

Issue February 2021

Presidents Message

“Can’t-Wait to Meet In Person”

With the Federal Governments increased purchases, of Pfizer and Moderna Vaccines and the Johnson and Johnson vaccine coming soon, I think it won’t be long before we have overflowing crowds at the Elsie-Quirk Library! Democratic enthusiasm for our great speakers and wonderful ideas that come from our membership during our in-person meetings is fantastic! I hope in person meeting can start happening by late summer or early fall.

In the meantime:

1. Please pay your yearly dues (with these dues we will be able to continue to fund the expansion of our Democratic ideas and presence in the Englewood area.)
2. Volunteer with the club. We need everyone and can always use more volunteers on our various committees.
3. Stay active (we have some very important elections coming up, local, state, and federal. You can write letters to the Editor and call your Representatives amongst other things)
4. Please join us at our Monthly Zoom Meetings on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 5:30 pm and let your voice be heard!

Looking forward to seeing you soon! David Jones



Calendar of Events

- ◆ Feb. 24, 5:30 – EDC General Membership Zoom Meeting
- ◆ March 10, 10:00 – EDC Board Meeting
- ◆ March 24 , 5:30 – EDC General Membership Zoom Meeting

Legislative Updates

The 2021 session of the Florida Legislature will be held from March 2 to April 30. Committees are already working in Tallahassee to prepare bills for presentation and a vote on the floor. We know there are hundreds, actually, thousands of bills that are sponsored by members of the House and Senate, many of them with full knowledge that they will never reach the floor but will provide future campaign evidence of how hard they are working for “our” interests. Sifting through these bills to find the most offensive ones among them is a real challenge, but there are many resources available to us to direct our efforts to give feedback to our representatives on those that are particularly disturbing.

There are several bills that have been identified as active in the committees that deserve note. They are identified by number with HB for House Bill and SB for Senate Bill. **RED** – Oppose **GREEN** – Support

HB1(Fernandez) / SB 484(Burgess) — Protecting the Right to Peacefully Protest: This bill is a direct attack on Democracy as it criminalizes free speech, dissent, and peaceful protest. Follow this [link](#) to an in-depth ACLU discussion of the bill.

HB 6013(Sabatini) — Anti-Immigrant E-Verify Bill Harming Businesses and Workers: Forces all Florida employers to use the error-prone E-Verify database to check the immigration status of all new employees and provides penalties and loss of license for noncompliance. (Needs Senate Companion Bill to proceed)

HB 351(Gregory)/SB 744(Rodriguez) SB 746(Rodriguez) — Banning Abortions After 6 Weeks – This is part of the continuing attack on the control of women over their own bodies by banning abortions after 6 weeks, before many even know they are pregnant.

HB 6017(Raynor)/SB 632(Torres) & SB 558(Polsky) — Repeal of Same-Sex Marriage Bans Currently Contained in Florida Laws — Proposed to remove all language referring to the illegality of same-sex marriage in Florida law, to conform with Federal Law. (2020 Legislation prohibiting LGBTQ Discrimination in Housing, Employment, Public Lodging and Food Establishments does not appear to be active in the 2021 session. Click on this [link](#) to read an interesting article regarding this topic.)

Other bills of note currently in committee are **SB 90 (Baxley) — Limiting Validity of Request for VBM Ballot to One Calendar Year**, which appears to make Vote by Mail reenrollment required on a yearly basis, is part of an extensive and obvious effort by DeSantis to suppress the vote in any means possible. Even though he admits that the Florida 2020 election was run without any evidence of wrongdoing, DeSantis is using a smoke screen of “increasing transparency” to “strengthen voter confidence.” as his noble justification. Also meriting close monitoring are possible new bills amending VBM enrollment requirements and signature verification procedures, ballot harvesting limits, drop boxes availability, and Early Voting and VBM tabulating periods. Click on this [link](#) to an article from the Charlotte Sun concerning this issue here:

SB 520 (Burgess) — Restrictions on Social Media Outlets to Censure Political Speech that currently requires candidates to have a 30 day notice of any suspension of their posting ability, but is under consideration as a total ban of such suspensions in an effort by Governor DeSantis who claims conservatives are under continual censorship attacks.

SJR 854 (Brandes) — Exceptions to Minimum Wage Rate Amendment Proposition of an amendment to the 2020 Voter Approved Minimum Wage Constitutional Amendment to authorize the Legislature to provide a reduced minimum wage rate for prisoners in the state correctional system, for employees convicted of a felony, for employees under 21 years of age, and for other **Hard-to-Hire** employees. No timeline in bill. “John Morgan of Florida law firm Morgan and Morgan promises to sue the state if the Brandes resolution advances” as reported in the *Orlando Sentinel*. Brandes also wrote legislation which required former felons to pay exorbitant fines before they could vote. (Note: SJR is A Joint Resolution used when proposing amendments to the State Constitution.)

SB 548 (Farmer) — Correctional Privatization — This bill is similar to Biden’s effort at the federal level to cease the existence of privatized prisons. Existing prisons will remain, but unlawful for local governments to contract in the future. Heavily marked up already and still needs a companion House Bill to proceed.

Senate and House Directory — where you can track the progress of individual bills:

<https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/representatives>

<https://www.flsenate.gov/Senators>

On the behalf of the Englewood Democratic Club, we will endeavor to keep our membership and friends apprised of the efforts of the Florida Legislature that are both consistent with Democrat Party beliefs and contrary to issues we support. As I mentioned, it is a daunting task, and I acknowledge all the help I have received from members, and other Democratic and Human Rights groups for this initial report. Please share any legislative concerns, corrections or updates you may have that you feel would be of interest to other Democrats to englewooddemclub@gmail.com. and we will be pleased to distribute the information to our extensive email list. Also, watch for more frequent emails during this legislative session. As a Democrat in Florida, there is no “Off Season” and all of us need to step up if we are to make any progress at all in protecting Democracy in our state. Thanks for everything you have done, and everything you will continue to do in this effort. Think Blue.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION STEP SUGGESTIONS — HOW TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- 1) Put the email and phone numbers of your Representatives from this list in your phone contacts now. If you begin each entry with the same identifier, like “My Representative” or “Florida Legislators,” you will be able to find them more quickly than if they were spread out alphabetically.

State Representatives: SC – Sarasota County; CC – Charlotte County

Governor Ron DeSantis, Phone: 850-488-7146

GovernorRon.DeSantis@eogmyflorida.com

State Senator- District 23 Joe Gruters CC and SC

Capital Phone: 850-487-5023

District Phone: 941-378-6309

Email: gruters.joe@flsenate.gov

State Representative – House District 75 — Michael Grant CC

Capital Phone: 850-717-5075

District Phone: 941-613-0914

Email: Michael.Grant@myfloridahouse.gov

State Representative – House District 74 — James Buchanan SC

Capital Phone: 850-717-5074

District Phone: 941-429-4560

Email: James.Buchanan@myfloridahouse.gov

- 2) Watch for legislative emails from the EDC and as soon as you see them — communicate your own opinions to your representatives.

It will not take long to make a phone call or send an email, and the people up in Tallahassee will know that we are watching what they are doing, supposedly with our best interests in mind. They have all told us that we should elect them because they are enormously powerful in the Florida State Legislature. It is

time that we hold them to account for their actions rather than just their words.

- 3) Try to identify a few friends/neighbors who you know are likeminded and send them an email telling them you are going to forward some emails to them during the next few months to let them know about what is happening in our state legislature, and representative contact info so that they can let our elected officials know how they feel about legislative issues that are important to them. There are over 500 people on our mailing list. If each one of them forwards the emails to 3 or 4 or 5 friends, 2,500 more voters will be informed. Or tell them about our club and they can become a member or friend of the club and receive our emails directly.
- 4) Send an email to englewooddemclub@gmail.com and alert us to legislation that you think should be included in our next Legislative Matters email. Share informative articles, or websites about happenings in Tallahassee or questions about issues that you would like to know about in more detail. The Legislative Session goes at a fast and furious pace and those two months are over before we know it. Any input will be appreciated.
- 5) Write a Letter to the Editor to one of our local newspapers about a legislative issue or action that hits your hot button. There are many committed Democratic letter writers in our community, and several are members of our club.
- 6) Stay involved! Every one of our elected representatives are from the Republican Party, but every one of them knows full well that the Democrats had a candidate running against them in 2020 for the first time in many, many years. They noticed us and were not pleased that on occasion they had to acknowledge Democrat constituents. Let's make sure they don't forget us!

Thank You!!!! Joanie Hillis

Meet A Member

Dueling Biographies

**Nancy Shoemaker by Tony Dunbar and
Tony Dunbar by Nancy Shoemaker**

Nancy Shoemaker and I moved to Englewood three years ago from New Orleans, where I had lived for 40 years and she for seven. Nancy grew up in Sarasota and wanted to get back for the sunshine, friends and her many relatives. We found the perfect home on Gottfried Creek surrounded by the flower gardens she tends. In New Orleans Nancy had been on the staff of the United Way as a senior vice-president in charge of major fund-raising events and “high net worth” donors (watch your wallet around her – in her seven years, she secured seven million-dollar gifts, the first ever in the organization’s history.) In earlier days she was the Chair of the United Way of Sarasota and manager of her family’s Stottlemeyer Shoemaker Lumber Company. Along her way, she also graduated from Carleton College, taught in the public schools on the south side of Chicago, and became an often-requested consultant on governance issues for non-profit boards of directors.



As a member of the Englewood Democratic Club, she organized a group of mask-makers last March who stitched hundreds of face masks for Englewood fire-fighters and nursing home residents. That group of volunteers mushroomed into a dedicated force of envelope-stuffers who sent out thousands of Vote-By-Mail applications and reminders to Englewood Democrats, and followed that up with thousands of phone calls. Nancy is also the co-associate captain (with Chris Kenealy) of the Precinct 545 Democrats. Nancy has two children: Annalisa (and husband, Derek) in Los Angeles; John Henry (wife, Melissa; children: Katherine and Brendan) in Chicago, and she manages to speak to all of them on a daily basis.

By Tony Dunbar

Tony Dunbar and I met in the summer of 1965 at a youth conference in North Carolina. We shortly thereafter became involved in a long-distance relationship. He went to NYU in New York; I went to Carleton College in Northfield, MN. In the summers, Tony bravely (in my opinion) worked to register black voters in the South during the weeks and hitchhiked to Sarasota on the weekends. His work brought him into contact with many luminaries of the Civil Rights movement including John Lewis, Vernon Jordon and Julian Bond.

On an extended break from college, Tony traveled to Mississippi - where he hid during the day and spent the nights interviewing black families in the Delta, chronicling their lives and living conditions. He then went to Appalachia where he did the same with Kentucky coal miners. The result was his first book: Our Land, Too, with an introduction by Robert Coles. (This book was followed by: Against the Grain; Hard Traveling; and, Delta Time. Tony also served as the editor of: American Crisis, Southern Solutions and Where We Stand.)

It was a time of turmoil, unrest and great passion in our country. The course of our relationship followed the same pattern. We separated in 1968; we did not see each other for 40 years.

With others, Tony founded the Southern Coalition on Jails and Prisons which evolved into the Southern Center for Human Rights – an organization still going strong and fighting for legal justice some 45 years later. He later moved to New Orleans where he became the Southern Field Secretary for Amnesty International, earned a law degree from Tulane University, and had a career as a commercial and banking attorney. He continued his writing – authoring a series of New Orleans based mysteries: The Tubby Dubonnet Mystery Series.

Tony more or less retired from the practice of law when we moved to Englewood. He's continued writing – currently working on a series based on the Sarasota Assassination Society. He's very involved with local politics – serving on the board of the Englewood Democratic Club and running county-wide for Charter Review Board during the last election cycle. He's passionate about preserving the environment – he's becoming a Master Naturalist and volunteers every week at Cedar Point Environmental Center.

Tony has one child, Sam, who lives in Denver.

By Nancy Shoemaker

Karn's Korner

Greetings Fellow Democrats! Last month, in Karn's Korner, I promised to include news about our club members, club activities and other news about Englewood. I'm excited to share some news about one of our EDC members who is devoted to making a difference in our community.

On January 29, 2021, the Englewood Sun newspaper featured Englewood resident and EDC member, Rosemary Hagen. Recently, Rosemary received a thank you letter from someone she doesn't know. It was from a Charlotte County woman who had been in crippling debt to medical providers following a double-organ transplant a year ago. The letter read, "This journey is hard, and there were times when I wanted to give up," the letter read. "Thank you and you guys have a spot in my heart." Hagen did not pay the woman's debt directly. Rosemary is a member of the Gulf



Coast Humanists who raise funds to donate to a new kind of philanthropy. This nonprofit is part of RIP Medical Debt started by two former debt collectors in 2016. The group's goal is paying off medical debt for people. The charity uses tricks of the trade to buy to up medical charges. What debt collectors know is the facilities will usually settle a debt for pennies on the dollar. Sometimes the organization works directly with doctors and hospitals.

Florida has a very high rate of medical debt, in part, because it is one of few states that did not expand Medicaid to allow more people to receive federally funded health insurance. That may go before voters in a future referendum. On helping to solve medical debt, Rosemary stated in The Sun article, "This is something each person in the United States should be thinking about." Rosemary continued, "Humanists believe that people alone are responsible for fixing problems of inequity and injustice in the world."

The website for the local campaign is <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/flohum/>, and the main website for RIP Medical Debt is www.ripmedicaldebt.org.

It is EDC members like Rosemary Hagen that make me proud to be a member of such a special organization. So, until next month, please remember humor is the best medicine and keep smiling.

By Karn Cunningham

IN MEMORIUM

Judy Ruotolo, a member of the Englewood Democratic Club, passed away in December. Judy Ruotolo was a lifelong and lively Progressive Democrat. She was a native of Pittsburgh and a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. After graduation she headed out for an adventure on the Orient Express from Paris to Istanbul. This led to an intriguing career at the Department of State where her spirit of adventure led her to challenging assignments in foreign lands and at headquarters in Washington DC.

Upon retirement, Judy and her husband Andy, an

Air Force Veteran and Pentagon official, moved to Englewood. She pursued many interests including tennis, books and tutoring students. Judy was an election official in many local and national elections and a loyal member of the Englewood Democratic Club.

Judy's great joy was helping to end the chaos of the past four years and supporting the election of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris.

May Judy's spirit live on in the good works of patriotic progressives.

By Edmund Lynch, Englewood,
edmundelynch@cs.com

Members Musings

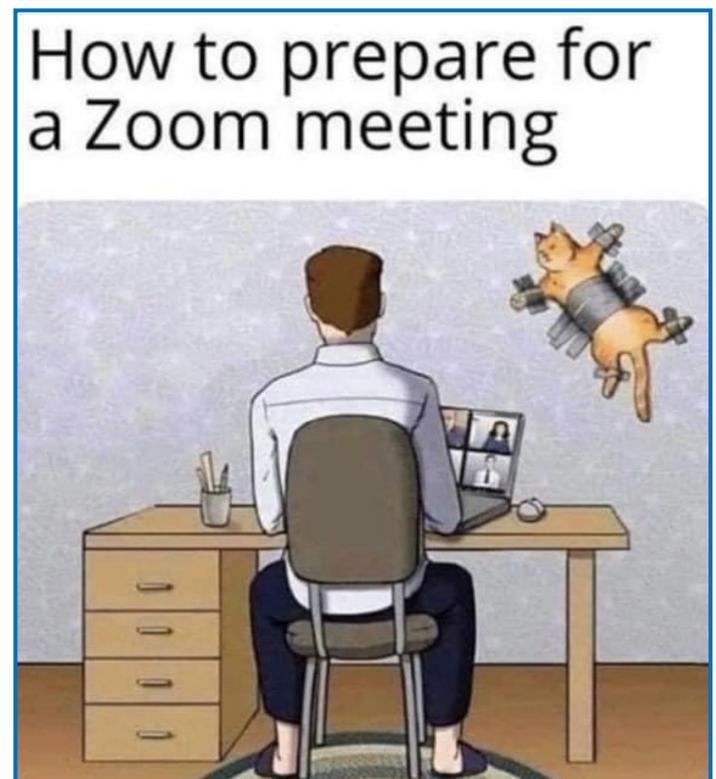
Over the past few weeks, we have heard from several of our members who, quite understandably, are still exhausted from the continual stress of the Trump Administration. Day after day, for more than four long years of dreading getting up in the morning only to hear about a dozen new tweets that Trump had spewed during the night. We all learned to stop thinking that it could not possibly get worse, because it did, again and again. Add the worry of a pandemic, and good grief, it is a wonder than anyone at all is still able to function. Most people are at least somewhat attentive to Self-Maintenance, but Self-Care is another story. As one member suggested, perhaps one way for everyone to regain some of our old joie de vivre is to treat ourselves with a little kindness for a change, and along the way, to celebrate the little victories that will surely happen now that Joe and Jill Biden are in the White House, and Champ and Major are curled up close by their sides.

A Democrat friend of mine, an energetic 82-year-old woman, and a voracious reader who is known to read a book a day, found herself searching for answers as to just how we, as a country, got to the point of January 6th. We were all stunned to watch a violent mob storm our Capital, desecrate the building and its contents, terrorize our elected legislators and then the unthinkable, maim and kill other Americans. She discovered the book *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent* by Isabel Wilkerson, who also wrote *The Warmth of Other Suns*, *The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. It took her three days to read it, having to take time to absorb and try to process the words that flew off the pages and left her breathless. As she was reading on her Kindle, she decided to order a hard cover copy, knowing that at some point she would need to have someone to talk to who had also read the book, about what she was feeling. I am on page 130 of

the nearly 400 in the book, not counting the extensive Notes, Bibliography and Acknowledgements Sections that close the narrative. I have already found myself full of shame and shock that I have been more clueless than I can comprehend about the true fabric of our country. It is certainly not a "read in an afternoon" Patterson book, but is still a page turner as Ms. Wilkerson puts together the pieces of a puzzle that has remained in an unopened box on the top shelf of the hallway closet of our country since our inception. Perhaps it is time to get that box down. Highly recommended read.

Greatly looking forward to hearing from more of our Englewood Democratic Club members and friends in the days ahead. Remember our email is englewooddemclub@gmail.com and our phone number is 941-270-3441. Be well and take care .

Joanie Hillis



A LOOK BACK

Not long ago I read a comment in an email, referring to the Englewood Democratic Club, that said “this, our first year in existence.” WHAT?!? There must be some history of the Club that hopefully defines the Political and Social impact of our Club and its loyal members over the years.

My curiosity was the impetus that led me to do some research on past EDC Clubs as well as our own. Since I am not a History Buff, I had no idea how to make this happen, but when I found the people who had the most to offer were so cooperative, and eager to share their information, stories, and memories, I was excited to continue. Perhaps you would be interested in reading it, so I will share what I found in our Newsletter. You will meet the people, their work, the successes, and sometimes, the failures of these Englewood Democratic Clubs.



The earliest information I have at the present goes back to 2002 when Marian Murry attempted to “reactivate” the Club but sadly, failed.

In January, 2004, Lowell Jones from the Sarasota Democratic Club helped Paul Spyropoulos submit bylaws and application to both the Sarasota and Florida State Democratic Parties for approval. The Democratic Club of Englewood/Sarasota was approved on January 17, 2004 by both the State and Sarasota County. The elected Officers were, Paul Spyropoulos, President, and Frank Lock, Vice President. It seems their meetings were usually held at the Englewood Elks Club. They had several candidates speak to them including Jan Schneider, candidate for Congress 13th district. She won both primaries in 2002 and 2004, but lost to Katherine Harris in both elections. On October 30th they held a Candidate Rally with a very large attendance. On April 10th they held a luncheon where a presentation was given by Lou Piper on John Kerry’s Presidential candidacy. The guest speaker was Steve McDonald, Democratic candidate for Charlotte County Commission. The book “MoveOn’s 50 Ways to Love Your Country” was the door prize. For a new club they were very active.

This is just an introduction with some very interesting and humorous memories to come. I would invite anyone of you who has information of successes or times it did not go so well, memories of special events or anything else that you would share, please call me. I would love to hear from you!

Muriel Glaim, 941-525-2588

Newsletter Info

The Englewood Democratic Club Newsletter was put together by Karn Cunningham, Holly DeVogt, Muriel Glaim and Joanie Hillis. We thank everyone who contributed in so many ways.

Send comments and articles to englewooddemclub@gmail.com or contact any one of us personally.