



Tuesday, May 11, 2021
6:30PM to 8:00 PM
Via Zoom

MONTHLY MEETING SUMMARY

Board Members: Bentonne Snay, Jane Moscowitz, Arun Ravindran, Richard Thurer, Pat Thaller, Thomas “Mac” Hooten, Elizabeth Newman, Janet Nostro and Carolina Camps

Speakers: Martha Schoolman, Jane Torres

Members: Jose Valdes Fauli, Bryan Hernandez, Janet Stearns, Norman Moscowitz, Madeline Shirley, Linda Fernandez, Julie Samkoff, Ruth Balestra, Marjorie Wilkoff, Ulrich Merten and Susan Scholz-Rubin

Guests: Eric Basseterre, Ana Henkel, Joseph Kano, Brian Olson and Katie Terry

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.

I. Call to Order, Opening Remarks & Meeting Rules President Bentonne Snay

- Bentonne opened the meeting launching a poll asking when members were comfortable for an in-person meeting, July, August, September, or October. **Seventy-five percent** of those polled voted to meet in July; based on the high support for an in-person meeting Bentonne advised that goal would be an in-person meeting in July, and that she would check with Books & Books to determine if they were ready to host in-person meetings again.
- Bentonne then covered the Zoom ground rules, e.g., all participants on mute during presentations with participants unmuted for questions.
- After an overview of the meeting agenda, Bentonne introduced and gave a brief bio for Martha Schoolman, the moderator of the presentation portion of the meeting, and the meeting’s speakers, Jane Torres of Moms Demand Action, Miami-Dade and Jane Moscowitz, of the Coral Gables Democratic Club.

II. Presentations on Gun Safety Legislation and the For the People Act of 2021

- a. **Update on Local and Federal Gun Safety Legislation** - Moms Demand Action Miami Legislative Co-lead Jane A. Torres
 - Background - Moms Demand Action is the grassroots arm of Everytown for Gun Safety, which is the largest organization advocating for stronger laws and policies for gun safety. Jane’s presentation gave a national overview, a Florida overview, and then discussed current federal, state, and local gun legislation.
 - National Overview – More than 38,000 people are killed with a gun every year; 60% are suicides; 38% are homicides; the remainder are police killings and accidental killings, usually involving children; gun violence costs *at least* 240Bn

- dollars a year, most of those costs are long-term medical care for shooting victims.
- Florida Overview – Florida ranks in middle/lower-middle in terms of both indicia of gun violence and efficacy of gun laws; it earns a “C-” on a national standard.
- Key drivers of Florida gun violence -
 1. *Inadequate Background checks* – in Florida, background checks and waiting periods do not apply to concealed weapons holders, the permit lasts for seven years, with no intervening investigation; further, background checks only apply to gun dealer sales, not private sales or internet sales; thus, ¼ of gun sales are done without background checks; and
 2. *Weak Laws* - safe storage rules work to limit liability in all instances except where a gun is used outside the home; stand your ground laws do not require no mandatory confiscation from domestic violence (DV) calls; persons convicted of DV can still own and purchase firearms; ‘stand your ground’ laws are not limited to defense of life.
- The Good: favorable developments at the federal level include President Biden’s passing rules concerning ghost guns and stabilizing braces; He directed DOJ to develop a model red flag law (in Florida we have an extreme risk protection order); He has also directed the DOJ to issue an arms trafficking report and nominated an ATF director.
- Federal Legislative Solutions – HR 8 is a proposed bill which federally mandates background checks for all firearms transfers, not just gun dealer sales; Senators Rubio and Scott are against HR 8; HR 1446 is a proposed bill which enhances background checks to close the “Charleston Loophole” – Florida already has a five-day waiting period.
- Peace and Property Plan – Mayor Daniella Levine Cava’s plan allocates \$90M from arena naming rights to study economic and social bases of gun violence.
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- Tips for how to talk about gun violence prevention – be mindful of language: not “gun control” but “gun safety”; not “universal background checks” but “background checks on all gun transfers”; not “gun free zones” but “keep guns out of sensitive places.”
- The Bad: Florida House Memorial 1301 – if the federal government passes any restriction of the Second Amendment, the State of Florida will resist the rule.
- **Miami-Dade has an ordinance requiring background checks on gun sales at gun shows but is not enforcing this requirement;** the Florida Legislature has recently preempted local rulemaking on gun sales and the anti-riot bill expands the scope of ‘stand your ground.’
- The Ugly: HB 259 – expanding rights to carry guns on school property; until now it was prohibited by state law to carry a weapon on the grounds of a school or church property, HB 259 changes that.
- Questions from the floor: What do we think about the weakening of the NRA because of the New York Attorney General’s investigation? Answer: NRA voters are single issue voters, but there is hope for less NRA power.

b. For the People Act of 2021 (HR 1, S 1)– CG Dems VP and Miami-Dade Dems DEC and Voter Protection Team Member Jane Moscowitz

This presentation and Q & A session were designed to provide insights on this sweeping legislation aimed at reforming our election system to strengthen democracy and prevent further erosion of voting rights by GOP-ruled state legislatures.

- Martha Schoolman – overview of For the People Act; three main purposes: (1) strengthening voting rights; (2) getting money out of politics; and (3) including anti-corruption policies.
- Jane Moscovitz – HR 1 is almost 600 pages long and deals with almost all electoral issues besides electoral college; applies to all federal elections only.
- HR 1 includes: Automatic registration with an opt out at public facilities such as the DMV; same-day registration at polling places; enables voting a regular ballot with an affidavit in cases of no ID; makes it unlawful to intimidate voters or challenge voters; makes electoral disinformation illegal; provides universal restoration of rights for all felons in federal elections; no more purges because of inactive status; establishes vote by mail without a qualifying excuse; makes election day a federal holiday for federal employees; no waiting for more than 30 minutes in line to vote; permanent paper ballots as an election security measure; anti-gerrymandering provisions in house districts; campaign finance reforms including cracking down on foreign money to campaigns; revisions to public matching funds; requires greater separation between campaigns and PACs.
- Foreign donation – while this is illegal, it remains a significant problem because it is not tracked or enforced well enough.
- HR 1 will require 60 votes unless the filibuster rules are stripped for parts of the bill; Senators Manchin and Sinema are signaling they are against parts of the bill; Sen. Rubio and Scott are against the bill; 80% of the population supports key provisions of the bill when polled with non-partisan methods.
- John Lewis Voting Rights Act – has a better prognosis because it concerns more technical issues and is not as susceptible to constitutional challenges; it applies to federal and state elections; will hopefully undermine many newly-passed state voter suppressions laws.
- Question: Will the Senate pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act? Answer: This is more likely than passage of HR 1.
- Question: Do Republicans support any aspect of this? Answer: Historically, Republicans were supportive of vote by mail, but that shifted after this election.

III. CG Dems Business

a. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Richard Thurer

- Richard Thurer reported the current balance was \$2,990.90; there are current renewals in the pipeline; the major expense over the last month were five \$50 gift cards the Club donated to the Blue Wave Coalition for their annual auction. There were no questions about the report.
- 2021 Operating Budget Pending Completion of Board Planning – Bentonne advised that 2021 Board Planning was paused until new board members onboarded.

b. 2021 Board Planning Process

Bentonne Snay

Members were advised about the Board's planning process; seeking to determine specific, measurable, aspirational, realistic and time-bound (SMART) outcomes and define action plans and goals for each committee. A brief overview of each committee was provided, and the plans will be shared during the June 8th monthly meeting.

IV. Upcoming CG Dems Monthly Meetings

Bentonne Snay

- a. June 8th Monthly Meeting: CG Dems 2021 Goals and Plan of Action 6:30-8:00pm
 - o We will be asking people to join committees at this meeting; we are excited about expanding our outreach into Blue Wave Coalition priority precincts and coordinating with Miami-Dade Dems; we will need to reactivate our almost 200 volunteers.
- b. July 13th CG Dems Monthly Meeting: Topic TBD – Suggestions Welcome
 - o Since there was a strong indication that people want live meetings, we will be planning for a live meeting in July (*Bentonne attended Cuban American Dems meeting which was live at Tropical Park and it was great*)

V. Other Business

Bentonne Snay

- No other business was discussed

VI. Adjourn

Bentonne Snay

- Bentonne reminded members to attend the County Commission meeting on May 12 (or email their commissioner) to press for the Peace and Prosperity Plan Jane Torres informed us about.

Meeting adjourned at 7:49

Meeting summary prepared by Secretary Arun Ravindran as edited and approved by President Bentonne. Snay.