

CORAL GABLES DEMOCRATIC CLUB
MONTHLY MEMBER MEETING SUMMARY

Tuesday, August 11, 2020

6:30-8:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: Bentonne Snay, Jane Moscovitz, Richard Thurer, Elizabeth Newman, Janet Nostro, Pat Thaller and John Wander

Member Attendees: Julie Samkoff, Monique Selman, Janet Stearns, Beatriz Portela, Marilyn Caputo, Gordon Fales, Sharon Langer, Susan Scholz Rubin, Ally Easley, Jill Berman, Linda Fernandez, Patricia Pino, Roman Lyskowski, Joseph Jamison, Janet Stearns, Madeleine Shirley, Karen Moore and Barbara Zwick

Non-Member Attendees: Susan Becker, Gregory Koger, Maria Antonietta Masetti, Oscar Braynon Sr.

Invited Speaker attendees: Julie Becker, Allie Brown, Maydee Martinez, Lance Helguero- Kelley, Francesca Cesti-Browne

I. CG Dems Business

a. Call to Order

President Bentonne Snay

Bentonne called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm, welcomed attendees, explained the mechanisms to be used during the Zoom meeting, including how to ask to speak, remaining on mute except for when you are speaking, the importance of all of us being involved.

b. Treasurer's Report & Merchandise for Sale

Treas Richard Thurer

Current Account Balance \$ \$5,018.82.

Richard reported that in the last month our major expenditure was a \$1,000 contribution as a sponsor of the Miami-Dade Democratic Party Blue Gala event. Otherwise, we had only minor expenditures for reimbursements for stamps and postcards.

Member Julie Samkoff asked how much money we will need to raise to take us through the election in November. Bentonne responded that we do not need to raise any more money at this time. Given that we are unable to host in-person canvassing events due to COVID, we have sufficient funds to cover the remote and virtual activities we can engage in safely during the pandemic.

Member Monique Selman expressed interest in obtaining the "Bye Don" sign; John Wander responded that she can get this sign from the Miami-Dade Democratic Party website at <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/mdshop?refcode=webmerch>. The signs that we are offering

say “BIDEN” in large letters. John noted that the “Bye Don” sign is clever but has been found to be confusing to many people.

Richard showed us the T shirts and mugs that we have available for sale on our web site in addition to Biden yard signs and bumper stickers. These can be purchased at [https://www.coralgablesdems.org/purchase some swag](https://www.coralgablesdems.org/purchase_some_swag). The Biden Yard signs, for which we previously charged \$15, are now free to members if they pick them up at Janet Nostro’s house (located near the CG Library). In the alternative, for payment of \$5 per sign, we will deliver the sign to the requester on the following Saturday. Bentonne noted that we will also be “planting” Biden yard signs at the homes of voters in the precincts that we have adopted when it is safe to do so.

c. August 18 Democratic Primary Get-Out-the-Vote Activities

1. Report from Julie Becker, Chair, Blue Wave Coalition Miami-Dade

Bentonne introduced Julie by providing some highlights of Julie’s career. She has a BA in history from Harvard, and spent 26 years working for the McDonalds Corporation, where she became an officer, and oversaw operations, human resources, training, marketing, real estate and construction for 300 restaurants in the Northeast. She then volunteered with the Clinton Foundation in Harlem, where she then worked for 14 years, running the very successful intern program as part of the Clinton Global Initiatives Volunteer program.

Julie explained the volunteer activities going on from August 12 to 18 in the five priority precincts that have been adopted by the Blue Wave Coalition Miami-Dade (Allapattah, Model City, N. Miami Beach, Miami Gardens and N. Miami). Each night for five nights from August 12 to 16, volunteers will spend from 5-7pm placing doorhangers with the recommended slate of candidates on one side and Early Voting Site ad Time info on the other side at the homes of Democrats who have received Vote By Mail Ballots but have not yet turned them in. The materials will be hung on the door but there will be no knocking the door or ringing the bell, so it will be a safe, no-contact event. Julie shared her screen with us so that we could see the location of the turfs, and for each turf noted the location at which volunteers will meet to receive their turf cuts and the doorhangers. Those interested should email Julie at skooter2@me.com.

Julie noted that long-time progressive community member Jack Lieberman is hospitalized with COVID-19. He had been responsible for printing the Blue Wave slate cards, the Biden signs and bumper stickers. He also allowed other Blue Wave canvassers to use the parking lot of his office building as a staging area, and a key to his building so that we can use the restroom there. He is now in the hospital and is on a ventilator, but has reportedly been improving, and it is hoped that he can be weaned from the ventilator soon. His wife, who also had COVID-19, was discharged from the hospital. A Go Fund Me page has been set up for those who would like to contribute as the family printing business was shut down for a significant amount of time: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/jack-amp-marilyn-lieberman-medical-funds>.

2. President Bentonne Snay's Report on the Ballot Chase Effort

Bentonne explained that board member Pat Thaller is the volunteer leader. The Ballot Chase effort involves calling approximately 1,600 low-turnout Democratic voters in our 8 adopted precincts (all but 2 in Coral Gables) who have requested VBM ballots but have not yet returned them. The goal is to assist these voters in getting their ballots counted. As of now, it is no longer advisable to mail the ballots in due to slower than usual mail services, but they can fill out the ballot, place it in the envelope, sign it, and bring it to any early voting site.

We have 48 volunteers, each of whom is asked to call 28 voters. Each volunteer is provided with a script and other instructions plus various voter resources, and the process of making the 28 calls typically takes 1.5 to 2 hours. In many cases the caller will not reach the individual and will leave a voicemail.

We need more volunteers, especially to get out the vote for Cindy Lerner, who unfortunately and unfairly was not endorsed by the Miami Herald, which instead endorsed Raquel Regalado, who is a Republican. To volunteer, get in touch with Pat at patthaller66@gmail.com.

Bentonne also noted that those who have already mailed in their VBM Ballots can go to <https://www.checkmyballot.miami> to check the status of their ballots as received and/or counted. VP Jane Moscowitz added that voters taking their VBM ballots to any early voting site, will have their voter ID checked and be reassured that the ballot has been accepted.

3. Rejected VBM Ballot Cure Request for Volunteers – VP Jane Moscowitz

CG Dems VP Jane Moscowitz is on the Miami-Dade Dems Voter Protection Committee. Jane stated that a vast number of ballots have been rejected by the Supervisor of Elections because the voter neglected to sign the ballot. The issue is not mismatched signatures, which was a problem in the past, but most mismatches are now being accepted. To cure the ballot, the voter must complete, sign and submit an Affidavit (available in English, Spanish and Creole) with a copy or photo of their valid photo ID such as a Florida Driver's License to the SOE via email or fax by 5:00pm on August 20th.

The problem, Jane advised, is that now that it is too late to send these documents to the SOE using USPS mail, many of these voters are elderly and/or lack the technology at home to download and print the ballot, sign it, scan it, and then email or fax it to the Supervisor of Elections. That is why we need to assist these voters in curing their ballots. We have emails for a few and phone numbers for most of these voters, but many of these emails and phone numbers are not up to date. Nevertheless, for the people whom we do reach, it is another vote counted.

Bentonne added that making these contacts does not take a long time. It involves connecting with people who are very grateful to find out that their ballots were not counted and who are eager to make it right. Jane noted that she spoke to one voter who asked her for

the address to send a donation to Daniella. To become involved in helping cure these approximately 2,000 rejected ballots to date, contact Jane at jmoscowitz@moscowitz.com.

d. CG Dems Special Zoom Event: Chocolate Tasting

Board member and Membership Committee Chair Elizabeth Newman announced our plan to have a fun event: a Zoom Chocolate Tasting Party on Sunday, Sept. 13 at 7:30 pm. Both members and non-members will be invited. We are partnering with a Miami-based boutique chocolate manufacturer, Ricardo of Cao Chocolates, who will deliver a kit of handmade gourmet chocolates to each participant. He will also provide recommendations for wine pairings, which attendees can purchase on their own. At the Zoom event, Ricardo will explain the manufacturing process, describe the individual chocolates in the kit, and take questions from the participants. It will take approximately one to one and a half hours. The cost has not yet been finalized but will be between \$25 and \$30 per person to cover costs, and CG Dems members will receive a discount. Full details will be sent out to all members and friends shortly.

II. Presentations

a. Maydee Martinez, Political Director for Daniella Levine Cava

Maydee emphasized that we need to do everything we can to help get Daniella elected. She has several volunteer activities available, including socially distanced canvassing, phone banking to make sure that voters turn in their VBM ballots, and presence at early voting sites. She explained that due to COVID, we are not going to approach voters to hand out literature, but we want to be at the polling places to give out literature to voters who request it.

Bentonne noted that on our website, <https://www.coralgablesdems.org>, we have a link to Daniella's website.

Maydee announced an early voting rally at Vizcaya on August 12. A caravan on August 15 will leave from Vizcaya, probably at 1 pm and ending at the Coral Gables library. It will be a short, 30 to 45-minute route.

Contacts and links: Daniella's website: <https://www.mobilize.us/daniella.vote/>;
Maydee's phone and email: 786-250-9233, maydee@daniella.vote

b. Allie Brown, Field Director for Congresswoman Debbie Mucarsel-Powell

Bentonne introduced Allie, who has many years of experience working on grass roots campaigns. At the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE), she promoted clean energy throughout the region, helped lead the Floridians for Solar Choice volunteer movement, and directed the Florida field program for the Elizabeth Warren campaign. She is now focused on the re-election of Debbie Mucarsel-Powell.

Allie informed us that the race for Mucarsel-Powell's congressional seat is one of the most competitive in the country. It is considered a toss-up race. She also noted that no

Democrat has held the seat two times in a row. The likely Republican candidate, Carlos Gimenez, has a well-financed campaign and Trump support, but lacks grassroots support. The Mucarsel-Powell campaign is relying on grassroots support as it soon enters the post-primary period.

The campaign is focused on giving help to low-turnout voters. This is being done through having volunteers write post cards, including having a “Pancakes and Postcards” volunteer event. Allie noted that many voters need to be educated on who Debbie is. Efforts are being dedicated to bringing in more volunteers to make phone calls and send text messages. She commented that in the time of pandemic, the campaign can recruit volunteers who are not here locally; they can engage in all volunteer activities from wherever they are. The campaign is planning future car caravans, although most events are going to be virtual. The campaign has yard signs and needs volunteers to deliver them.

Allie observed that District 26 is a difficult one in terms of volunteer engagement. The campaign cannot do it with them alone and needs help from outside the district. Bentonne responded that while many volunteers are reluctant to make phone calls, we have many who are eager and willing to write postcards.

Contact information and links for the Debbie Mucarsel-Powell campaign:

www.mobilize.us/debbieforcongress/
www.debbiemucarselpowell.com/yard-signs/abrown@floridadems.org and 404-583-7740

c. Lance Helguero-Kelley, FL Dems Coordinated Campaign Organizer/Coral Gables

Lance comes from Coral Gables and attended Ransom Everglades and Tufts University. He said that the FL Dems are now involved in a big get-out-the-vote push, with phone and text banking. He noted that volunteers can do the texting directly from their computers.

Regarding volunteers, Lance said that the campaign is trying to address the fact that many volunteers do not want to make phone calls. They are trying to find different ways for volunteers to become active. He is scheduling Zoom or phone calls with potential volunteers. There will also be virtual watch parties around the convention. There will be no campaign offices in Miami due to COVID-19.

There will be a big caravan on Sunday, Aug. 16 on Miami Beach, timed to coordinate with the Democratic convention. Lance noted that the FL Dem Party is using the local campaign to gauge our efforts in connection with the fall campaign.

Links and contact information:

Saturday, Sunday, Monday GOTV Phonebank:
<https://www.mobilize.us/fl2020victory/event/297365/>

GOTV Phonebank 8/17 for before Michelle Obama speaks:

<https://www.mobilize.us/fl2020victory/event/302146/>

Michelle Obama Speech Watch Party for Monday:

<https://www.mobilize.us/fl2020victory/event/302144/>

Volunteers can sign up by going to <https://rb.gy/kq2k8g>

d. Florida State House District 115 Candidate Francessca Cesti Brown

Francessca was born in Peru and emigrated to the US at age 8. She has a master's degree in Public Administration from Florida International University and has had a career in advising nonprofits on business strategies, especially in the fields of education, family planning, domestic violence and other social services. In her spare time, Francessca is a Brownie Troop leader for her daughters' troop.

Francessca has no Democratic primary opponent in this race. She noted that the seat has been in Republican hands for the last 20 years. The Republican incumbent is Vance Aloupis. Bentonne advised that we need to help Francessca defeat him in November as he has significant support.

Contact information: <https://francesscaforflorida.com/>

III. Meeting adjourned at 7:50 pm

Meeting summary prepared by Elizabeth Newman with approval of Bentonne Snay.