

Polk State College celebrates incorporation of Lake Wales campus into base budget

Last week, Governor Ron DeSantis signed a reduced 2020-2021 state budget that reflects \$1 billion in vetoes required to maintain state reserves and to account for shortfalls in state revenues due to the impact of COVID-19 on the state economy.

Polk State College staff published a release last week saying school officials are grateful that DeSantis maintained state funds for the Florida College System, including \$30 million in performance funding through the 2+2 Student Success Incentive Fund and the Work Florida Student Success Incentive Fund.

Polk State also achieved a critical victory during the 2020 Legislative Session.

The college successfully incorporated operational funding for the Lake Wales Campus — the JD Alexander Center — into Polk State’s base operational budget, ensuring that it would not be vulnerable to veto year after year.

This issue, which began in 2017, placed long-standing operational funding for the Lake Wales Campus at risk each legislative session. The incorporation of this funding into the college’s base budget ensures the preservation of this location which serves approximately 1,100 students each year.

“The Polk County legislative delegation, members of the Polk State District Board of Trustees, the Polk State Foundation Board and President’s Circle, and the community continued to advocate effectively for the Lake Wales Campus and our students,” Polk State President Angela Garcia Falconetti said. “Their efforts have ensured that Polk State will be able to continue to fulfill its mission to provide access to affordable, quality higher education to all parts of the Polk County community.”



FILE PHOTO

Sun Staff

Supervisor of Elections candidates spar over registration issue

By CHARLES A. BAKER III
Staff Writer

POLK COUNTY – A fairly uncommon issue regarding voters’ ability to participate in primary elections was at the core of a disagreement between the two candidates for Polk County Supervisor of Elections last week.

The Sun received an anonymous request to investigate a potential voter registration problem — that, for the past few years, when someone registers to vote at the driver’s license office, sometimes that process doesn’t always work as intended.

When someone changes their name and their address at the same time while applying for a new driver’s license, occasionally the voter registration card comes back as having no party affiliation — even if the individual had previously registered as a voter affiliated with a political party.

A Florida voter with a non-party affiliated card cannot vote in a primary election, as Florida is a closed primary state. That poses an issue, then, for voters who may be otherwise unaware that their affiliation had reverted to no party affiliation.

The individual making the anonymous request implied that Polk Supervisor of Elections Lori Edwards knew about the problem and was not doing enough to remedy it.

In response, Edwards acknowledged the issue did sometimes occur, but said the issue is a Tallahassee-level problem and that she has been lobbying to fix it

for the past six years.

Edwards is facing off against Debbie Hannifan in the general election in November. Hannifan cites the issue, and the lack of action on it, as one of her inspirations for seeking the office.

“I have been aware of this issue since 2016, when I was approached by numerous voters that were turned away at the polls due to this mistake,” Hannifan said. “Lori’s attempt to explain this foul up is nothing more than her refusing to acknowledge her error and the fact that she has known about this issue for years without finding a solution.

“This is one of the reasons I decided to run,” Hannifan continued. “The Supervisor of Elections must protect your voting rights, not systematically disenfranchise voters.”

Edwards said the problem is between two computer databases in Tallahassee that need to be upgraded. She says that state officials claim there is not enough money allocated to do so. Edwards said the problem presents itself a handful of times each month in Polk County. The few times this happens each month, that person usually has to follow up with the Supervisor of Elections and request a party affiliation change in order to be eligible to vote in a Florida primary election.

Edwards maintains that it is not an issue that can be remedied from Polk County.

“I’m fighting for voters to get this straight and it’s not happening in our office,” Edwards said. “It’s happening between two computer systems in

Tallahassee.”

Hannifan, however, was insistent that the issue should be something Edwards is more proactive in resolving.

“She is blaming the DMV system, but to knowingly allow the error to happen without implementing your own corrective action is wrong,” Hannifan said. “As a result, the voter rolls are inaccurate and this has caused voters to lose the right to vote for their candidates in the primary elections.”



Debbie Hannifan



Lori Edwards

CITY OF BARTOW PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the City of Bartow is accepting applications for the following voluntary advisory board(s):

- Building & Housing Board of Appeals (2)
- Citizen’s Advisory Committee (4)
- Community Redevelopment Agency (1)
- Joint Airport Zoning Board (1)
- Zoning Board of Adjustment (alternate)

To obtain an application or board description contact the City Clerk’s Office at (863) 534-0100 ext. 1256 or visit the City Clerk section on the City’s website:

www.cityofbartow.net

STORAGE
Charging Stations!

SELF STORAGE
BOAT & RV PARKING

2700 Eloise Loop Road
863.324.0255
www.aplustorage.com