

April 14, 2020 CG Dems Club Monthly Meeting via Zoom

MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present: Bentonne Snay, Jane Moskowitz, Richard Thurer, Marjorie Wilkoff, Elizabeth Newman, Pat Thaller, John Wander

Registrants (includes members and guests) Janet Nostro, Ricardo Ibarria, Beatriz Portela, Jeanne Baker, Patricia Pino, Evelyn Greer, Monique Selman, Sharon Langer, Susan Scholtz-Rubin, Joseph Fadel, Lisa King, Marilyn Caputo, Julie Samkoff, Janet Stearns, Barbara Zwick, Rose Mary McVeigh, Victor Balestra, Christian Ulvert, Alma Suarez, Sharon Van Smith, Kerry Gruson, Marcy Cox, Amaris Leon, Ally Easley, Linda Marraccini, Martha Schoolman, Dana Snay and Mari Gonzalez

- I. **Club Business-** Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Bentonne Snay. Meeting minutes from the March 10, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.
 - a. Showing a slide of a member wearing a CG Dems T-Shirt and holding a mug, Bentonne discussed the Club's fundraising efforts and explained how it pays to be a member. A price list and order details were provided on the slide.
 - b. Canvassing Overview- For virtual canvassing via postcards, the Club has been concentrating on 6 priority precincts with sporadic Democratic voters. Precincts include: 531, 536, 640, 801, 802 and 904. To date, 2,400 postcards have been mailed to priority precincts. 1,000 cards are prepared and ready to mail, and an additional 1,500 Blue Wave postcards will be sent. Texts and phone calls to Dem voters not yet signed for VBM are also being made.

- II. **Presentations**
 - a. **Daniella Levine Cava, County Commissioner** described Miami-Dade's COVID 19 response:
 - For the past 5 weeks, Daniella has been actively pushing the mayor "every step of the way." The five areas Daniella focused and expanded on were: 1) testing 2) protection 3) health 4) the economy and 5) voting.
 - Locally we have more testing sites open and the age of people being tested has been expanded.
 - The Abbott 15-45 minute test will be the standard and we will need more.
 - Took MDC too long to take precautions, but we are getting better.
 - The numbers of people affected is horrific but not going up exponentially. Need to flatten our curve. Peak in Florida was April 21, now extended to May 3.

- In MDC, more of a shortage of gowns than masks and respirators. Masks kept under lock and key.
 - Regarding the National Stockpile, 50% goes to FEMA and 50% goes to the open market for purchase.
 - Daniella's focus has also been on relief, including the county's food distribution program.
 - Has asked Mayor to be more supportive of vote by mail campaign so everyone is offered opportunity to vote by mail, to allow for social distancing at voting sites and extend early voting.
 - Meeting scheduled for April 15 regarding plan for opening parks and beaches, rolling back precautions for recreational facilities; stated her opinion that county over-reacted to the closing of running trails, bike trails, etc.
 - Stressed the importance of unifying the county's response with all local cities.
- b. **Melba Pearson, Esq. Candidate for Miami-Dade State Attorney** presented her plans for Miami-Dade County's criminal justice reform if she is elected. Main points included:
- 4 main issues of her platform. 1) Bail reform 2) Juvenile Justice System 3) Transparency and 4) Civilian oversight of police
 - Wants more incarcerated people to be released on their own recognizance and put in a special program which would enable them to continue working; seeks to abolish the current cash bail system that is prejudicial against the poor
 - Believes children up to the age of 26 should be kept in the juvenile system rather than adjudicated in adult court and seeks transparency regarding who gets diversion.
 - Advocates for designated prosecutors selected to exclusively handle cases regarding police conduct, a special unit of prosecutors that handle no other cases. Prosecutors in a neighboring county could hear police brutality cases to ensure objectivity.
 - Regarding COVID-19, there are currently 4,000 people in custody and 3,000 have not been sentenced yet but are incarcerated as they await trial, primarily due to the cash bail system. Jails are unable to practice social distancing, do not have masks, have mostly metal surfaces and make it impossible to prevent spread of disease. Need to reduce the jail population, especially to advocate for release of non-violent offenders. Other jurisdictions have reduced their jail population by 20-25% but not Miami-Dade
 - Melba intends to make these reforms with improved communications between police and SAO to find common ground.
 - She explained current drug prosecution policies and the difference between trafficking vs. simple possession. She would like to expand the pre-trial diversion program. Budget was slashed and pre-trial services are no longer being provided.
- c. **Javier Estevez, Candidate for Florida House District 105** presented information on how the Trump administration is taking advantage of the US focus on the current pandemic:

- Many political issues have been overlooked and forgotten.
- Trump halted funding to WHO, said their response to the pandemic was inadequate.
- EPA guidelines have been reduced and abandoned in favor of “expediency”
- New White House chief of staff and communications director lack qualifications.
- States are limiting access to abortions (not yet in Florida) by considering them elective procedures.
- Firing of Inspector General Michael Atkinson (who handled whistleblower complaint) and Captain Crozier (Navy Captain who wrote letter seeking help on behalf of his crew)
- Gov’t. is not calling to reopen enrollment in the Affordable Care Act. Currently 170,000 people without healthcare.
- Jared Kushner in charge of the National Stockpile. Not giving states supplies so states must fend for themselves. Supplies from other countries are going to the stockpile or on the private marketplace and sold to highest bidder.
- \$50 million in small business loans- Of 38,000 applications, only 1,000 were accepted.
- Florida’s unemployment system is among the worst in US w/\$275 maximum per week.
- Budget which was approved before COVID-19 will have to be re-done. Items to go first will be teacher pay raises and affordable housing, not tax refunds to major corporations. Special session needed to take care of unemployment.
- Stressed the importance of access to voting. The policy now is that it is illegal to send a ballot to someone who did not request it.
- Trump has renewed his attack on the US Postal Service.

III. Treasurers Report

Treasurer Richard Thurer reported that CG Dems has more than \$4,200 in its account; a year-to-date increase of \$2,000.

IV. Other Business

Club member Jeanne Baker gave a brief update on Amendment 4. Judge Robert Hinkle (U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida) has granted class-action status for Florida felons seeking to get their voting rights restored. Class could include 430,000 people instead of just the original 17 plaintiffs.

V. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Minutes recorded and written by Secretary Marjorie Wilkoff as approved by President Bentonne Snay