

The Delray Democrat

March 2023 (# 54)

The Democratic Contract with Florida

David Kulick

Democrats in Tallahassee are as marginalized today as Republicans were in Washington before Newt Gingrich's *Contract with America* helped them flip Congress. If we hope to flip the Florida Legislature in 2024, we must explain what Democrats will do, if given the majority. Here are some suggestions:

1. Expand Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act to save our state money while providing healthcare services to the working poor.
2. Reverse draconian abortion laws and enact a law that codifies the reasonable compromise instituted by the Supreme Court in *Roe v. Wade*.
3. Institute commonsense gun control measures such as banning assault weapons and large capacity magazines intended for combat operations.
4. Build affordable housing, not as an adjunct to large luxury developments, but as a policy.
5. Restore Vote By Mail so that people do not have to jump through hoops to do what should be a simple civic activity.
6. Automatically restore voting rights to persons convicted of felonies after completion of their sentences. Many countries, including Canada, Germany, France, Greece, Spain, and Israel, as well as the states of Maine and Vermont, even allow most prisoners to vote. Virtually all democracies other than the United States restore voting rights upon release from prison, as do 41 U.S. states, although some also require that parole be completed. Florida is not one of them.
7. Separate hurricane policies from standard homeowner insurance and use Citizens or some other government backed carrier to handle the hurricane portion. This is akin to FEMA handling flood insurance and will result in lower policy costs for Florida homeowners.

The Validity of the U.S. Debt “Shall Not Be Questioned”

Michael K. Cantwell

The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law . . . , shall not be questioned. *14th Amendment, Section 4*

Under the scary headline Debt Default Would Cripple U.S. Economy, *The New York Times* reported that Moody's Analytics had estimated the immediate impact of the first government default in American history would be the loss of one million jobs and a recession.

That's just the immediate impact. A prolonged refusal by Congress to raise the debt ceiling would cause the loss of 7 million jobs and a 2008-style financial crisis.

The devastation that would result from a Republican refusal to raise the debt ceiling is surely warming the cockles of many Republicans. “Nice economy you got there. Be a shame if something happened to it.”

The last two times Republicans extorted an American president into cutting government spending in the midst of a recovery, John Boehner was speaker but House Republicans were really led by the Tea Party. As mad as that bunch was, they

look almost deliberative and rational next to the QAnon/MAGA crowd that is today dangling Kevin McCarthy by a string.

In 2011, John Boehner negotiated a Grand Bargain that, he bragged, got him “98% of what he wanted” from Obama in the way of spending cuts. The Tea Party embarrassed Boehner by rejecting his deal and demanding more cuts as a condition to raising the debt ceiling.

Not until two days before the Treasury exhausted its borrowing authority was a bill finally passed. Four days later S&P downgraded U.S. government credit rating for the first time in its history.

Even though the public blamed the Republicans, they were back at it two years later. In 2013, they managed to shut down the government, although a default was averted. Once again the public blamed the Republicans.

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And here they go again! The likelihood of a default is arguably greater today. For one thing, while the Tea Party adhered to Nixon's Madman Theory (a negotiating tactic in which one feigns madness, giving the adversary the choice of yielding or precipitating some horrifying event), the QAnon/MAGA Republicans don't need to *feign* madness. .

The debt ceiling is a limit on the borrowing authority of government to pay for past obligations already authorized by Congress. Unlike a budget submitted by a president to Congress to secure authorization for future spending, it is not something that is properly subject to negotiation.

Secondly, Biden witnessed up close and has clearly learned from Obama's difficulties in dealing with people whose number one goal was to make him a one-term president. They fell short but succeeded in slowing the recovery from the Great Recession they had just created.

Having learned from that experience, Biden has already indicated that he will not yield to extortion, throwing down the gauntlet on raising the debt ceiling:

Raising the debt ceiling is not a negotiation; it is an obligation of this country and its leaders to avoid economic chaos. Congress has always done it, and the President expects them to do their duty once again. That is not negotiable.

The debt ceiling was raised at least 90 times in the Twentieth Century without controversy, until Republicans saw it as a way to hold the government hostage when a Democrat was in the White House. Now, as Eric Levitz put it in a *New York Magazine* piece, "For House Republicans, manufacturing a debt-ceiling crisis under a Democratic president is an act of muscle memory."

Although raising the debt ceiling was allowed to become a negotiation in 2011 and 2013, Biden is absolutely correct that Congress has no legal authority to prevent a president from faithfully executing the laws as written, that is, laws Congress has already passed.

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authorization for *future* spending, it is not something that is properly subject to negotiation.

President Biden has also indicated he's perfectly willing to have a discussion about future spending and ways to reduce the deficit, but that tax increases on the wealthiest Americans are going to be part of that discussion. He recently submitted his budget to Congress that calls for such tax increases, something Mitt Romney has already labeled dead on arrival.

Biden is baiting Republicans, just as he baited them at his State of the Union when he said that "some Republicans" wanted to cut or even end Medicare and Social Security. Thanks to the outburst by the woman later dubbed by a commentator "a serious contender for the stupidest person in the room," he got Republicans to agree not to cut Social Security or Medicare as a means of reducing the deficit.

Biden knows that, as in 2011 and 2013, raising taxes on the wealthiest Americans is something the public supports by substantial margins. He's daring Republicans to put forth a proposal that will reduce the deficit without touching the sacred cows or raising taxes. Indeed it's arguable that the ragtag gang that is dangling McCarthy by a string is even capable of reaching agreement on a counterproposal.

And that leads to a very real possibility that the Republicans will actually try to force the first government default in American history. Even if they are blamed by the public, it is Joe Biden and not Congress who is running for president in 2024 – and they could be right that crippling the economy is the best way to ensure he's a one-term president.

But Biden has an ace in the hole, and that is to simply direct the government to enter into whatever borrowing is necessary to ensure that the obligations of the American government are met. As Jamelle Bouie pointed out in a recent *New York Times* op-ed, the debt limit law is arguably unconstitutional under the command of Section 4 of the Fourteenth Amendment, which declares that "The validity of the public debt of the United States, authorized by law . . . , shall not be questioned."

Let's Go Make History

Steve Fradkin

Most people are content to watch history happen. The rest of us would rather make it happen.

Most people think “reality” is a handful of people trying to survive on a tropical island. The rest of us know that reality, for millions of people, is trying to survive on lower-than-poverty wages in an increasingly expensive world.

Most people think “health care” is a choice between Advil and Tylenol. The rest of us know that health care is too often a decision between medicine and supper.

That’s the kind of people we are. The kind of people our friends laughingly call “political junkies.” For us, holding a sign is more fun than a birthday party. We can’t talk on the phone without asking for money. Some of us even allow our jobs to occasionally interfere with our political work.

We’re school board members and senators . . . councilors and committee people . . . field workers and fundraisers . . . spokespeople and speechwriters. We plant lawn signs in the ground, canvass door to door, and cheer for our guy or gal at the end of election day — win or lose.

We’re activists. I know, I know . . . some would call that a dirty word. But we wear that badge proudly. Activists. From the Latin *actus*—to drive, or to do. An activist is someone who cares enough to do something.

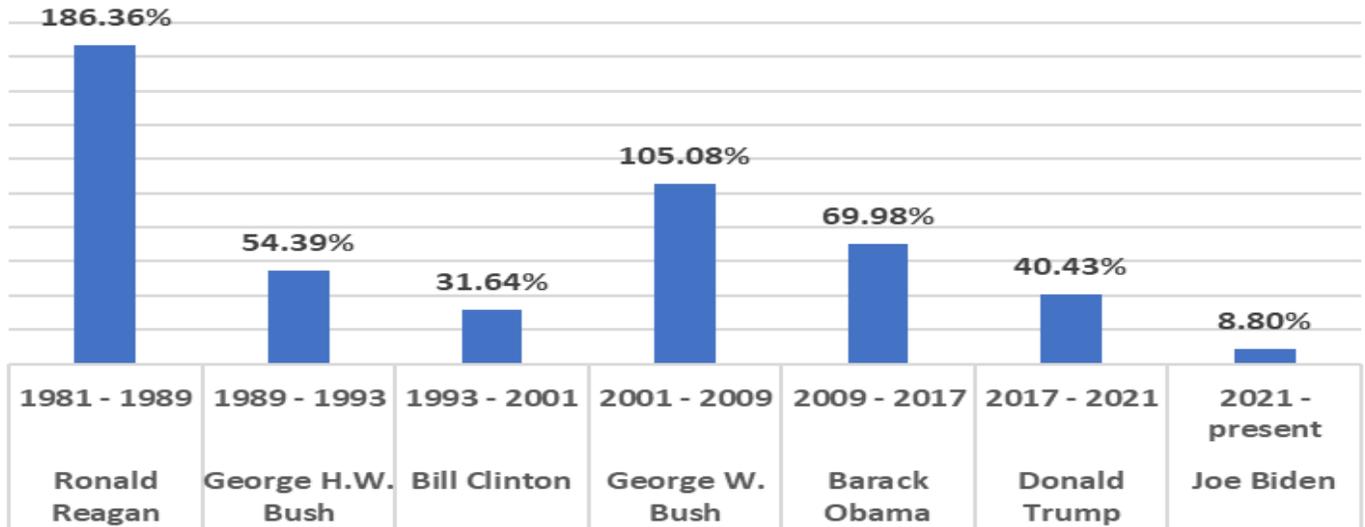
We have a mission. And that mission is more than just campaigning. More than getting *more* Democrats elected. More, even, than taking back the state house.

Our mission is—our mission must be—to get more people to care about the things we care about. To get more people to want a better society. A society that educates its young, feeds and houses its poor, cares for its sick and disabled, and cherishes its elderly. One that doesn’t kill in anger or for financial gain, or allow its government to do so. One that insists on protecting the rights of even the smallest of minorities. A society that cares enough to do something.

Our mission—as activists—is to create more activists. When we do that, our government will follow.

Let’s go make history.

Percentage Increase in Debt By President



Data derived from: <https://fiscaldata.treasury.gov/datasets/historical-debt-outstanding/historical-debt-outstanding>

Democratic Club of Delray Beach Officers and Directors

Michael Cantwell, President; Char Lane, Vice-President; Mary Fader, Secretary; David Kulick, Treasurer; Robert Averack, Parliamentarian; Peter Camacho, Charlie Holbrook, and June Neal, Directors; Sandra Elaissen-Cantwell, Director Emerita; and John Ramos and Robert Resnick, Directors Emeritus.

The New Political Geography: It's Whole Foods Against Cracker Barrel!

June Sandra Neal

Way back in 2011, political analyst Dave Wasserman coined this cute metaphor for America's growing red v. blue political migration. He and others tracked the point gap between Democratic and Republican candidates starting with President Obama's 2008 election onward and found Whole Foods and Cracker Barrel establishments to be significant markers in political clustering. "Fact: Biden won the presidency winning 85% of counties with a Whole Foods and 32% of counties with a Cracker Barrel - the widest gap ever."

He was onto something. Many Americans, especially Republicans, are relocating, not for the traditional reasons of weather, taxes, or jobs but to places where they feel more culturally and politically comfortable. It will take more time to realize the full impact of the migration, but signs in Florida, for example, cash real estate deals, demonstrate a strong trend.

The Washington Post reported that, "In the last six years, South Florida has consistently been one of the top places for homes bought with cash. The state's tax incentives, *permissive response to the pandemic and political culture* have accelerated the rush of home buyers who can afford to purchase property without a mortgage" (author's italics).

Translation: Many people, especially the very rich, are moving to Florida specifically because they like Governor DeSantis's overweight conservative politics, including his irresponsible handling of a lethal virus in the guise of personal freedom and his racist, xenophobic policies.

Are we headed toward single-party states? And closer to two Americas?

As CNN's Ronald Brownstein put it: "Red states are building a nation within a nation."

NPR calls it "The Big Sort, Americans fleeing blue state liberalism for "Don't Mask Me" states.

In "Vote with your feet: Post-pandemic Florida transplants are twice as likely to be Rs as Ds," Renzo Downey put it: "In November 2021, Republicans overtook Democrats in active registered voters in Florida, accomplishing the feat for the first time in Sunshine State history." floridapolitics.com/archives

"It's become MAGA in exile," says Fernand Amandi, a consultant who worked on President Obama's Florida campaigns in 2008 and 2011. "Florida is now the cradle for the MAGA movement. The sentiment is if you believe in the MAGA philosophy, Florida is where you want to be."

CNN's autopsy: "When Barack Obama won Florida in 2008, his historic campaign brought a wave of new Democratic voters. Registered Democrats outnumbered Republicans in Florida by nearly 700,000, their largest advantage since 1990... But after the 2020 election, the reversal has accelerated. Republicans grew their numbers in 52 of the state's 67 counties. Meanwhile, there are fewer registered Democrats in all but one county than there were two years ago — a net loss of 331,000 voters overall."

There's a funnel cloud on the horizon. Republicans talk about overturning the federal government. (January 6th was close.) And secession. And they're wresting election authority from the federal government for the states. We could devolve into a federal government so impotent it cannot make or enforce laws for the common good.

Yesterday's political climate has no familial relationship to today's America. Who could dream that Republicans would support a president who commits treason? Or a governor so blatantly racist that he eliminates Black history from the school curriculum?

Or Republican officials faking prowess by battling non-existent antagonists? Remember DeSantis boasting that he banned teaching CRT in Florida schools—when it wasn't being taught at the public school level anywhere in the United States? Easy to declare a KO when you punch at thin air.

And why is the Democrats' exemplary history of lifting minorities and the underserved losing impact? "Republicans have picked up where Trump left off," said CNN. "More than half of their gains in registered voters can be attributed to the 58,000 new Hispanic voters who checked "Republican" on their forms. Democrats, though, are bleeding support from these communities. The party saw a net loss of more than 46,000 Hispanic voters." This, despite having

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Karla Hernandez, daughter of Honduran immigrants, as Charlie Crist's running mate.

And President Biden pulled the Black vote by less than 80 points – the worst margin since 1996.

True, the Republicans had more money. Our national party left us at the altar. And Florida suffered a kneecapping when DeSantis overruled his own Republican legislature and ignored laws to fracture heavily Black congressional districts and move the pieces into Republican zones. It worked.

They grabbed 20 out of 28 congressional seats.

And his messaging works as well, conflating the true meaning of “freedom” with his irresponsible negation of life-saving restrictions in a pandemic.

Fact is, no one knows more about true freedom than the Democrats. Let's remind voters, loud and clear, of our unparalleled contributions to American liberties and equality. And tell them, by the way, that Democrats enjoy Whole Foods, McDonald's, bodegas, soul food, and Cracker Barrel restaurants and just about everything in between.

What We're Reading

Noam Chomsky, Ian Roberts and Jeffrey Watumull, [The False Promise of ChatGPT](#), *The New York Times* “The human mind is not, like ChatGPT and its ilk, a lumbering statistical engine for pattern matching, gorging on hundreds of terabytes of data and extrapolating the most likely conversational response or most probable answer to a scientific question . . . On the contrary, the human mind is a surprisingly efficient and even elegant system that operates with small amounts of information; it seeks not to infer brute correlations among data points but to create explanations.”

Katherine J. Wu, [The Strongest Evidence Yet That an Animal Started the Pandemic](#), *The Atlantic*: A new analysis of genetic sequences collected from the [Wuhan] market shows that raccoon dogs being illegally sold at the venue could have been carrying and possibly shedding the virus at the end of 2019. It's some of the strongest support yet, experts told me, that the pandemic began when SARS-CoV-2 hopped from animals into humans, rather than in an accident among scientists experimenting with viruses.

Thomas Friedman, [American Jews, You Have to Choose Sides on Israel](#), *The New York Times*: “Because if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu succeeds with his judicial putsch to crush the independence of the country's judiciary, the subject of Israel could fracture every synagogue and Jewish communal organization in America. To put it simply: Israel is facing its biggest internal clash since its founding, and for every rabbi and every Jewish leader in America, to stay silent about this fight is to become irrelevant.”

Nelson George, [The Greats: Angela Davis](#), *The New York Times*: “Davis — who has written or edited nine books and retired from teaching at U.C. Santa Cruz in 2008 — is still very much defined by the iconography of her past. It hasn't always been easy. ‘I felt that there was no way that I, as an individual, could actually live up to the expectations incorporated in that image. There came a point when I realized I didn't have to. The image does not reflect who I am as an individual, it reflects the work of the movement.’”

Democrats Poised to Take Control of Wisconsin Supreme Court

Michael K. Cantwell

Conservatives have controlled the Wisconsin Supreme Court since 2008. That may change on April 4, when voters chose between Daniel Kelly, a MAGA Republican and former justice who lost a reelection bid in 2020, and Janet Protasiewicz, a liberal County Court judge.

Private polls show Protasiewicz leading, propelled by over \$9 million in television advertising and

abortion. With three weeks remaining in the race, Kelly has yet to run any ads, although he told a private gathering that help was on the way.

Happily for the people of Wisconsin, it might be too little, too late. If Protasiewicz wins, it's likely that the reconstituted court will legalize abortion and revisit challenges to the gerrymandering that has plagued Wisconsin since 2010.

Worth Repeating

“The real criminals in this society are not all of the people who populate the prisons across the state, but those who have stolen the wealth of the world from the people.” Angela Davis.

“A prime minister currently on trial for corruption, and who has appointed ministers with criminal records, is claiming legitimacy to overturn the legal system.” Rabbi Daniel Gordis, Yossi Klein Halevi, and Matti Friedman, in their open letter to Th faae Times of Israel, referring to against Netanyahu’s latest effort to destroy Israeli democracy.

“Let’s ask them to pay their fair share so that the millions of workers who helped them build that wealth can retire with dignity and the Medicare they paid into. Republican plans that protect billionaires from a penny more in taxes — but won’t protect a retired firefighter’s hard-earned Medicare benefits — are just detached from the reality that hardworking families live with every day.” President Biden

Through tatter'd clothes small vices do appear;
Robes and furr'd gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks:
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.
King Lear

Franklin Delano Roosevelt: “Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”

“Public relief is a sacred debt. Society owes maintenance to unfortunate citizens.” Paragraph 21 of the 1793 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen — the ultimate statement of the ideals of the French Revolution.

ALL CURRENT VOTE-BY-MAIL REQUESTS EXPIRED ON 12/31/22 RE-ENROLL TO VOTE BY MAIL FOR 2023/2024

By Phone: (561) 656-6208

By Email: votebymail@votepalmbeach.gov

Online: www.votepalmbeach.gov

By Fax: (561) 656-6230

In person at any SOE office ([CLICK HERE for locations](#))

Online, you can download the form [HERE](#) to email, fax, or return in person.

***NOTE: Your vote-by-mail request must now include your Driver’s License OR your FL State ID number OR the last 4 digits of your Social Security Number.**

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Editorial Board: Michael K. Cantwell (Editor), Sandra Elaiszen-Cantwell, David Kulick, Char Lane, June Neal, and Rob Resnick.

2023 Membership

Char Lane

It's 2023 and time to renew your DCDB membership if you've not already done so. Membership is on a calendar year basis and your dues help provide funding for operational projects, such as The Delray Democrat, our meetings, other working supplies and signage for our sign waving events. Meetings are currently at 7 PM on the third Thursday of each month at the Democratic Executive Committee office at 220 South Congress, Suite 1140, across the street from the Health Department office.

Our goal is to educate people as to why they should vote Democratic and use Vote-by-Mail as a critical tool in support of this goal. We'll have to work hard to help keep our democracy intact and protect it from the manifesting lunacy. We planned to help turn Florida BLUE in 2022, but were thwarted by the circumstances as noted in the articles by Michael Cantwell and Jeff Kash in the November issue of *The Delray Democrat*.

If you're a member of the Democratic Club of Delray Beach, please renew. If you're not a member of the Club, please consider joining.

Please visit us at www.demclubofdelray.org,

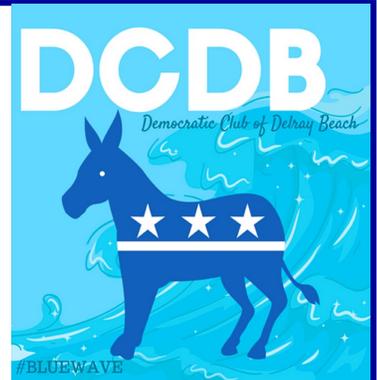
Read our monthly publication *The Delray Democrat* at www.thedelraydemocrat.com,

Visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/992741928168620>

Become a member of the DCDB by going to <https://www.demclubofdelray.org/membership> or filling out and mailing the application below or by scanning the QR code below:



Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2023 Membership Application and Renewal



Date _____ New _____ Renewal _____

Name/names of household members _____

Address _____

Community/Condo Name _____

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 _____ Hand delivery _____ U.S. Mail _____

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

Payment: Individual \$25 _____ Household \$35 _____ Donation _____

Please make checks payable to Democratic Club of Delray Beach and mail to P.O. Box 8224, Delray Beach, FL 33484. Thank you and welcome to our Club.

Thank a Democrat

1964 Civil Rights Act

1965 Voting Rights Act

Affordable Care Act

AmeriCorps

CDC

Family and Medical Leave Act

Food Stamp Act

Freedom of Information Act

GI Bill of Rights

Medicare and Medicaid

Minimum Wage Act

National Labor Relations Act

National Science Foundation Act

National Voter Registration Act
(a.k.a) Motor Voter Act

Social Security Act

Unemployment Compensation Act

Workers Compensation Act

American Rescue Plan Act, Signed March 11, 2021

- Provided \$1400 to every taxpayer and each of his or her dependents
- Expanded coverage and reduced premiums under the Affordable Care Act for 9 million Americans.
- Expanded and extended unemployment benefits.
- Increased SNAP benefits
- Increased and expanded Child Tax Credit
- Made largest investment in child care assistance since World War II
- Increased the Earned Income Tax Credit for frontline workers who helped their communities through the COVID crisis
- Invested \$160 billion to provide supplies and vaccines to combat COVID's heavy toll
- Distributed \$360 billion in emergency funding for local governments to help keep front line public workers on the job and paid
- Provided emergency grants and loans to hard-hit small businesses
- Established a special sign-up period for the Affordable Care Act, providing insurance to 800,000 previously uninsured Americans.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Signed November 15, 2021

- The largest federal investment in public transit
- Makes the largest federal investment in passenger rail since the creation of Amtrak
- Makes the single largest dedicated bridge investment since the construction of the interstate highway system
- Makes the largest investment in clean drinking water and waste water infrastructure in American history, delivering clean water to millions of families
- Ensures every American has access to reliable high-speed internet
- Helps us tackle the climate crisis by making the largest investment in clean energy transmission and EV infrastructure in history; electrifying thousands of school and transit buses across the country; and creating a new Grid Deployment Authority to build a resilient, clean, 21st century electric grid

Inflation Reduction Act, Signed August 16, 2022

- Invests \$369 billion in energy security and fighting climate change
- Invests \$64 billion to extend Affordable Care Act subsidies
- Authorizes Medicare to negotiate with drug companies and expands Medicare benefits, capping costs and out-of-pocket drug expenses
- Provides \$80 billion for tax modernization and enforcement, which is estimated to reduce the deficit by recovering as much as \$203.7 billion from tax cheats
- Closes tax loopholes by imposing a 15% minimum tax payment on companies with over \$1 billion of income and a 1% excise tax on stock buybacks
- Expands Medicare benefits: provides free vaccines (2023), caps insulin costs at \$35/month (2023) and caps out-of-pocket drug costs to an estimated \$4,000 or less in 2024, settling at \$2,000 in 2025
- Provides \$4 billion for drought resiliency in western states