



**From the President's Desk**

*By Rich Piper*

Now that the holidays are behind us, it is time to get really geared up for the 2012 election campaigns.

The good news locally is that our club member, Belleair Bluffs Commissioner **Joe Barkley**, has won re-election without opposition, since no candidate filed by the deadline to run against him in the March election. Not only does his automatic re-election give the community his outstanding services for another term, but it also frees our club members to devote attention to other worthy election projects.

Another well-known local Democratic officeholder, Seminole City Council Member **Patricia Plantamura**, is seeking re-election in March. In contrast to Joe Barkley's situation, the Seminole race features five candidates for two city council positions. The other incumbent in Seminole is a Republican, Leslie Waters, who withdrew recently from a race for the Florida Senate. One other registered Democrat, Sheryl Goff, is among the five Seminole candidates in this officially nonpartisan election.

Beyond the local council and commission contests, I believe the most important task for us right now is to get as many Democrats as possible registered to vote in Pinellas County. This effort is already under way on a major scale. More than 20 club members are now to register voters under the new Florida legislation. Another 100 OFA volunteers have received certification county-wide under the auspices of Obama for America.

If you are not already certified, I strongly urge you to complete the two-hour course offered by OFA to become certified and assist the voter registration drives that we are mounting. Our club members have already canvassed most of Ridgecrest, as well as St. Petersburg College Clearwater, the Seminole Library, sections of South Greenwood in Clearwater and a number of shopping centers in Mid-Pinellas County. We have so far registered more than 100 voters, most of them Democrats, just in the past few weeks. On Jan. 16, we'll be moving forward with a really major effort to sign up voters at the Martin Luther King, Jr., Day Parade in St. Petersburg.

Right now, we Democrats hold a voter registration lead of about 5,500 over the Republicans in Pinellas County. Our goal is to increase that lead dramatically over the months leading up to the 2012 election and then to get out the vote for our candidates. OFA registration drives in

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**REMINDER**

**NEXT MEETING** of the Largo-Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club.

**Bring your donation of canned goods for the local food pantries.**

**DATE:** Jan 16, 2011

**TIME:** 7:00 PM

**PLACE:**

**Balla's Steakhouse**  
776 Missouri Ave., Largo,  
(727) 586-3474 or email  
Rich at  
[President@largodemocrats.com](mailto:President@largodemocrats.com)



Visit our website at:

[www.largodemocrats.com](http://www.largodemocrats.com)

2008 in Florida added nearly 200,000 voters to the registration rolls. Of these, 75% voted on Election Day (compared with 59% of those who were registered by the Supervisors of Elections or other non-OFA groups). If we can expand the electorate even more dramatically than we did in 2008, Democratic victory chances in Pinellas County and Florida will be dramatically enhanced.

When I ask people to help out with voter registration and in other ways, quite a few say, "Later," and indicate that they don't see the need to get involved "this early." However, I believe strongly that we need to move our campaign forward NOW.

Of course, we can and must support the Democratic campaign of 2012 in other ways beyond voter registration. We are staging phone banks every week to reach out to past supporters and recruit new volunteers for 2012. Joe Barkley and Mary Lou Ambrose have generously allowed us the use of their insurance agency offices on weekends, greatly boosting this effort.

We are also seeking to expand the membership of the Pinellas Democratic Executive Committee to strengthen the party organization in our county. The Pinellas County Democratic Party will be holding its Kennedy-King Dinner and Fund-raiser at Banquet Masters on Saturday, March 10. Tickets are \$75 each. Our club hopes to fill two or more tables with our members and give the Democratic Party and its candidates a major financial boost going into the campaign.

Whether through registering voters, making phone calls, building the Democratic organization or giving money through the **Kennedy-King Dinner** and otherwise, we can all contribute our part! Please contact me at [rpiper3404@aol.com](mailto:rpiper3404@aol.com) or [727-588-0891](tel:727-588-0891) if you'd like to get involved.

**Please remember to pay your annual club dues (still just \$10 each) at our next meeting, Monday, Jan. 16, 7 p.m. Balla's Steak House, 776 Missouri Ave. North, Largo 33771.**

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### **FLORIDA'S CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION**

- **Sen. Bill Nelson** - 813 225-7040 or (202) 224-5274 Email: <http://billnelson.senate.gov/contact/index.cfm>
- **Sen. Marco Rubio** - 813 977-6450 or (202) 224-3041 email: [http://rubio.senate.gov/contact\\_form.cfm](http://rubio.senate.gov/contact_form.cfm)
- **Rep. Bill Young** - 727 893-3191 or (202)225-5961

## **Calendar of Events**

### **January Meeting Reminder - MLK Biographer to Speak at January Meeting**

The Rev. Dr. Charles McKenzie, who has been studying the life and legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for 40 years – since he was a 13-year-old – and has recently completed a biography of this giant of American history, will be the club's January speaker.

Some club members have had the privilege of hearing Rev. McKenzie speak and can vouch for his oratorical abilities. In addition to sharing observations about MLK and his ongoing impact on the U.S., he will discuss the challenges we are facing today.

As the state director of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow-PUSH Coalition, Rev. McKenzie works tirelessly against poverty, hunger and gun violence, for peace and justice, to register new voters and to improve the lives of those who have been oppressed, exploited and left in the margins of society.

Rev. McKenzie knows Florida politics too, having been a Democratic candidate for Congress in 2001 and the State House in 2008. We're still looking for "a few good men" so hopefully he will try again. He also has co-written a biography of President Obama.

Come hear Rev. McKenzie at 7 p.m. Monday, Jan. 16 at our new meeting location: **Balla's Steakhouse**, 776 Missouri Ave., just north of Largo High School. The program is open to the community.

The club is still collecting non-perishables for local food banks.

Date	Time	Event	Location
<b>MONDAY, JAN 1</b>	10:00 AM – 2:00 PM	MLK Parade Voter Registration and Volunteer Recruitment	<b>Event Location:</b> Meet at PCDEC HQ at 8:00 am to organize for the event <b>¶Event Description:</b> <b>MLK Parade Voter Registration and Volunteer Recruitment</b> January 16 10am-2pm Downtown St. Pete Staging Location Forthcoming
<b>MONDAY, JAN 16</b>	7:00 PM – TBD	<b>Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club</b>	<b>Balla's Steak House</b> , 776 Missouri Ave. N , Largo 33771 Come early to eat, drink and socialize before the meeting. Contact Rich Piper, <a href="mailto:rpiper3404@aol.com">rpiper3404@aol.com</a> or 813-210-7457 for further information
<b>TUESDAY, JAN 17</b>	6:00 PM – 9:00 PM	Hispanic Caucus--Organizational Meeting	<b>Event Location:</b> the Sentinel Building, 300 S. Duncan Avenue--Clearwater <b>Event Description:</b> The Pinellas Hispanic Caucus is energized and ready to work to get President Obama re-elected, other Democrats elected and re-elected! They are keen on reaching out to the Hispanic community. The meeting is in the Lobby Conference Room. Please join our newest caucus. Contact Edward Quinones, President at 481-4692 or Elaine Granata at 455-7400
<b>WEDNESDAY, JAN 18</b>	6:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Gulfport Democratic Club Meeting	<b>Event Description:</b> Please call Stuart Fraser, Johnny Boykins, Bonnie Sklaren and Karen Hodgen for details. Bring a dessert as this will also be a social hour
<b>THURSDAY, JAN 19</b>	6:30 PM – 9:00 PM	6:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Pinellas County Democratic Party Office - 2250 - 1st Avenue N., St. Petersburg Join the Stonewall Democrats for their regular monthly meeting at FEB Headquarters, 2250 1st Ave. N. in St. Pete. Social at 6:30, meeting starts at 7. Questions? Contact Rick Boylan at <a href="mailto:RQBoylan@gmail.com">RQBoylan@gmail.com</a> .
<b>MONDAY, JAN 23</b>	11:30 AM – 2:00 PM	Democratic Women's Club of Upper Pinellas	Event Location: Golden Corral--10050 Ulmerton Rd, Largo Guest speaker is Mary Stanley. Contact Mary Freeman. Senior Lunch is \$7.79 and Non-Senior Lunch \$8.29

Date	Time	Event	Location
<b>TUESDAY, JAN 24</b>	7:00 PM – TBD	Hispanic Caucus Voter Registration Training	Event Location: 300 Duncan Avenue--Clearwater, FL <b>Event Description:</b> Conference Room
<b>THURSDAY JAN 26</b>	2:00 PM - TBD	On Top Of The World Democratic Club Meeting	<b>Event Location:</b> Main Clubhouse World Parkway <b>Event Description:</b> Join fellow active Democrats as we get organized and energized. When: Thursday , 8/25/2011 , at 2:00 PM Where: Main Clubhouse World Parkway On Top Of The World Sunset Point Rd. Between Belcher And US. 19. Clearwater, FL. For more info. Contact Rosemarie At (727) 797-7927.
<b>THURSDAY JAN 26</b>	7:00 PM – 9:00 PM	PCDEC MONTHLY MEETING	<b>Event Location:</b> St. Pete Marriott Hotel, 12600 Roosevelt Blvd. N., St. Pete <b>Event Description:</b> Please join us for the monthly DEC meeting
<b>WEDNESDAY, FEB 1</b>	6:30 PM – 8:30 PM	St. Petersburg Democratic Club	<b>Event Location:</b> Picadilly Cafeteria 1900 34th St. N (Plaza at sw corner of 34th St. N & 22nd Ave. N.) St Petersburg, Fl 337137 <b>Event Description:</b> Monthly meeting of the St. Pete Dems, which takes place the first Wednesday of every month. Share food together from 6:30-7. Meeting with guest speakers  For more information, please contact Mike Fox at 727-320-4502 or <a href="mailto:tampabaydemocracy@yahoo.com">tampabaydemocracy@yahoo.com</a>
<b>THURSDAY, FEB 9</b>	6:30 PM – 8:30 PM	Greater Pinellas Democratic Club Meeting	<b>Event Location:</b> Banquet Masters--8100 Park Blvd., Pinellas Park <b>Event Description:</b> Social hour begins at 6:00 PM. Looking Ahead in 2012 addressing the concerns of the community, Pinellas county and the country. Guest speakers will be: Pinellas Commissioner Ken Welch and Reverend Manuel Sykes, President of the Pinellas County NAACP and leader of Bethel Community Baptist Church.

More Information available at: <http://www.pinellasedemocrats.com/calendar.asp?nMonth=1&nYear=2012>

## Pinellas Democratic Party NEWS

### **Another Way to Celebrate MLK Day**

Victoria Kirby, our local Obama for America field director, is coordinating a huge voter registration effort at St. Pete's MLK DRUM MAJOR for JUSTICE PARADE. She plans to staff 10 tables along the route with volunteers registering new voters, promoting vote by mail and early voting, and otherwise campaigning for President Obama and all Florida

candidates. OFA supporters are also invited to march in the parade.

You don't have to be certified to register voters to participate. Democrats need to be a large presence so contact **Victoria at [vkirby@ofafl.com](mailto:vkirby@ofafl.com)** or just meet up at the Pinellas County Democratic HQ, 2250 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue N. in St. Pete at 8 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 16, Martin Luther King Day. If possible, wear an Obama shirt or a good old Democrat-blue shirt.

The parade, which was started in 1985 and has grown steady every year, is recognized as the largest MLK Parade celebration in the Southeastern United States, with more than 100,000 spectators annually and over 125 marching bands, floats and many other types of entrants. The parade route is 2.5 miles through the heart of beautiful downtown St. Petersburg, starting at the Tropicana Field and ending at Vinoy Park.

### ***PCDEC Kennedy/King Dinner***

After a year's hiatus, the Pinellas County Democratic Executive Committee is once again holding its Kennedy/King Dinner. With a theme of "Democrats serving our communities at the local level," it is being co-chaired by Rep. Rick Kriseman, Rep. Darryl Rouson and County Commissioner Ken Welch. All Pinellas Democrats serving in state or local governments will be honored.

Mark your calendar for March 10 and your GPS for Banquet Master's on Park Boulevard in Pinellas Park. Tickets are \$75, with proceeds to fill the coffers of the Democratic Victory Fund. Details on the program will be announced.

This is the PCDEC's biggest fundraiser. Republicans have waged an unrelenting war on women, seniors and the middle class. If we want to send them packing in November, we can't sit on our wallets. According to one of the many appeals we all get, "2012 is going to be a big freaking deal for Florida. The work we do to stop extremism

here will have a national stage. There's so much on the line.

"You know that together, we can effectively challenge Gov. Scott and his extreme agenda. Together, we can hold him and his allies in the Legislature accountable for their anti-middle class positions devastating our state."

Give some serious thought to the Kennedy/King Dinner. It would be great if the club could fill at least two tables. Good for the club's reputation as a "go to" organization and good for electing Democrats. And a good time will be had by all!

### ***PCDEC Not All Work***

### ***St. Petersburg VFW Hall***



*Victoria Kirby, Regional Field Director of OFA, Pinellas Democratic Chairman Mark Hanisee, State Democratic Chairman Rod Smith, and Harvey and Betty Morgenstein, leaders of the Greater Pinellas Democratic Club..*

## ***Club News***

### ***Grassroots Campaigning in Earnest***

OK, maybe it's not the greatest photo we've ever published in the newsletter, but this shot by Rich Piper of Ginny Nelson, Deb Anderson, Chris Jamison and the almost seen Kathleen Jamison and Heidi Sanchez did make it into the OFA's Twitterverse a few weeks ago. (Must have been a slow news day!)

The club members/OFA volunteers were getting their marching orders before heading

out to register voters door-to-door in Ridgcrest.



*Preparing door-to-door foray to Ridgecrest.*

There are ongoing opportunities to register voters, encourage mail-in and early voting, in other ways campaign for President Obama and other Democrats – and maybe get a decent photo of yourself in the process!

Rich Piper, 727-588-0891, and Heidi Sanchez, 727-593-2311, are the point people in this area.



*OFA leadership training led by Rich Piper.*

### ***Warm Hands, Warm Hearts***

Thanks to the Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club, 100 or so of this area's homeless citizens will have warmer hands when the weather gets cold again.

**Members donated \$204** to the outreach committee's fund for purchasing gloves for those attending the Christmas dinner at Clearwater's Peace Memorial Lutheran Church. Included were outfits for two young girls who live with their grandparents but see their parents once a week at the church's weekly Thursday night suppers.

Outreach committee chair Charlotte Maas and her sister Beth, who was visiting from Chicago, dropped the gifts off to Santa. Each had a "From Largo Democrats" label, which will hopefully inspire any eligible voters to vote Democratic next November.

If the church grants permission, we will be doing a registration drive there sometime soon.



*Carol Alt and Charlotte Maas wrap holiday gloves for the homeless.*

### ***Club's Not All Work Either***

Board member Wanda Schwerer's beautiful Belleair Beach home was the perfect setting for the club's annual holiday gets together on Dec. 17. And once again we proved that Democrats are good cooks – with every kind of casserole and dessert imaginable. (Sorry, Ron. You were a great co-host even though you're not a club member!)

Politics was Topic A, as usual. But holiday plans, travel, favorite NPR commentators, even broken bones were also discussed. Mary Lou Ambrose, who arrived on crutches, precipitated the latter subject. Our club secretary snapped a little bone in her foot as she was finishing cooking her famous meatballs but gamely showed up – with said

meatballs – after a visit to the emergency room.

More Holiday Party Photos below



*Chilling out on the warm evening: from the left, Bob Lansburg, Elaine Granata, Hal and Lynn Alterman, Mary Ellen Lansburg, hostess Wanda Schwerer and Jack Nazario.*



*Before dinner conversations, xxx Joe Barkley, Elizabeth Snedeker, Rod Snedeker*



*Dining in the Den, Sallie Elmore & others chat with Theresa Piper and George Grazier*



*After dinner relaxation, Lois Fries, Terry, Kathleen Jamison, Chris Jamison, Mary Lou Ambrose.*

## LETTERS and OPINIONS

### **Republican Disarray and Flawed Candidates - Bolster Democratic Prospects**

*By Rich Piper*

As Republicans battle Republicans in the Presidential nominating race, in the U.S. Congress and in the U.S. Senate race in Florida, and demonstrate repeatedly their shocking lack of concern for the broad middle class and those who hope to join the middle class, Democratic prospects for victory in 2012 seem to be improving.

The Republican Presidential nominating competition has become a circus. Donald Trump's role as moderator/ringmaster of a

candidate debate, most candidates' refusals to participate and Trump's withdrawal as moderator and threat to run himself on an independent or third-party ticket are just a sampling. The rise and decline of Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, Herman Cain and Newt Gingrich add to the picture of disarray. Rick Santorum became the latest "flavor of the week" in the wake of his strong showing in Iowa, but he fizzled in New Hampshire; and his far-right ideology and lack of effective campaign infrastructure make him less than credible as a candidate over the long haul. Ron Paul's eccentricity on many dimensions and his opposition to Republican orthodoxy on foreign policy make him an unlikely nominee. The gross Republican appeals to

racial and ethnic hatred and homophobia are another part of the toxic G.O.P. mix. As I've said many times before, it seems that Romney – the darling of the top 1% and the biggest phony that I've seen in any recent presidential race -- is the likely Republican nominee.

President Obama's steady leadership in defense of the middle class and diversity offers a sharp contrast to Romney and the rest that should be apparent to anyone who is paying any attention to national politics.

Meanwhile, the Senate and House Republicans' infighting over the payroll tax-cut and unemployment compensation extension led even the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, a bulwark of Republicanism, to voice disgust with their performance. According to most surveys, popular assessments of Congress are now at an all-time low; and public anger rightly focuses far more on the Republicans than on the Democrats.

The encouraging signs of economic recovery should further boost the prospects for victory of President Obama and the Congressional Democrats if they prove durable. Unfortunately, most Republican leaders are doing everything they can to wreck the economy and will undoubtedly continue to do so. The 2008 McCain campaign slogan of "Country First" apparently has no appeal whatsoever for the current Republican leaders. Their approach is to put the interests of the top one per cent and narrow partisan advantage ahead of the national interest – again and again and again.

Here in Florida, Senator Nelson has opened up a lead over the fractious Republican candidates. Though Connie Mack once appeared likely to win the Republican nomination with ease and seemed to have a good chance of defeating Nelson in the general election, Mack's long record as a champion of questionable earmarks and right-wing causes, as well as attacks from fellow Republicans, appear to be dimming his attractiveness to voters. Nelson led Mack 46% to 35% in the PPP public opinion survey completed in early December, after trailing him in two previous

polls, and the *Times* survey of experts in both parties in late December showed seven in 10 now give the edge to Nelson.

It is still a long way to November 2012, but Democratic prospects have been improving over the past month. Here in Pinellas, we still have a shortage of declared Democratic candidates, though I hear that several are on the brink of announcing their candidacies. Good Democrats need to step forward and rev up their campaigns if they hope to take advantage of an improving political environment at the national and state levels.

### ***Gleeful Dems Store Up Ammunition for Campaign 2012***

If Mitt Romney is the GOP presidential candidate – and that's looking pretty inevitable even though many Republicans are still a wishin' and a hopin' for someone better – the Democrats can thank him for providing plenty of ammunition to use against him between now and November.

The latest: his infamous "I like firing people."

According to the Huffington Post (your editor's favorite political news source), "Under pressure from right and left, Romney delivered a series of gaffes and fibs in the past few days that may appear trivial on the surface, but reinforce the harshest critiques of him as a heartless businessman and soulless politician." That comment – which he looked like he wanted to choke back the moment he said it – will come back to haunt him in coming months. ""

The foot-in-the-mouth came after Romney "fibbed about his political ambitions while governor, lied about having seen an attack ad cut by his Super PAC, bizarrely asserted that he'd been worried in the past about getting laid off, and approvingly related advice from his father, that nobody who still has to pay a mortgage should run for political office." "The more this goes on, the more I think he's not going to beat Obama," one well known New Hampshire Republican told HuffPost. His words to God's ear!!!

## ***Remember Scott's negative record of accomplishment***

By Hal Alterman

Club member and St. Petersburg Democratic Club newsletter editor

In 2012, Florida Democrats have a powerful weapon that can and should be used to bludgeon any local or statewide opposition candidate – we can simply paint them as a “Rick Scott Republican.”

Establishing, and then emphasizing, that association should send shivers down Republican spines because the latest Public Policy Polling survey finds Scott's approval at an unprecedented low of 26%. This makes him “the least popular governor of all those surveyed by PPP, and probably the least popular in the country,” in the words of Dean Pagani of *Governors Journal*.

Although Scott's polling woes appear to be primarily policy-driven – such as his veto of the \$2.4 billion high-speed rail project that would have created thousands of jobs in the Tampa-Orlando I-4 corridor – “he is generally disliked by many people who can't get over his checkered background and the legal troubles his companies have had,” says Sean Foreman, a political science professor at Barry University (Miami Shores).

Another poli-sci professor, Seth McKee of the University of South Florida St Petersburg, goes into even more detail about why Scott's approval numbers are at a historic low: “Not long after he was sworn in, Scott behaved in a manner that drew broad opposition, with nixing high-speed light rail between Tampa and Orlando as the most prominent case. He drew bipartisan ire in refusing federal funds for this project, and then turned around and supported a smaller project (SunRail) in the Orlando area.”

“Quite frankly,” noted McKee, “Scott's about-faces make one question his competency and leadership. One, you can't simply change the terms of the promise you made with respect to how many jobs will be created during your administration when that's the most important issue to voters. Two, it is hard for voters to trust a governor who originally pushes a budget that guts education and then most recently realizes that education is one part of the budget that must be protected.”

Our job in Pinellas will be to remind voters of Scott's negative record of accomplishment and to link Republican legislative candidates to him .”

## For Your Information

### Largo/Mid-Pinellas Democratic Club Board of Directors

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<b>Outreach Coordinator</b> Charlotte Maas	<b>Director/newsletter editor</b> Kathleen Jamison

Additional contact information is available on [www.largodemocrats.com](http://www.largodemocrats.com) -

### ***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, Kathleen Jamison, at [Editor@largodemocrats.com](mailto:Editor@largodemocrats.com)

If you don't wish to receive this newsletter, let Editor Kathleen Jamison 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 [Editor@largodemocrats.com](mailto:Editor@largodemocrats.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
- Attend special events and monthly meetings.
- For membership information, email [administrator@largodemocrats.com](mailto:administrator@largodemocrats.com)

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**ANNUAL DUES ARE JUST \$10**

**CHANGE, YES WE CAN!**