

The Delray* Democrat†

March 2020

Where We Stand With Amendment 4

Dr. Mark Schneider, president ACLU of Palm Beach

In 2019, the Florida Legislature passed SB7066 to “implement” amendment 4. This bill required that returning citizens (Floridians returning from incarceration) pay all fees, fines, and restitution (legal financial obligations or LFOs) before being able to register and vote, even where those LFOs had been converted to civil liens.

Seventeen returning citizens who are unable to pay their LFOs asked for a preliminary injunction against SB7066 so that they could register, vote, and once again participate in their democracy. A federal court granted this injunction for the named plaintiffs pending a trial on the merits scheduled for April 2020. Florida appealed this injunction to the 11th Circuit Court.

A three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit rejected Florida’s appeal. It opined that allowing returning citizens who could pay their LFOs to vote, while denying the franchise to those who couldn’t afford to pay, violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. The opinion firmly supported the plaintiffs’ case as well as the lower-court decision, and it affirmed the foundational importance of the right to vote. Its opinion provides wind in the sails to the plaintiffs for the upcoming trial in April, which will address not only the inability-to-pay issue but also other claims, including claims based on the First Amendment, due process, and protections against race discrimination.

Florida has already sought review of the three-judge panel’s decision. But to prevent the irreparable harm of being unable to vote in the primaries and general election later this year, the State should act quickly to ensure that those without an ability to pay their LFOs can register and vote. So far, the State has dragged its feet every step of the way.

In the meantime, returning citizens with convictions in Palm Beach County who owe court fees alone (not fines and restitution) can contact the Public Defender’s office at 1-561-355-7500 to determine their eligibility to vote. Those convicted elsewhere in Florida can contact the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition at 1-867-698-6830 or text “FINES” to 82623.

The time is now to end Florida’s mass voter suppression. Floridians voted for Amendment 4 to restore the right to vote to 1.4 million of their fellow citizens. It is time for the State to take note and take action.

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Trump’s Katrina

Michael K. Cantwell

Donald Trump has never taken responsibility for his own failures and has always taken credit for others’ achievements, including an economy he inherited that was so strong it weathered even his trade wars and tariffs and tantrums. Until now.

Of course Trump is not responsible for the coronavirus, which would make it poetic justice if (like the *deus ex machina* that ends a Greek tragedy), the coronavirus prevented his reelection and thus ended our American tragedy. And if there are indications that it might, it will not be because (as the hapless Mick Mulvaney claims) the media is stoking fears in order “to bring down the president.”

Rather, it will be because anyone who has been paying attention understands that Trump is delusional, his administration is incompetent, and both are completely unprepared for a crisis of this nature. The coronavirus is his Katrina and we are only fortunate it comes before and not after November.

*You don’t need to live in Delray Beach to read *The Delray Democrat* or to write for it.

†Democrat: 1. An advocate of democracy. 2. a person who believes in the political or social equality of all people.

How Can Anyone Support Trump? There Is an Answer

by June Sandra Neal

Three years ago, I sat in a sociology class at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem atop MT Scopus, fighting to stay awake. Exhausted from the tortures of a double-booked graduate class schedule and my 5:00 AM alarm, I wondered how long it would take for me to simply keel over. Then, the professor turned to some guy named Tajfel and it was an injection of caffeine.

A Polish-born Holocaust survivor, Henri Tajfel went on to become one of the world's preeminent social psychologists, known especially for his classic work, "Social Identity Theory," which demonstrated that our sense of who we are is based, not on our individual traits, but on our group memberships.

His findings were profound. The central hypothesis of the social identity theory is that members of an "in-group" will attempt to search for negative qualities of an "out-group" to enhance their self-image.

Tajfel, who lost his entire family to the Nazis, also demonstrated that intergroup conflict is not required for discrimination to occur. In fact, no dispute is necessary. It's simply that our desire to fortify our own group's worth causes us to deny the value of the other group. This prejudice turns to racism, and racism results in a desire to demean, even destroy, the "others," often to the point of genocide. A zero-sum game.

It is terrifying how little it takes to turn us into irrational actors. Young gang members murder rivals simply for wearing a color they feel is proprietary. In countries where football (soccer) is a national obsession, people kill one another, and themselves, over the score.

Throughout the world, wearing a team shirt can be as provocative as waving a pistol. The power of group

identity is as primitive and tenacious as jealousy, greed or fear.

The important takeaways are 1) blind group identity quickly devolves into prejudice in an attempt to maintain our own sense of superiority and 2) it is never rational.

In *Why We Are Polarized*, the new bestseller by Ezra Klein, editor-at-large and cofounder of Vox news, the author turns to Tajfel for explanation of this phenomenon, noting those identifying with a particular cause, group or leader will rationalize anything to maintain the integrity of their group.

Thus, it is folly to argue facts with the Trump cohort; facts are perceived as threats to those convinced their very identity depends on their group. Statistics only ricochet off MAGA hats. Trump's popularity remains at 46% despite his lying, corruption, and pathological thirst for power.

Only a Democratic win in November can save us. Yet, in the meantime, perhaps we can grab at opportunities for communication. The American narrative is powerful. When Trumpers rage about immigrants, instead of debating, we can evoke stories of their—and our—immigrant ancestors who contributed enormously to this country. And leave it there.

When they brush off Trump's embrace of Putin and Kim, route the conversation to our veterans who paid the ultimate price for fighting against communism. And leave it there.

Such anecdotes of a shared American history, without any attempt at refutation of the Trumpers' beliefs, have a way of penetrating our consciousness.

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The Survival of Democracy

Sandra Elaiszen-Cantwell

Last month the Democratic Club of Delray Beach invited Mark Schneider to discuss democracy and its constituent ramifications in a talk entitled “Is the United States a Democracy? Should It Be?” We are now recognizing that since the election in 2016, the concept of democracy and the part played by the electorate has come under such scrutiny as they have not since the founding of this country.

This topic is a vexed issue among political scientists because, as Steve Levitsky of Harvard University comments, “Today democracies don’t die at the hands of generals, but at the hands of elected leaders – presidents, prime ministers . . . Many citizens are not fully aware of what’s happening until it is too late.” Those who have made a study of government and the dire circumstances Americans face are nevertheless loath to insist that our future is perilous indeed. We are left with issues that have frightening consequences and few solutions.

we need to be mindful that this president and his minions and followers are capable of just such action.

In Florida, Republicans have been trying rigorously to minimize the number of voters who might vote Blue. Ignoring the clear message of voters who overwhelmingly supported Amendment 4, they are focused on preventing returning citizens from registering and expunging from the voting rolls any who do succeed in registering.

In effect, they are seeking to impose the type of poll tax that was made unconstitutional when the Twenty-Fourth Amendment was passed. It is urgent that we prevent that from occurring. Indeed, the goal of Florida’s Amendment 4 was to restore voting privileges to former felons who had completed their sentences and were seeking to return and be integrated into society.

If we do not ensure and uphold these constitutional

“Democracy dies when there is no support for democracy, when people stop believing in it.”

Members of our Club are only too aware of what is happening and are trying to give this message to our community at large and offer it to the voters who can prevent another and disastrous four years. Is it possible that the psychopath now occupying the White House could or would take action to bring about a coup “similar to those that brought down democracies during the last century?” Realizing the violence and hatred being propagated among his constituents,

promises, we risk the great evils that arise from our neglect and apathy. “Democracy dies when there is no support for democracy, when people stop believing in it.” So we are advised by political scientist Harold Aron.

We need to carry these words to Americans everywhere.

“IF YOU DON’T VOTE, YOU DON’T COUNT”

“If you don’t vote, you don’t count” was the creed and epitaph of Vernon Ferdinand Dahmer, Sr., president of the Hattiesburg, Mississippi, NAACP, who was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan on January 10, 1966.

Democrats outnumber Republicans locally and nationally, but we lose elections we should win because Republicans turn out in greater numbers.

Low turnout from Democrats in 2016 gave Republicans the White House, and high turnout in 2018 gave Democrats the House and many state Legislatures and Governors’ Mansions.

If you don’t vote, you dishonor the graves of the thousands who have died fighting for the franchise. Get registered if you’re not already, make sure your friends are registered, and get out and get them out to vote.

Vote Blue, No Matter Who^{*}

Michael K. Cantwell

It's some comfort that many of the people who said Donald Trump was unelectable are saying the same about Bernie Sanders. It's possible they'll be right this time. It's also possible that the only similarity between the two men is that they both defied the common wisdom. Of course, it's also possible that the issue becomes moot because Biden ends up being our nominee.

What is certain is that the prospect of Sanders being our standard bearer has unnerved Democrats across the spectrum and induced a state of near hysteria among the leadership as well as within the so-called liberal media ("SCLM"). All this angst despite the fact that the polls do not suggest Sanders is unelectable, much less that he is likely to lead the party to a McGovern-style rout.

Indeed, Sanders leads Trump both [nationally](#) and in the [Midwest](#) battleground states, and does so by essentially the same numbers by which Biden leads Trump. The doomsayers are right to point out that the Republican disinformation machine and its paid professional liars have yet to take full aim at Sanders, but the same can be said about whoever is our nominee.

So let's agree that it is impossible at this point to predict the results of a Sanders-Trump race or even which Democrat would be our strongest candidate. But let's put a lid on the hysterical claims that Sanders is unelectable. They are not only premature but reckless . . . they are sound bites for Trump ads should Sanders win the nomination. And they raise the question whether those voicing such concerns are doing so because they fear a Sanders loss or because they fear a Sanders victory even more.

In a [blog post](#) that has come to be referred to as "The Iron Law of Institutions," Jonathan Schwartz suggested that "people who control institutions care first and foremost about their power within the institution rather than the power of the institution itself. Thus, they would rather the institution 'fail' while they remain in power within the institution than for the institution to 'succeed' if that requires them to lose power within the institution."

However the primaries play out, there is no question that our party is as divided as it was in 2016, perhaps even more so. Contributing to the perfect storm that elected Trump were those millennials who stayed home or wasted their votes on Jill Stein. It was idiotic, even if that election should never have hung by such a slender thread.

[Evidence](#) from the 2018 midterms suggests that millennials have learned from the 2016 debacle: turnout among voters aged 18 to 29 years old was 79% higher than in the 2014 midterms, more than double the next greatest increase (37%), which was found among those aged 30-44. We're daily treated to warnings from the SCLM about offending the swing voters who went Democrat in 2018, but they exhibit little concern about offending millennials.

What is certain is that if Sanders does not win the nomination, and young voters believe that he was treated unfairly, that is as likely to propel Trump to a second term as the prospect that Sanders will alienate swing voters.

So far, and notwithstanding their preference for a moderate candidate, the Democratic establishment (if not the SCLM) has been careful to avoid treating Sanders in an overtly unfair manner. And Sanders did sign onto the post-2016 reforms that prevented super-delegates from voting on the first ballot but allowed them to vote on subsequent ballots if no candidate had a majority on that ballot.

Moreover, there is nothing unfair about the Democratic establishment trying to consolidate behind a candidate that they think can stop Sanders. Indeed, it is good that this is happening now, and not in a brokered convention. That said, it is somewhat ironic that the reason Buttigieg and Klobuchar entered the race was because the establishment had jitters about Biden 1.0, and they are now quitting the race so that Biden 1.1 can be launched.

That said, this is our election to lose. Regardless of who wins the nomination, we will win if we stick together and "vote blue, no matter who."

^{*}I have written and re-written this piece several times as we approached Super Tuesday. That morning I sent the latest draft around to family and friends for comment. My cousin Andy Kulick responded with what I think is a better argued piece, which appears on the facing page. (You don't have to live in Delray Beach to read or write for the Delray Democrat.) The articles carry the same title because it reflects our shared belief in the Indivisible Pledge.

Vote Blue, No Matter Who

Andy Kulick

Specifically regarding the general election, you are obviously correct in that no one knows for sure what would happen in a Sanders vs. Trump or Biden vs. Trump election. So, all we are left with is our best guess, based mostly on reasoning, facts, experiences, etc. Bernie and his fervent supporters believe he has as good of a chance, if not better, of beating Trump than Biden or anyone else. That's a legitimate opinion. My personal opinion is that he has less of a chance of beating Trump than Biden (though I don't love Biden's chances either). My view is not an "establishment" view or one that I've brainwashed into thinking from the SCLM. My view is formed in part from experiences I've had and discussions I've had living in the South for 15 years and for living the last 15 years in a comfortable Chicago suburb that is probably a 55-45 Democratic split at best, but it's also informed from listening to how Bernie speaks and gets his message across, particularly in the era of Trump. And from the fact that turnout thus far doesn't seem to support the narrative that Bernie will win because of his high turnout and also from the fact that numbers seem to clearly show that the top agenda in the democratic party is defeating Trump and not aligning strictly to ideology in this election cycle.

Bernie is not going to change who he is or how he delivers his message, but if he did, I think that it could make a difference. My opinion is that he comes across as only inclusive with his current supporters and the "working class". His level of anger, vitriol and contempt for anyone and anything else comes across as demeaning and antagonistic. I guess he needs to rail against "the establishment," the top 1% and moderate Democrats in order to keep the revolution going, but my view is that if he wants to expand his current base of support (even in the Democratic party - let alone nationally), he needs a more inclusive tone and message and to ramp down the anger towards anyone else who has a different view of how to get to where he wants to country to go. I don't see any signs of outreach from him at this point in a way that will bring more people to him. Even in the speeches last night, Sanders was more of the same, while Biden seemed to be at least making an attempt at being more inclusive.

I fully recognize that I have lived a privileged life and been given opportunities that the majority of the country was not. I'd love for everyone in the country to have been as fortunate as I have been in my life, but Bernie makes me feel like I'm the enemy. And if he makes someone quite liberal like myself feel like the enemy, I imagine that he's making many more

feel the same way. Much of our current capitalistic system needs change and there is a horrible wealth inequity in the country, but he's alienating people instead of bringing them on board.

Did the "establishment" just rally around Biden over Sanders? Yes. Do I think that Beto, Klobuchar and Buttigieg did this because they only want to hold onto power or really want the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer and for not everyone to have affordable healthcare? I personally don't think they do. I think that they see a different path to getting there, which involves getting Trump out of office, gaining seats in the Senate and increasing control of the House and they (like me) don't see Sanders as the best chance to make those things happen. AND, these are people that to a large extent agree with Bernie's end goals for healthcare, drug costs, economic divide, etc. For non-Trump beholden Republicans and Independents, they are even further away from thinking that Sanders can make all of this happen or that they even want Sanders to make that happen.

I do think that you are exactly right in that there is a large part of the country (and a good chunk of the Democratic Party) that fears a Sanders victory potentially more than losing the election to Trump. I'm clearly not in that category, but I think that's just a fact and it's not a small group. And, it's not because they all want to stay in power at all costs. It's because, right or wrong, they don't think the time is right for an all or nothing agenda fight for the white house.

I fully agree with you that the whole of the Democratic party needs to fully come together at the end of the day and vote in very large numbers to defeat Trump, because despite who/what he is, my view is that Trump is going to get a big turnout because of his hardcore base AND if Sanders is the nominee, that Trump turnout is only going to be bigger. I just wish Sanders would stop alienating the big swath of the party (and Independents and disillusioned Republicans) that don't hold the exact same view as how to get to where we basically all want to end up as a country. Based on the numbers from Super Tuesday, turnout, if anything, favored Biden. If Sanders can't bring the huge turnout in the primary, I just don't see it happening in the general election.

I will gladly vote for Sanders if he's the nominee. I just hope that you are right and the Bernie Bros don't stay at home and basically give a vote to Trump if Biden ends up the nominee.

What We're Reading

From *New York Magazine*

Eric Levitz, [Bernie's Revolution Failed. But His Movement Can Still Win.](#) “The left doesn't have its pick of coalition partners. At least not for now. Both Sanders-aligned socialists and Warren-supporting progressives have a tendency to invoke an idealized conception of nonvoters as a means of escaping the distasteful compromises that building majority coalitions among actually existing voters would undeniably entail.”

From *Newsweek*

Jason Lemon, [Bernie Sanders' Medicare for All Policy Would Likely Increase Wages and Create Jobs, New Economic Analysis Shows.](#) “Josh Bivens, EPI's director who conducted the study, wrote in the report that Medicare for All “would be unambiguously positive” for the labor market in the U.S., leading to a “boost in wages and salaries” as well as an “increase in job quality, while producing “a net increase in jobs.”

From *Rolling Stone*

Bill McKibben, [How JPMorgan Chase Became the Doomsday Bank.](#) “Bankers like numbers. Numbers tell the story. No emotion gets in the way. So let's look at the numbers: Over the past three years — that is, in the years after the world came together in Paris to try to slow climate change — JPMorgan Chase lent \$196 billion to the fossil-fuel industry.”

From *The Guardian*

Oliver Millman, [Revealed: quarter of all tweets about climate crisis produced by bots.](#) “The social media conversation over the climate crisis is being reshaped by an army of automated Twitter bots, with a new analysis finding that a quarter of all tweets about climate on an average day are produced by bots, the Guardian can reveal.”

From *The New York Review of Books*

Sue Halpern, [The Drums of Cyberwar](#) “In mid-October, a cybersecurity researcher in the Netherlands demonstrated, online, as a warning, the easy availability of the Internet protocol address and open, unsecured access points of the industrial control system—the ICS—of a wastewater treatment plant not far from my home in Vermont. Industrial control systems may sound inconsequential, but . . . [it] removes contaminants from the water supply; if its controls were to be compromised, public health would be, too.”

From *The New York Times*

Karthik Balasubramanian, [Democrats Are Ignoring the Voters Who Could Decide This Election.](#) “Black neighborhoods in key swing states hold enormous power to reshape politics in November and beyond. But in order to maximize this potential, progressives need to imagine and invest on an unprecedented scale.”

Steve Phillips, [Bernie Sanders Can Beat Trump. Here's the Math.](#) “Whatever you think about Bernie Sanders as a potential president, it is wrong to dismiss his chances of winning the office.” Not only does most of the available empirical evidence show Mr. Sanders defeating President Trump in the national popular vote and in the critical Midwestern states that tipped the Electoral College in 2016, but his specific electoral strengths align with changes in the composition of the country's population in ways that could actually make him a formidable foe for the president.”

Charlie Savage, [Judge Calls Barr's Handling of Mueller Report 'Distorted' and 'Misleading.'](#) “A federal judge on Thursday sharply criticized Attorney General William P. Barr's handling of the report by the special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III, saying that Mr. Barr put forward a “distorted” and “misleading” account of its findings and lacked credibility on the topic.

Corona Crash

David Kulick

Normally stock market crashes, like the one that occurred last week and might continue, leave me worried and unhappy since I'm retired and my 401k is what I hope to survive on. I have mixed feelings this time since the economy is the one thing that Trump supposedly has in his favor, but recessions hurt a lot of people and that is something we don't want.

The "good" economy always had an asterisk next to it. Unemployment is low by some standards but having crappy jobs that don't pay well isn't good for anyone who isn't getting dividends. Only 54% of households own any stock and most have very small amounts.

The best way to live well right now is to borrow large amounts of cash and have a ball. That is exactly what the Republicans did with their "tax reform" on a nationwide basis, because no economist believes that the tax cuts on billionaires will ever come close to stimulating the economy enough to produce enough growth to pay back that deficit.

Remember though, deficits only matter to Republicans if Democrats are in power, and this is just more of the trickle-down crap that started with Reagan. Checking the numbers on when the staggering divide between

the middle class and the wealthy grew, it starts in 1980 with Reagan and has just continued since then because we haven't had a Democratic President willing to push to restore the previous tax rates on the wealthiest Americans.

So maybe we have to suffer a bit to defeat Trump. Again, I have mixed feelings because I harbor some anger towards the workers who voted for the snake oil salesman and figure maybe they deserve what they're getting. Still, they were ignored by the corporate Wall Street Democrats for decades so it's tough to blame them for being desperate.

Since the supposed trigger of the crash has been the coronavirus, that's really the thing to worry about. Trump has gutted the agencies tasked with fighting epidemics and that kind of thing can't be reversed quickly. It's a funny world where we worry more about the economic impact of the virus than the deaths and suffering it will cause, but that's Capitalism in a nutshell. It would be somewhat ironic, but totally fitting, if the gutting of those agencies is finally responsible for the gutting of Trump.

Upcoming Meetings

March 12: *The Census (Guest Speakers Dr. Corinna Balderramos Robinson)*

April 9: *Addressing Sea Level Rise (Panel Discussion with Reinaldo Diaz, Shelly Petrolia, and Ryan Rossi)*

May 14: *Criminal Justice Reform and Amendment 4 update (Guest Speaker Micah Kubic, Executive Director of Florida ACLU)*

June 11: *Local Candidate Forum*

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Take the (Indivisible) Pledge

THE 2020 CANDIDATE PLEDGE.

We must defeat Donald Trump. The first step is a primary contest that produces a strong Democratic nominee. The second step is winning the general election. We will not accept anything less. To ensure this outcome, I pledge to:

Make the primary constructive. I'll respect the other candidates and make the primary election about inspiring voters with my vision for the future.

Rally behind the winner. I'll support the ultimate Democratic nominee, whoever it is – period. No Monday morning quarterbacking. No third-party threats. Immediately after there's a nominee, I'll endorse.

Do the work to beat Trump. I will do everything in my power to make the Democratic Nominee the next President of the United States. As soon as there is a nominee, I will put myself at the disposal of the campaign.

Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2020 Membership Application

Date _____ New _____ Renewal _____

Name/names of household members _____

Address _____

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E-mail Address _____ Phone number _____

(E-mail addresses are shared with the Palm Beach County Democratic Party so our members will be kept abreast of the latest County Democratic Activity. If you do not wish to receive this information, please initial here ___ and we will not share your E-mail address.).

Preferred method of contact: E-mail _____ Mail _____ Phone _____ Text _____

Send newsletter by: E-mail _____ U.S. Mail _____

I/we are in South Florida from _____ to _____ each year or are a permanent resident _____.

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