin he’s wholly unstable: Imagine him in charge of the Situation Room Table! [Can I say a word about his use of twitter? So sad! ....you might even think he was bitter. Tweeting out attacks has worked well for him He may have more followers than Kanye and Kim. But so many insults that I’ve lost count: Donald, it’s time to Delete your Account.] One reason we can’t let up our attacks is Trump refuses to release his own taxes. This lack of transparency? Like never before! Is he stashing his loot in some haven offshore? Is it because he’s not a 10-billionaire? Or because Donald’s rate is grossly unfair? Even ol’ Mitt Romney is in an uproar -- Maybe Trump’s cars also get their own elevator? Then there’s his anti-immigrant rants and racism -- And he just reeks with his own narcissism. Building yuuuge walls are part of his plans; Must all be related to the size of his .... hands. And his issues with women and what it reveals! Seems he only likes us in tiaras and heels. Punish the women who exercise choice, Criticizing the sound of Hillary’s voice, Bleating out bile like a bloviating blowhard: I think it’s time to play that woman card. Cuz over in DC, it’s gridlock times ten-- But all that can be fixed with some more estrogen. The boys had their fun, let’s turn a new leaf. It’s time for woman as Commander in Chief. So we need you to fight in this state Against the science-denying right wingers of hate. We’ll let them all steep in their party of tea As we register voters in Pinellas County! All eyes are on Florida, the pressure is mounting, Damn the chads! Every vote you’ll be counting! While Donald Trump thinks he will con you all too: I ask you my friends: will we turn Florida blue? So batten down the hatches, amass the artillery, I hope that this crowd is ready for Hillary; And with Donald Trump, it’s totally evident - That we'll work our tails off to elect her President!
More photos from the Prelude to Victory Dinner

Speakers for our upcoming meetings
AUGUST 15, 2016  MITCH PERRY
SEPTEMBER 19, 2016  RICK BOYLAN
OCTOBER 17, 2016  ROB LOREI
NOVEMBER 21, 2016 DR. RICH PIPER

Post election analysis from our founder and former President, Dr. Piper is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Tampa University.
Many from our club helped at the event in St. Petersburg. Our President says, “It was HOT.”

Tribute to those slain in Orlando. The Parade opened with marchers declaring the names of those lost to the attack at the PULSE night club. This was followed by 10 seconds of silence for each of the 49 lost, before the parade festivities began.
CAN’T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

ED note: In light of the horrible senseless killings of the past weeks, we need to assess our own moral concerns regarding our shared Humanity. And share a bit of Hope!

By Donald Eastman III president of Eckerd College, Baccalaureate speech (exerpt)

This generation is being called, perhaps more vociferously than any previous generation, to expand its circle of moral concern. You are called to figure out how to save the planet, and all its creatures, from themselves and from environmental catastrophe.

There were at least four great expansions of moral consciousness in the 20th century. The significant progress and deepening of understanding of human rights to include civil rights, religious and cultural rights, women’s rights and gay rights is the definitive moral advance of the modern era. Steven Pinker, the Harvard cognitive scientist, calls this historical trend “The Rights Revolutions” and connects it to what he argues is a dramatic decline in violence worldwide — despite relentless media reports to the contrary. But we can see, if we have some historical perspective, the dramatic advance of what the philosopher Peter Singer calls “the expanding circle of moral concern.” A growing mountain of recent evidence supports Martin Luther King’s famous claim that, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

The limitations of our moral and intellectual imagination are astounding — in retrospect. The fact that so many of the great men who founded our nation were slaveholders is astonishing and morally reprehensible to us — but they lived in a world wholly different from ours, a world in which there were slaves and slaveholders on every continent. It is only in retrospect that their moral blindness is apparent to us. Living in their time, most of us would have been blind too. Our grandchildren are likely to think us moral reprobates, or worse, because we ate meat and wore leather shoes. And they may well be right.

In this complicated world, it is our duty to minister to the “other,” however foreign and unknown to us, as the good Samaritan did, because there are always “others.” Where there were Irish, Italians, Armenians, Jews, African-Americans and gays and lesbians, there are now Muslims and Mexicans and transgender people. This is the path of social justice, and it is the moral imperative for each of us. 🌊
Environmental News

Truth vs Excuses from Everglades Trust,

submitted by Wanda Schwerer

In the face of overwhelming proof that our waterways are under siege and on the verge of collapse, you would think your government could be trusted. But you would be wrong. The South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) recently promoted a “Myth vs Fact” sheet. Maybe you received it. This State agency continues to deny and deflect responsibility. You deserve better. What you will get from the Everglades Trust are the facts and the truth.

TRUTH The Governor and Florida Department of Environmental Protection provide daily control over the actions of the SFWMD Governing Board and staff.

TRUTH Since 200, shortly after they agreed to sell the land, US Sugar has been lobbying Florida government to not go through with the deal – a written binding contract. They spent nearly 11 million dollars on campaign contributions in 2014 alone.

TRUTH In 2014, 75% of Florida voters amended the state constitution again. This time, to pass the Florida Water and Land Conservation Amendment, which: “Funds the Land Acquisition Trust Fund to acquire, restore, improve, and manage conservation lands… including the Everglades.”

TRUTH The SFWMD is responsible for managing and protecting water resources of South Florida by balancing and improving flood control, water supply, water quality and natural systems.

TRUTH Despite overwhelming evidence and independent scientific support from more than 200 scientists for additional storage south of Lake Okeechobee, the SFWMD has consistently refused to meaningfully consider any additional options for storage south of Lake Okeechobee.

TRUTH The one CERP project that will provide the most relief to the northern coastal communities, the Everglades and Florida Bay (The Keys) is the Everglades Agricultural Area (EAA) reservoir. Without additional storage in the EAA, the Everglades will not be restored, Florida Bay will continue to suffer from a lack of fresh water, and the coastal communities will continue to receive harmful Lake Okeechobee discharges.

No more excuses. Just fix it.

This is a horrific symptom of years of water mismanagement that we are seeing play out in our waterways and oceans throughout South Florida today. Here is the solution: Buy the land in the EAA. Build the reservoir. Restore the flow of CLEAN freshwater into our Everglades and get it down to a starving Florida Bay.

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Guacamole sludge along our Southern rivers, (left) and Adams Ranch, a candidate for protection within the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area. (CARLTON WARD JR. Special to the Times)

How easily we can go from the beauty on the right to the guacamole on left!
Sugar’s decades-long hold over Florida Everglades came with a price

by Mary Ellen Klas, Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau in Tampabay Times July 11

TALLAHASSEE — Fifteen years after Jeb Bush and Bill Clinton reached a landmark accord to revive the Everglades, billions of dollars have been spent but not much marsh has been restored, and the River of Grass continues to cycle through the same familiar struggles.

Disastrous algae blooms foul coastal estuaries. Seagrass die-offs plague Florida Bay. High water threatens the Lake Okeechobee dike. Everglades marshes drown under too much water or wither under too little. All the ecological crises of this summer are just déjà vu, all over again. But a review of the key decision points by Florida policymakers over the last two decades shows that one key player in the fate of the Everglades has grown healthier and stronger: Big Sugar.

The industry, one of the largest producers of phosphorus-laden pollutants in the Glades, has rung up a string of political successes while recording bumper harvests in recent years. That influence has not come cheaply. Between 1994 and 2016, a review of state Division of Elections records by the Miami Herald/Tampa Bay Times Tallahassee bureau shows, the sugar industry — led by United States Sugar and Florida Crystals — has steered a whopping $57.8 million in direct and in-kind contributions to state and local political campaigns. (The total does not include federal contributions.)

It appears to be money well spent. On issue after issue, regulators, legislators and governors have erred on the side of softening the impact of adverse rules and regulations on cane growers and other powerful and polluting agriculture interests, including cattle operations north of Lake Okeechobee.

The sugar industry beat back a voter-approved amendment that would have forced it to pay for cleaning up its own nutrient-rich runoff into the Everglades, instead shifting much of the cost to taxpayers. It won repeated delays of strict water quality standards. It has fended off calls for buyouts — even after one of the largest companies, U.S. Sugar, offered to sell itself to the state. And it has undermined attempts to use a second constitutional amendment, Amendment 1, to be used to buy farmland for Everglades cleanup.

For the most up-to-date information on your Federal, State, and County representatives including all contact information, Go to:

What do we include in the Newsletter?

It’s clear that we Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club members are an interested, involved, informed - and opinionated - bunch. And providing a forum for all that “good stuff” is an important function of our newsletter. The Board encourages articles and letters to the editor.

This newsletter is created by volunteers who make every attempt to publish factual information, and who encourage the free exchange of information and opinions. It should include input from all of us. However, the opinions and viewpoints expressed by contributors may not necessarily reflect those of the club. Please send submissions to newsletter editor, Lois Fries, at loisfries@gmail.com.

If you don’t wish to receive this newsletter, let Editor Lois Fries know. She will also be happy to add more folks to our newsletter email list. (Please forward to anyone you know who may be interested in what we do and how to join.) Her address is: loisfries@gmail.com.

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