

Women March on Washington

By EMMA COLLUM

The rhetoric of this past election cycle has insulted, demonized and threatened many already disenfranchised groups of people. There is a pervading sense of fear and uncertainty. The question many are asking is, how do we move forward?

In the spirit of democracy and honoring the champions of human rights, dignity, and justice who have come before us, we join in diversity to show our presence in numbers too great to ignore. The Women’s March on Washington will send a bold message to our new administration on their first day in office, and to the world that women’s rights are human rights. We stand together, recognizing that defending the most marginalized among us is defending all of us.

The Florida Chapter of the Women’s March on Washington is a grassroots movement which will culminate with a March on Washington D.C. on January 21, 2017. This is not an Anti-Trump protest, this is a march to have our tremendous united voice heard on the first day of the incoming administration’s term in office. This march is not just for women; everyone is invited to attend.



The last Women’s Mobilization on Washington took place on April 25, 2004.

City Elections to be Held March 14

City Elections will be held in March in Sarasota, North Port and Longboat Key. City Elections are non-partisan, so all voters regardless of party affiliation can vote in the election in March. The formal qualifying period and deadline for candidates to file is **noon on January 13** and several more candidates are expected to enter the race by then. The first City Commission election is scheduled for March 14 with a run-off election scheduled for May 9. If no candidate gets a majority of the vote then the top three vote-getters advance to the runoff.

The two at-large seats up for election this spring are currently held by commissioners Suzanne Atwell and Susan Chapman. After eight years on the Commission, incumbent Commissioner Suzanne Atwell has announced that she will not be running for re-election. Susan Chapman has filed to run, as have two other candidates: Jennifer Ahearn-Koch, and Martin Hyde.

Ahearn-Koch is the president of the Tahiti Park Neighborhood Association and serves on the board of Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations (CCNA) and the steering committee of the activist group STOP. She also served for six years on the city’s planning board. After serving as the marketing director for Mattison’s for a number of years, she opened her own public relations firm this past summer.

Longtime City Commission critic Martin Hyde was the first official candidate to file for the Sarasota City Commission. Born in England, Hyde’s family frequently vacationed in Sarasota and he moved here permanently in 1999. He currently serves as president of local office equipment company Gulf Business Systems. He has been particularly critical of Commissioner Chapman’s Sunshine lawsuit and of actions taken by City Manager Tom Barwin. His positions on other issues ranging from homelessness, parking meters and fiscal policy can be found at: <http://www.electmartinhyde.com>.

Susan Chapman remains the subject of an

open-government lawsuit - a case she won this past summer but is now being appealed. It has cost the city about \$353,000 in legal fees. She decided to run for re-election to continue to provide leadership on combatting homelessness (see supports a housing first plan, not a shelter), planning the Bayfront 20:20 project and addressing transportation issues.

The City Commission meets the **first and third Mondays of each month** at City Hall. Meetings take place from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. and continue at 6:00 p.m. if necessary to cover all agenda items. Municipal government is involved in many aspects of our daily lives - from fixing roads, providing water and electricity, collecting garbage, supporting the arts, and public safety. It is important to be informed and participate in the upcoming election.

Due to the resignation of North Port Mayor Jacqueline Moore halfway through her four-year term, (Moore resigned two years into her four-year term to run in District 2 due to new districting requirements), there will be a special election to fill the District 4 seat on the North Port City Commission in March. So far five people have filed to run for the vacant seat: Bill Goetz, Jill Luke, Jerry Nicastro, Pete Emrich, and Sam George. Whoever is elected will serve until November 2018.

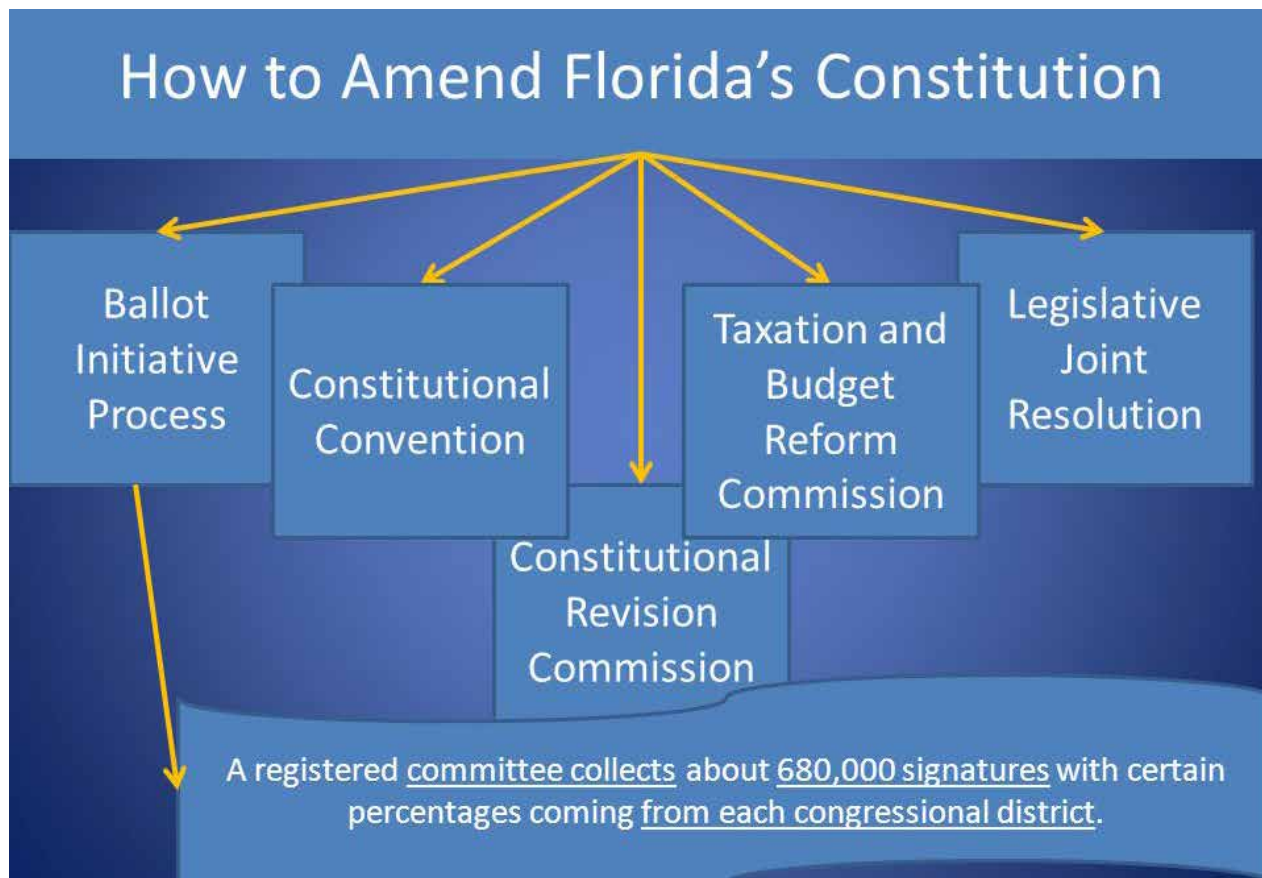
Three seats are up for election on the Longboat Key Commission. James Brown and Gene Jaleski have filed to run for the at-large seat, Larry Grossman and Jack Daly (incumbent) will compete for the District 4 seat and currently only George Spoll has filed to run for the District 2 seat. The Longboat Key Town Commission meetings are held on the **first Monday of each month at 7:00 PM** in the Town Commission Chambers. The Commission also meets for a monthly workshop meeting. For additional information concerning the Town Commission you may call the Office of the Town Clerk at Town Hall, 941-316-1999, Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM.

SRQ Rally In Solidarity With DC Women’s March January 21st

Can’t make it to DC? March across Ringling Bridge in solidarity with the women in DC on January 21st at the Unconditional Surrender Statue (US 41 and Ringling Causeway) at 12pm. Brings signs.

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Florida Constitutional Revision Commission Meets this Year

WWW.REVISEFL.COM

The Florida Constitution dictates the creation of a Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) every 20 years for the purpose of reviewing the state constitution and proposing changes for voter consideration. The CRC is a group of 37 people appointed to review and recommend changes to the Florida Constitution. Florida is now the third largest state in the country and as our population continues to grow, our state will grapple with issues like transportation, education and health care. The CRC is an important way for citizens to have input in the future of the state and one of five ways that Floridians can amend the state constitution.

The Governor of Florida appoints 15 members, the House Speaker and Senate President each select nine members, three members are chosen by the Chief Justice of the Florida Supreme Court and the Florida Attorney General is an automatic member. The Governor selects one of the 37 members to serve as chairman.

The people of Florida play a critical role in the Constitution Revision Commission, which meets for approximately one year, traveling the state, identifying issues, performing research and gathering public input. Citizens can attend and participate in these statewide public hearings to make sure the issues they care about are carefully considered by the CRC and to ensure there are qualified, bi-partisan and forward-thinking individuals selected to serve in this important role. Citizens can vote on the proposals on the 2018 ballot, which require 60 percent of the vote in order to pass.

The members of the 2017-2018 Constitution Revision Commission will be selected 30 days before the start of the 2017 Legislative Session. Potential CRC members can apply through the offices of the Governor, the Florida Senate President, the Florida Speaker of the House and the Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice (go to www.ReviseFL.com to find links). The commission will begin its work upon the conclusion of the 2017 session.

Advocating for the Environment

By **GLENN COMPTON**

ManaSota-88 is a non-profit 501.c3 organization that is an advocate for the protection of our environment and public health. Our commitment to safeguard air, land and water quality is aggressive and uncompromising. Volunteers are unpaid. Private citizens contribute 100% of the operating revenues. ManaSota-88 has never accepted a contribution from any polluting industry.

Over the past few years, ManaSota-88 has worked to:

- Strengthen rules to prevent other cities from dumping sewage sludge in our community;
- Reduce the amount of toxic pesticides used in our schools;
- Oppose the expansion of phosphogypsum uses in landfills, agriculture and roadbeds;
- Ensure the Florida Department of Environmental Protection fully enforces the provisions of the Clean Water Act and Florida Statutes;
- Educate the public about health problems

associated with environmental pollution;

- Educate the public and elected officials about health care issues such as the overprescribing of psychotropic drugs;
- Focus attention on the need to develop policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and its associated impacts of sea level rise on coastal resources;
- Ensure Charlotte Harbor, Myakka River, Lake Manatee, Ever's Reservoir, and the Peace River are protected from phosphate mining;
- Educate our state, federal, and local government officials about our unique groundwater problems. We need to have the capability to take a more active role in the development of all levels of water laws and regulations.

We are proud of our involvement with county, state and national government. Please visit our website at: <http://www.manasota88.org> to learn about ManaSota-88 or send an email to manasota88@comcast.net to receive our email newsletters.

Initiatives to Get Big Money Out of Elections Succeed

Two super bright spots in the November 2016 election were the two successful initiatives seeking a U.S. Constitutional Amendment that constitutional rights belong only to individuals, not corporations, and constitutionally-protected free speech excludes the spending of money.

In Washington State, Initiative 735 urged the Washington state congressional delegation to propose a federal constitutional amendment. This amendment applied to labor unions and non-profits along with corporations. 63% of Washington voters voted in favor.

In California, Proposition 59 supported advising the state's elected officials to use their authority to overturn the Supreme Court Citizens United decision, potentially through an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In 2014, a nearly identical legislative advisory did not make it onto the ballot due to litigation. In 2016, 53% of California voters voted in favor.

California and Washington State join Colorado and Montana in passing similar referendums. In 2012, Colorado Amendment 65 and Montana Initiative 166 were both successful with almost three-quarters of voters supporting these measures.

In addition to the states, 32 local citizen initiatives were passed in 2016 that called for an amendment to end corporate constitutional rights and money as speech.

Two hundred candidates took the Pledge to Amend this year, (more than ever before), including 19 new members of Congress who are not yet co-sponsors (GREAT targets to for 2017!), and 19 new state legislators. If you haven't signed the Move to Amend petition yet, please do so at www.movetoamend.org. Get involved with your local affiliate by emailing Sarasota@movetoamend.org.



Critical Times is a publication of the Peace Education and Action Center.

MISSION:

The Peace Education and Action Center connects and empowers people to build a socially just, non-violent and sustainable community and world.

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2016 VDAY Volunteer Team

Photo credit: Cliff Roles

Standing Up Against Exploitation of Women

By **ARLENE SWEETING**

Planning has begun for the 2017 VDay “The Power of Love” event and we are reaching out to invite you to participate. Our event, part of the One Billion Rising global initiative to end violence against women and girls, is based on the sobering statistic that 1 in every 3 women across the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. “The Power of Love” event exists to change those statistics. Last year working with Selah Freedom, we brought attention to the issue of human trafficking in our community and what is being done to solve the problem. This year, we are rising to honor the sacred and valuable work of women around the world, in all its forms, by demanding safe, violence-free workplaces. The 2017 VDAY event will take place on Saturday, February 18th, 6pm at Fogartyville.

In 2017, VDAY is shining the Spotlight on Violence Against Women In the Workplace. Violence against women at work takes place every day, in every country, across socio-economic levels – from laborers to company executives, to waitresses and teachers, at-home mothers, nurses, farmworkers, factory workers, actors, and domestic workers. The additional layer of exploitation is that, in many cases, women facing workplace violence are vulnerable and impeded from speaking out or seeking justice for fear of losing their job. All of this is happening in the context of a global economic reality where it is increasingly difficult for women to even earn a livable wage.

This year we plan to present excerpts from A Memory, A Monologue, A Rant and A Prayer. This groundbreaking collection of monologues by world-renowned authors and playwrights

breaks open and examines the insidiousness of violence at all levels: brutality, neglect, a punch, even a put-down. The volume features such authors and topics as: Maya Angelou on women’s work; Susan Miller on raising a son as a single mother; Patricia Bosworth on her own physically abusive relationship; Jane Fonda on reclaiming our Mojo; and many more. We are assembling a cast of performers and curating new testimonies from local women workers so that we can include their stories in our production. If you have a story you would like to share, contact L’Tanya at VDaySarasota@gmail.com.

We also plan to follow up this event with a series of women-centered conversations in local homes. If you are interested in participating in or hosting a conversation, please contact Arlene at peacenter@gmail.com.

Center for Religious Tolerance Responds to Post-Election Bigotry

By **ANDREA BLANCH**

Hate crimes, hate speech and recruitment to hate groups have all spiked since the election. According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, anti-Black and anti-immigrant incidents have shown the largest increase, followed by crimes against Muslims and transgender people. While hate crimes have been increasing for several years – incidents involving Muslims grew a startling 67% between 2014 and 2015 - this outbreak is clearly election-related. In fact, many reported incidents included direct references to Donald Trump or to “our new President.” Most disturbing is the fact that schools K-12 and colleges have been the most common venues. Reports have been made of Black school children being told by their peers that they would have to ride at the back of the school bus, and Hispanic children being taunted about “the wall.”

Since 2006, the Sarasota-based Center for Religious Tolerance (CRT) has stood against religious and other forms of intolerance. Much of our work has involved bridging the

divide between Jews, Muslims and Christians in Israel and Palestine. However, the new reality is that our own neighbors and friends are increasingly at risk. We intend to spend the next few months reaching out to vulnerable individuals and groups in the Sarasota community to see if they would welcome our support. We will be gathering and sharing resources on how to respond to hate when you see it, and how to be an effective “ally.” We will explore ways to confront our own privilege, to have difficult conversations, and to get our egos out of the way while doing this work. We hope the Sarasota community will join us in these efforts.

We will also continue to work internationally, but with a stronger focus on supporting and strengthening local women and their initiatives. The election made two things clear. First, the progress women have made over the past 40 years is in jeopardy. Second, the world needs a brand of feminism that is not just about personal opportunity and accomplishment, but about creating a society where all girls and women – and all other marginalized groups – are free to excel.

Over the past decade, CRT has assisted hundreds of women and girls in Israel, Kenya and Honduras to see themselves as strong and powerful actors who can make a difference in their communities. We plan to build on these successes by bringing young women from these programs together in an international “Young Women’s Parliament.” We have already had one international conversation using web-based technology. The girls were unanimously enthusiastic about getting together. What happens after the first face-to-face meeting will be in their hands.

CRT is an all-volunteer organization that works to promote peace and social justice in areas of conflict. We support activities that are designed and implemented by people at the grassroots level. To learn more, visit www.c-r-t.org or find us on Facebook. To share your thoughts and suggestions, contact CRT Director Andrea Blanch, akblanch@aol.com 941-312-9795.



WORLD CULTURES INITIATIVE: WEST AFRICA

Friday, January 13, 7pm @ Fogartyville.

Join us to enjoy the sights, sounds and tastes of West Africa. Featured performers: Group Dôdô Ahoco. Tickets: \$10 adv/\$15 door

Saturday, January 14

African Drumming Class 2-3:30pm/West African Dance Class 4-5:30pm.



Supporting Veterans Through Advocacy and Service

By GENE JONES

Florida Veterans for Common Sense Inc. (FLVCS) is a non-partisan, veteran's advocacy organization. Its twofold mission is to educate and inform members and the public on national security and veteran issues while also supporting and helping fellow veterans.

Veterans formed FLVCS to speak out in opposition to the Iraq invasion. As veterans, we valued the words of Thomas Paine, founding father and author of the pivotal Revolutionary War treatise, *Common Sense*, who said, "The true greatness of a nation is founded on the principles of humanity; and to avoid war when her own existence is not endangered ... is a higher principal of true honor than to madly engage in it."

From its founding, FLVCS has advocated for a strong national defense while simultaneously opposing unnecessary war as folly and waste. FLVCS members recognized that the justifications for invading Iraq in 2003 were based on false premises and that the invasion violated international law, and Iraq, as a developing country, posed no substantial or imminent threat to the United States.

The Iraq War cost countless lives and wasted trillions in treasure with little to show for the effort. In fact, the invasion may well turn out to be one of the worst U.S. foreign policy blunders ever with detrimental reverberations that will continue for decades to come.

In addition to the direct costs of the Iraq War that skyrocketed our national debt, it has been

estimated that the lifetime costs of providing VA healthcare, disability compensation, and readjustment benefits average \$1 million per veteran for the more than 2.5 million U.S. veterans who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nearly 1.2 million had already sought VA healthcare by March of last year when the VA inexplicably stopped publicly reporting VA utilization rates by Iraq and Afghanistan



War veterans. Undoubtedly, the numbers will continue to grow, and the cost to treat these injured veterans must be paid as America has a sacred trust to pay the financial cost of assisting injured veterans for their lifetime.

Now under the new Administration and Congress, discussions of possible VA privatization are very disconcerting – some are disguised as giving veterans "choices". While the VA has many challenges, it is a unique healthcare system worth saving to fulfill

the nation's mission to care for our nation's veterans. Needed improvements include: better, timely healthcare access, research and treatment development for toxic wounds, such as Agent Orange, Gulf War Illness, and burn pits; disability claims standardization, improved accuracy and fairness, and improved speed of adjudication.

A central tenet of FLVCS's mission is to ensure that Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans receive better treatment so that mistakes made with previous generations of veterans are not repeated. FLVCS has raised funds for the Haley House, which houses families of patients at the James A. Haley VA Hospital in Tampa, and bought TV's for Haley Hospital day rooms. Along with community partners, FLVCS helped initiate annual Stand Downs to assist homeless veterans. FLVCS was recognized by the Bar Association for our role in helping to create the local 12th Judicial Circuit Court's Court Assisting Veterans

Program. We also support Green Path Veterans and Friends urban farm project, designed to train and empower veterans. Another major FLVCS initiative educates the public about the human impact on climate change, its national security implications, and ways to mitigate its consequences.

For more information, join us at one of our sponsored events. Visit our website at: FloridaVeteransforCommonSense.org, or contact us at: FLVeterans@aol.com.

Sierra Opposes Mining Expansion

By GERRY SWORMSTEDT

January will be an important time for our Sierra Group and our ongoing battle against the expansion of phosphate mining by Mosaic. Our January 12th monthly meeting at the Sarasota Garden Club, 7 p.m., will feature a presentation by Andy Mele giving a comprehensive picture of the impacts of mining on our region. On January 26, the Manatee County Commission will be considering the Mosaic petition to expand their Wingate mine and we intend to gather as many people as possible to attend the meeting at the County Administration Building and voice our opposition to this complete destruction of the land; the land they claim to restore. Instead of restoration, we have mountains of toxic gypsum, lakes of toxic wash and now, a major sinkhole. We must keep educating the public about this threat to our drinking water quality, as well as the threat to our river flows.

A second priority is Solar energy production, and to that objective, we are co-sponsoring the Sarasota Solar Co-op plan to allow home owners to benefit from group pricing in their installation. Aside from these activities we will be having our usual Outings. For the list of these, one can go on our website, <http://sierraclub.org/florida/manatee-sarasota>.

See calendar of events for upcoming programs or visit (list website) for more information.

New Grassroots Media Initiative Takes Shape

Raw News Network, Inc. is a recently formed 501(c)(3) nonprofit news service that aims to provide unfiltered information to individuals and organizations working for positive social change in the Sarasota area.

Raw News Network Inc. (RNN) is premised on the idea that all of us can be reporters of social and economic injustices in our community, reporting the news that mainstream media ignores or distorts. RNN contributors largely use cell phone-based videography and photography to record and document these injustices. Videography and photography will also capture the power of area grassroots movements working to usher in a democratic society based on social, economic and ecological justice. Volunteer videographers film relevant talks, presentations and rallies in the Sarasota area as well as conduct interviews with leaders and members of grassroots movements. These videos and photographs are posted on RNN's Facebook page and categorized on the RNN website with links to a RNN YouTube channel.

For further information or if you wish to participate with RNN, go to www.RawNewsNetworkInc.org or email Carol Lerner at rawnews.carol@gmail.com.



CIW Urges Wendy's Boycott

Pull out your calendars, Fair Food Nation, it's time for Wendy's, and the nation, to return to human rights!

The dates for the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' big spring action have been announced. This is the annual event that has become the hallmark of the Campaign for Fair Food for nearly two decades, from the first Taco Bell Truth Tour in 2001 to next spring's Return to Human Rights Tour. From March 16th to 29th, 2017, CIW members and their allies will embark on the longest protest action in the last 10 years of the Campaign for Fair Food, joining thousands of consumers in mobilizing for the national Wendy's Boycott. The Return to Human Rights Tour will travel to the heart of Wendy's territory for action demanding justice of farmworkers in Columbus, Ohio, on March 26th, and will end the following week with a massive vigil in Tampa, Florida — stopping in nearly 12 cities over the 13-day journey.

For more information, , visit ciw-online.org!



Sarasota-Charlotte County Democratic Progressive Caucus

By DON DIDDAMS

Formed in 2016, the local Sarasota-Charlotte caucus is a chapter of the Florida Democratic Progressive Caucus. While our focus is local, we support the state caucus platform and also work on state and national issues. That platform emphasizes the need for greater economic, social and environmental justice; environmental protection; equal rights for all; and peace in our nation and our world. You can read the details by downloading it using the link on our web page (see end of article).

Underlying all our efforts is the belief that the Democratic Party can be saved, so that its candidates and elected officials promote and honor these progressive values on the campaign trail and in office. We believe that refocusing the Party on progressive values is the key to a government that serves those values.

Many people have become disillusioned with our political system over the past few years – and the most recent election has put an exclamation point on that. However, systemic and structural features of our political system make it very difficult, if not impossible, for a third party to have any meaningful impact.

Some are so fed up with partisan politics that they would opt for purely personal action. Living a peaceful and just personal life is vital to a healthy community, and we support everyone in their personal efforts to do that. However, we will always be governed by laws, rules and an economic playing field defined by our government. Justice is needed there as well. And that is why we believe political action to refocus the Democratic Party on progressive values is so important. Please join us, and support us in this effort!

Our next membership meeting is scheduled for January 18th at 6:30 pm, at Sarasota County Democratic Party headquarters, 7358 S. Tamiami Trail in Sarasota. All are welcome. Until then, check us out on the web and Facebook (links below)!

Links:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SarasotaCharlotteDemocraticProgressiveCaucus/>

Web page: <http://sarasotacharlotteprogressives.strikingly.com/>

Let's Talk About It!

By TOM WALKER

The Nation Group of Sarasota and Manatee was formed over a decade ago to discuss current affairs and articles in The Nation magazine. We meet once a month on the first Thursday of the month at the downtown Sarasota Selby Library from ten until noon. Our leader is the dynamic 103-year-old Joe Newman. Our meetings are free and open to the public.

At our monthly programs we have speakers and then discussion on a wide range of local, state, national and international topics. We plan these meetings at a mid-month meeting at the North Sarasota Library on the third Thursday, again from ten until noon. All are welcome to attend. To be included on our email list and to find out about upcoming meetings, please send an email to nationtalk@gmail.com.

Empowering the Newtown Community



Newtown Nation Board members

By DEANIE BERGBREITER

The Newtown Nation was conceived in late 2014 after disappointing results in the mid-term elections. Frustrated that local issues were not being addressed by local candidates and organizations, a group of community organizers determined to tackle issues that were relevant for the Newtown community. The Newtown Nation officially incorporated with 501(c)(3) status in 2015 and its diligent Board of Directors and Advisers remain committed to their vision and goals. The purpose of the Newtown Nation is to engage and empower the community to improve the quality of life in Newtown.

The Newtown Nation values community collaboration and developed an early partnership with the local honors college, New College of Florida. In 2016, The Newtown Nation furthered this partnership with the New College of Florida AmeriCorps VISTA program to address issues related to food security in Newtown. The overarching AmeriCorps VISTA objective is to bring individuals and communities out of poverty by supporting sustainable community engagement initiatives.

Community engagement priorities for 2016 included creating opportunities for local entrepreneurs; improving local access to healthy foods; providing job training; participating in community safety initiatives, and addressing pressing issues expressed by the community. Starting in January 2017, The Newtown Nation will hold monthly community meetings to address issues and hold local leaders accountable. The Newtown Nation is also committed to supporting existing organizations whose programs benefit the Newtown community and will continue to develop those partnerships in 2017.

One of The Newtown Nation's major initiatives is the The Newtown Farmer's Market, which began in January 2016. The Newtown Farmer's Market provides fresh seasonal produce and accepts SNAP EBT (food stamps), debit and credit cards as well as cash and checks. The market is located on the corner of Osprey Ave and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and operates the 1st and 3rd Fridays of every month from 2:00 - 6:00 pm (and the following Saturday morning from 10 a.m. until produce is sold out). In 2017, The Newtown Farmer's Market intends to expand healthy food initiatives by teaching urban gardening to local community members.

The Newtown Nation aims to use the market as an incubator program for local entrepreneurs that are interested in launching small businesses in Newtown. The incubator program will provide financial and business assistance to individuals for up to one year, to help pay costs for the insurance and permits that are necessary to lease a booth at the market. Successful businesses would ultimately transition into brick and mortar businesses and begin to rebuild a vibrant business district in Newtown.

For more information about the Newtown Nation, please visit our website at www.newtownnation.com or email us at newtownnation@gmail.com.

Organizing Summit For Community Groups



The Peace Education and Action Center will host an organizing summit for community groups at the Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center on January 28 from 1-4pm. The purpose of the event is to get representatives from community groups that are already working on local issues in the room together with concerned citizens to identify priority issues and see how we can work together to make progress on identified issues. This will be a participatory meeting and all are welcome.

Volunteers Needed!

The PEACenter is looking for friendly people to lend their energy to support our growing community. Some areas where we need help: producing our bi-weekly e-newsletter, keeping our online activist calendar updated, recording a weekly activist calendar for broadcast on WSLR, providing support for the Peace and Justice Radio show, promoting upcoming events on social media, and staffing events at the Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center. If you have some time to spare and would like to get involved, please email us at peacenter@gmail.com.



Community Media & Arts Center
Fogartyville
 West Entrance

Food and beverages are available at most of our shows, call for individual show menus

525 Kumquat Court, Sarasota
941-894-6469

8pm Saturday, January 7: \$15^{adv}/\$20 day of show



Compton & Newberry

A stringband of two—Mandolin master Mike Compton and veteran banjoist/guitarist Joe Newberry pay homage to pioneering Americana musicians such as The Monroe Bros., Robt. Johnson and The Carter Family with an artistry unmatched in today's bluegrass world.

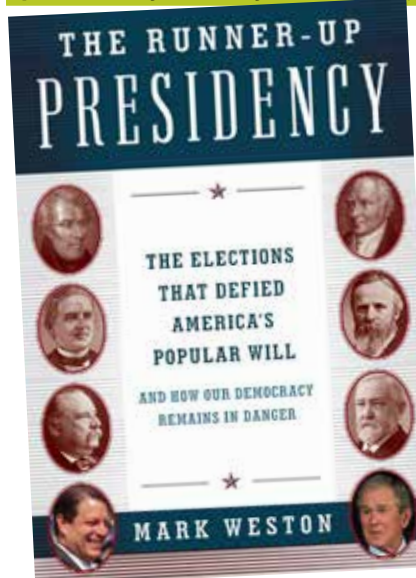
7pm Sunday, January 15: \$12^{adv}/\$15 day of show

WORLD BEAT VAUDEVILLE EXTRAVAGANZA!
ZOE LEWIS

Jazz, jump-jive, Latin grooves, swing, int'l folk & funk originals on everything from the piano to the spoons! Troubadour, vaudevillian, storyteller, adventurer, singer-songwriter!



7pm Tuesday, January 24: People's pricing: \$3



Author and historian

MARK WESTON

Join author of the entertaining and important account of presidential elections in which the winner of the popular vote lost or came all too close to losing, focusing on how electoral votes emerged as a compromise between the free states and slave states at the Constitutional Convention, how they were inspired by an unusual method of counting votes in ancient Rome.

8pm Thursday January 26: \$10^{adv}/\$12 day of show

Missy & Rainey



THE NEW HIP

She is a 7-time recipient of the Bass Player of the Year Award from the International Bluegrass Music Assoc. and a former member of the Grammy-nominated *Claire Lynch Band*. Missy and her band just got named 2017 Official Folk Alliance Showcase band for the 29th Annual Folk Alliance International Conference, for good reason.

8pm Friday, January 27: \$10^{adv}/\$15 day of show

Yarn

Armed with their catalog of original songs, they spent 2yrs honing their chops during a Mon. night residency at the famed Kenny's Castaway in N.Y.C.'s Greenwich Village. They've laid down some rubber along the way and paid their dues, this Grammy nominated Alt-Country, Americana Rock outfit comes to Fogartyville!



8pm Saturday, January 28: \$12^{adv}/\$15 day of show



CLAUDIA SCHMIDT

Singer/songwriter of the folk blues, she is accomplished on 12-string guitar and the mountain dulcimer, Claudia was a regular during the early years of *Prairie Home Companion*.

8pm Saturday, February 4: \$20^{adv}/\$25 day of show

ROY BOOK BINDER & BLIND BOY PAXTON



Our friend, Roy is an American blues guitarist, singer-songwriter and storyteller. A student/friend of the Rev. Gary Davis & Jorma Kaukonen he is equally at home with blues & ragtime. Storytelling is another characteristic that makes his style unique and entertaining.



Although only in his 20s, Jerron "Blind Boy" Paxton has earned a reputation for transporting audiences back to the 1920's and making them wish they could stay there for good.

8pm Friday, February 10: \$15^{adv}/\$20 day of show

HANNEKE CASSELL TRIO

"One of the hottest young fiddlers in Boston." says the *Boston Globe* about Cassel's playing. Such charismatic fiddling has brought the native Oregonian many honors & awards. She is the 1997 U.S. National Scottish Fiddle Champion and has performed around the world. Hanneke will be joined by cellist Mike Block and guitarist Christopher Lewis.



7pm Sunday, February 12: \$12^{adv}/\$15 day of show



MICHAEL ROSS QUARTET

feat. Fred Johnson

A fixture on the Florida jazz scene, one of the pivotal moments in his career occurred in the early 1980s when he joined, and soon led, *Liquid Bebop*, one of the most formidable jazz units to ever call Tampa Bay area home. "Michael Ross possesses one of the FATTEST acoustic bass sounds you'll likely hear." —All About Jazz



8pm Friday, March 3: \$15^{adv}/\$20 day of show

THE OUTSIDE TRACK



A Pan Celtic group that play high energy traditional music with virtuosity and passion, featuring flute, fiddle, accordion, harp, whistles, guitar, vocals and even step dance! Members of the group include Ailie Robertson who has won a Live Ireland Music Award and was a BBC Radio Scotland Young Traditional Musician Finalist, and Fiona Black who was a winner of the BBC's Fame Academy. As a group they won 'Best Group' in the 2012 Live Ireland Music Award, a 'Tradition In Review' award, and were nominated for the 2013 MG Alba Scots Traditional Music Award. For their album *Flash Company*, they also won the German Radio Critics' Prize.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

TUESDAY, JAN 3. - Women's Organizing Meeting - 6pm - Fogartyville.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 4 – Sarasota Solar Co-operative – 10am - Florida House Institute.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 4 - Phosphate Mining: The Devastating News - 5:30-8pm - Fogartyville. Sierra Club Conservation Chair Andy Mele will speak.

THURSDAY, JAN. 5 – The Nation Group Meeting – 10am-12pm – Selby Library 2nd Floor Community Room - Discussion topic: The Decline of Decency.

THURSDAY, JAN. 5 – Ask the ACLU About Immigration – 6:30-7:30pm – Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Court. FREE

THURSDAY, JAN. 5 – Nation Group: Change topic to : Post-Election Briefing and What Now?

FRIDAY, JAN. 6 – Freethinkers Speakers Series - UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, FREE. Speaker will be David Houle, Co-Author of This Spaceship Earth.

MONDAY, JAN. 9 - Occupy Bradenton GENERAL ASSEMBLY - 7pm - UU, 322 15th St. West , Bradenton

TUESDAY, JAN. 10 – Letter Writing at Fogartyville - 5pm - Want to help fight the Sabal Trail Pipeline? Come out for an evening of group letter writing - we'll have letter templates and materials - just bring yourself, a pen, and your enthusiasm!

TUESDAY, JAN. 10 – The Future of Labor Panel Discussion, 7-9pm – Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct, FREE.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 11. - General meeting for Stand Up Fight Back SRQ. 5:30-8pm. We discuss future events, causes and protests. Contact Mark at 941-536-5900 for more info.

THURSDAY, JAN. 12– Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Club General Meeting – 7pm – Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. Of the Arts. Bring a snack to share. Topic: The Impacts of Phosphate Mining with Ande Mele.

SATURDAY, JAN. 14 - Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting A: 12:30 pm, North Sarasota Public Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd.

MONDAY, JAN. 16 – Occupy Bradenton Film Screening & Discussion – 6:30pm - UU, 322 15th St. West. 'When Justice Isn't Just' explores police violence against people of color.

TUESDAY, JAN. 17, Stop Sabal Trail Fundraiser - 6-9pm - Fogartyville. Tickets \$10-\$20 (\$20 includes dinner). Sponsored by Stand Up Fight Back SRQ. Opening act TBA.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 18 – Sarasota Solar Cooperative Informational Session -1 pm - Venice Community Center

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 18 – Democratic Progressive Caucus Meeting at 6:30 – Democratic Headquarters, 7358 S. Tamiami Trl.

THURSDAY, JAN. 19 – Sarasota Solar Cooperative Informational Session - 5 pm - Selby Library

THURSDAY, JAN. 19 – Florida Veterans for Common Sense General Meeting. Waldemere Fire Station, 2070 Waldemere St.

FRIDAY, JAN. 20 – Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting B: 1:30pm, Unitarian Universalist Church of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road

SATURDAY, JAN. 21 – Morning Reflective Walk - \$10 donation. Join us for a morning of reflection in nature. This will be a time to reflect on who you are and what your life is speaking to and through you Your will need paper, writing instrument, water and any needed snacks. Group size limited. Reserve with Bill Lewis at billatpeac@gmail.com

SATURDAY, JAN. 21 – Women's March on Washington Rally, 12-4pm – Meet at the Sailor Statue downtown for a march across the bridge. Bring signs.

TUESDAY, JAN. 24 – Mark Weston, author of The Runner-Up Presidency - 7pm – Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct. The Runner-Up Presidency combines an in-depth political and numerical analysis of America's electoral system with rich narratives of our six strangest elections.

THURSDAY, JAN. 26 – Mosaic Mine Expansion before Manatee County Commission – Contact Ande Mele for more information:

SATURDAY, JAN. 28 – Local Summit – 1-4pm – Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct. Local community organizations will gather to determine priorities, enhance communication and cooperation.

SATURDAY, JAN 28 – Florida Veterans for Common Sense Annual Thomas Paine Birthday Party

TUESDAY, JAN 31 – Women's Organizing Event – 6pm – Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct., FREE. A follow-up gathering for women involved in the March on Washington.

THURSDAY, FEB. 2 – Nation Group Meeting – 10am-12pm – Selby Library.

THURSDAY, FEB. 2 - ACLU Presents "Discrimination, Registries & Surveillance in America" - 6:30pm - Selby Library.

THURSDAY FEB. 2 - Film: Legalize Democracy - UU Congregation of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road, 7-8:30pm

FRIDAY, FEB. 3 - Freethinkers Speakers Series – 10am - UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, FREE . James Livingston, Research Physicist, Author & Senior Lecturer Emeritus for the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at MIT. His topic will be the origin of life on Earth.

TUESDAY, FEB. 7 - Black Lives Matter with Ruth Beltran –5:30-8pm - Fogartyville. Sponsored by Stand Up Fight Back SRQ. Potluck, bring a dish to share.

THURSDAY, FEB. 9 - Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Club General Meeting – 7pm - Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. Of the Arts. Bring a snack to share.

SATURDAY, FEB. 11 - Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting A: 12:30 pm, North Sarasota Public Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd

TUESDAY, FEB. 14 – Love Your Local Activists – 6pm. Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct. An appreciation event for local activists.

THURSDAY, FEB. 16 – Florida Veterans for Common Sense General Meeting.

Waldemere Fire Station, 2070 Waldemere St.

FRIDAY, FEB. 17 – Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting B: 1:30pm, Unitarian Universalist Church of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road.

SATURDAY, FEB. 18 - VDAY: The Power of Love - 6pm - Fogartyville.

TUESDAY, FEB. 21 The War on Drugs? Or War on Addicts? (Part 2) – Fogartyville - 5:30-8pm. A diverse panel discussion followed by Q&A. Potluck, bring a dish to share.

FRIDAY, FEB. 24 - Sarasota Solar Cooperative Informational Session - 11 am - Twin Lakes Park.

TUESDAY, FEB. 28 – Women's Conversation Circles – 6pm. Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct. Bring snacks to share.

THURSDAY, MAR. 2 – Nation Group Meeting – 10am-12pm – Selby Library.

FRIDAY, MAR. 3 - Freethinkers Speakers Series - UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, FREE. Nancy Parrish, Founder, Co-Chair & CEO of Protect Our Defenders, which The New York Times wrote has "become the nation's pre-eminent advocacy group on behalf of victims of sexual assault in the military."

TUESDAY, MAR. 7 - Topic TBA (Check Stand Up Fight Back SRQ FaceBook page for updates) – Fogartyville - 5:30-8pm.

THURSDAY, MAR. 9 – Manatee-Sarasota Sierra Club General Meeting – 7pm - Sarasota Garden Club, 1131 Blvd. Of the Arts. Bring a snack to share.

SATURDAY, MAR. 11 - Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting A: 12:30 pm, North Sarasota Public Library, 2801 Newtown Blvd

TUESDAY, MAR. 14 – Focus on Education – 6pm – Fogartyville, 525 Kumquat Ct.

WEDNESDAY, MAR. 15 - General meeting for Stand Up Fight Back SRQ. 5:30-8pm. Contact Mark 941-536-5900 for more information.

THURSDAY, MAR. 16 - Florida Veterans for Common Sense General Meeting. Waldemere Fire Station, 2070 Waldemere St.

FRIDAY, MAR. 17 - Freethinkers Speakers Series - Sherry H. Penny, Author & Professor of Leadership in the College of Management at the University of Massachusetts Boston - UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, FREE. Penny will speak on Still Stuck: Women in the 21st Century.

FRIDAY, MAR. 17 – Citizens Climate Lobby Meeting B: 1:30pm, Unitarian Universalist Church of Venice, 1971 Pinebrook Road

MONDAY, MAR. 20 – Michael Oppenheimer: The End of Climate As We Know It. \$10 adv/\$15 door. UU Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road.

TUESDAY, MAR. 21 The War on Drugs? Or War on Addicts (Part 3) - 5:30-8pm - Fogartyville. Sponsored by Stand Up Fight Back SRQ. Potluck, bring a dish to share.

SUNDAY, MAR. 25 - ACLU Annual Meeting - 2:30-4:30pm - Selby Library.

To contribute events or articles to the next edition of Critical Times, please email peacenter@gmail.com.



Occupy Bradenton

By JAIME CANFIELD

The Occupy Movement was born in September of 2011 in Zuccotti Park in the financial district of New York City. The main issues raised by Occupy Wall Street were

social and economic inequality, corruption and the undue influence of corporations on government—particularly from the financial services sector. The movement quickly spread around the country. In Bradenton, progressive-minded people started to demonstrate and hold general assemblies on the corner of Manatee Avenue and 43rd St West. Reactions were (and still are) mixed from the general public; about a third supporting our signs, a third showing us the middle finger, and a third not making eye contact - either shying away or just plain disconnected.

Beginning with around 25 participants, the core group is currently composed of eight-ten individuals. We moved our general assembly to the local UU in Bradenton and have been meeting there ever since. We have protested

at County Commission meetings and various rallies in Manatee and Sarasota counties. We put on a play called “The Mock Trial of Goldman Sachs” and performed in three different venues in the surrounding communities. All of the opinions expressed in that play, written by Chris Hedges and Cornel West, have proven to be right on the mark.

In 2017 we will continue to offer Educational Seminars in partnership with the UU Social Justice group. We normally show progressive documentaries followed by discussion.

We are collectively shocked at the result of the presidential election and are groping for our next step. We meet on Monday evenings at the UU at 7 pm. For more information and for exact dates please contact Jaime Canfield at 941-704-7782.

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WEEKLY PROGRAM GUIDE

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
12 mid.	Global Village Syndicated	Beats, Rhymes & Life Radio DJ Cellus	Lumpytunes! Definitely Difficult Listening The Head Lump	Rayo Radio Ryan Larranaga	New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail	Open A.I.R. Matt Dakan	
1 a.m.	Rootstock Radio						New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail
2 a.m.	MUSIC Automated playlist	Midnight Special Syndicated	Strange Currency Syndicated	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Trance on the Porch Syndicated	MUSIC automated playlist	
3 a.m.		Union Edge Syndicated	Truthdig Radio Syndicated	A Way With Words Syndicated	Economic Update Syndicated	Juke In the Back Syndicated	
4 a.m.							
5 a.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated		MUSIC Automated playlist
6 a.m.						FM in The A.M. Mr. Bill	
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	All Things Rock Gary O.	Soul School Troy Nichols	Blues to Bluegrass John Dickman	Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen	The Breakfast Bar William Stoner		A Love Supreme John Haupt
9 a.m.	No Nonsense Nutrition Eve Plews	Stratosphere Sarasota Paola Baez-Perez	Florida Caribe ALTERNATE WEEKS	Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors	The Detail Syndicated	Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris	Wings of the Heart Salima Rael & Carol Rosenbaum
10 a.m.	Music of the World Marco Ciceron	Latin Alternative Syndicated	Afro Cuban Jazz Frankie Piniero	Vibrational Journeys Perette Cannady	The Global Groove Pam Marwede	Complex Waveforms Mark Zampella	Alternative Radio Syndicated
11 a.m.							Law and Disorder Syndicated
NOON	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Democracy Now! Syndicated	Folk Alley Syndicated
1 p.m.	Thom Hartmann Syndicated	Background Briefing Ian Masters	Ralph Nader Radio Hour Syndicated	Richard Wolf's Economic Update Syndicated	The Monitor Syndicated	De MUSH Doctor's Caribbean Rhythms De MUSH Doctor	Dadee-O's Collector Corner Dadee-O
2 p.m.	Organic Grooves Ian	Second Wind Sean Green	Back Alley Blues Steve Arvey	Progressive Palace Phil G	Music Museum Ed Foster	Play It Again Marshinvitz David Smash	Eclectricity Susan Runyan
3 p.m.							
4 p.m.	From the Mountains & Beyond Tracy Hostetter, Annie	Tuesday Drive Home David Young	Hawaii Bob and Company	Dave's Day Off David Beaton	Ted's Head Ted	Friday Happy Hour Bartender Tommy D.	Bop & Beyond Bill Ewell
5 p.m.							Big Willy's Juke Joint Richard
6 p.m.	Capitol Update State News	Micro-Macro-Enviro-Radio	Shortwave Report	Guns & Butter or Letters To Washington	Jumping Mullet Local News	All Mixed Up Syndicated	Louisiana Gumbo Show Kid Red
7 p.m.	Free Speech Radio News	Public Affairs	TUC Radio		Counter Spin		
8 p.m.	Yesterday's Dead Today Mark Binder	Lost in the Root Cellar Roger & Peter	Aerial Boundaries Rich LaPenna	New & Blue Session Gary Inganamort	Adventures in Jazzland Mike Finly	INI Radio Haile Burke	Metropics Carlos Pagan
9 p.m.							
10 p.m.	Indigenous Sounds White Horse	Alternative Reality Alex & Steph	Global Village Syndicated	Indie Files Joel Jaffe	Spirit of Punk Jill Hoffman-Kowal	Velvet Radio Eussa Bello	Common Threads Fred Nowicki
11 p.m.						Dirty Ice Cream Truck Luke Rosebaro	
12 mid.	Beats, Rhymes & Life Radio DJ Cellus	Lumpytunes! Definitely Difficult Listening The Head Lump	Rayo Radio Ryan Larranaga	New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail	Open A.I.R. Matt Dakan	New Radio New College Becca, Noah, Gerina, Abigail	Global Village Syndicated

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Growing a Sustainable Community

By **DARRYL MCCOLLOUGH**

Transition Sarasota was founded in 2011 by Don Hall to serve Sarasota and Manatee counties as part of the worldwide Transition movement founded by Rob Hopkins. The mission of Transition Sarasota is to improve overall quality of life by building community, revitalizing our local food system, reducing dependence on fossil fuels, and strengthening our local economy.

Two programs stand out among Hall's many initiatives. First, the Suncoast Gleaning Program, which harvests local produce that would otherwise be unused. Working every Monday morning during the long Florida growing season, Transition Sarasota volunteers collect about 25,000 pounds of organic vegetables grown at Jessica's Organic Farm in north Sarasota County each year. These vegetables are then distributed throughout the region by All Faiths Food Bank.

Equally important is Eat Local Week, a major undertaking that takes place during the last week of October each year. Supported by a variety of local sponsors, Eat Local Week features more than 20 educational and recreational

events such as farm-to-table dinners at area restaurants; tours of school gardens, fruit tree groves, the Florida House Institute, and research facilities at Mote Marine Laboratory; classes in topics such as fermentation, wild plants and foraging, herbal medicine, and horticulture; and Geraldson Community Farm's popular Fall Harvest Fest. In 2016, the spectacularly successful Big Mama's Collard Green Fest in Newtown was initiated as an Eat Local Week event, and planning is already underway for next year's Fest. Each year, a different Eat Local Week Keynote Speaker has educated and inspired our local community.

During 2017, Transition Sarasota will continue these two unique programs and restart its popular Films for a Future series. Eight documentary films will be shown at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota.

Besides its own programs, Transition Sarasota also acts as a catalyst to other community action. It has partnered with many area businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits. Those interested in supporting Transition Sarasota as members, volunteers, or in leadership roles can find extensive information at the Transition Sarasota website: transitionsrq.org.



Volunteers gleaning at Jessica's Organic Farm

Crew Consciousness

By **BOB LEONARD**

This Spaceship Earth is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation headquartered in Sarasota, Florida—the state at the highest risk for sea level rise. This Spaceship Earth is a global organization whose mission is to overcome the challenges of climate change and re-establish a balanced relationship between humanity, the planet and the systems that sustain them. The key component of this effort is changing consciousness. The issues that confront us transcend personal, political, temporal and geographical boundaries. We must think differently about our actions and activities, so that we can act differently, which enables us to undo the harm we have done. Marshall McLuhan wrote, “There are no passengers on spaceship earth. We are all crew.”

The catalyst for the organization was the writing of This Spaceship Earth by David Houle and Tim Ramage. During the course of that project, it became clear that the rate of climate change, and its related events of extreme weather and sea level rise, were accelerating. A sense of urgency developed which required something more than the book to address. We searched for a clear metaphor to provide an immediate context for individuals to understand

the magnitude of challenges involved, rapidly gain insight into what to do, and create a sense of personal responsibility.

R. Buckminster Fuller had already created both the metaphor and the call to arms in Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth, which reminds us that earth is a spaceship with a finite amount of resources that cannot be resupplied. His later book Utopia or Oblivion: prospects for humanity illuminated the fork in the road that we have sped by. We see climate change as the path to oblivion for humanity and civilization. Never in human history has our species experienced the climate conditions that we currently face. The planet has, but we have not. This Spaceship Earth is not about saving the planet; it is about saving ourselves from ourselves. We use “This” because that is where we start the change – This Spaceship Earth, as it is now... so forgive the past and move toward a desired future.

Moving to this desired future requires comprehensive redesign. We must think holistically, from a planetary perspective and in a planetary context. Systems grow to a certain size and then have to redesign and reconfigure themselves to continue to maximize their efficiency and effectiveness. This Spaceship Earth is an on-the-front-line organization. Learn more at: www.thisspaceshipearth.org

Democracy at Work

By **STEPHEN PINNA**

The Democracy @ Work Tampa Bay Group is comprised of individuals from all walks of life who are united in a common belief that the need for a democratic society extends to our economic system. Some have been inspired by Richard Wolff's books and radio program; some got wind of a group seeking to promote economic democracy and hopped on board. Others are looking for ways of running a business that provide greater equality and prosperity for all involved.

Ultimately, we see ourselves as a growing interest group whose purpose is to popularize and support the growth of worker-owned cooperatives as a dominant form of business structure and as the gateway to a new economic system. Cooperatives function internally as mini-democracies where all the employees have equal say and ownership of the business itself. We believe that not only would this sort of structure reduce income inequality but it would also alleviate problems like pollution and outsourcing, as the ones running the business would be the friends and family of all those affected by its decisions.

This sounds like it's too good to be true but it actually exists in practice all over the world. It is especially prevalent in the Romagna region in Italy and the Mondragon region in Spain. In the US, major cities like New York, Philadelphia, and Oakland have all started initiatives to promote worker-owned cooperatives as ways to combat unemployment and low-wage job growth. In our Democracy @ Work group, we pay special attention to these and scrutinize them.

We've organized ourselves into two groups. The first is a “Development and Outreach” group that works on developing programming for education (like “What are Cooperatives”). At the same time, it establishes a point of contact for business owners and groups who are interested in starting a cooperative or transforming their current business into one.

Our second group is the “Education and Activism” group which looks at system critiques like those made by Richard Wolff and explores ways to popularize such thoughts. This group provides a space for those seeking to study and plan activism on a local level and help move our community in the direction of a fairer system.

If all this sounds great to you, we encourage you to contact us and get involved.

Our meetings are currently monthly in St. Petersburg, but we plan on having several in Sarasota as we get rolling. In the meantime, feel free to contact us at tampabay@democracyatwork.info and like our Facebook page www.facebook.com/dawtampabay for more information on our current projects. For information on the Democracy @ Work movement as a whole, check out <http://www.democracyatwork.info/> and don't forget to check your local radio station for Richard Wolff's Economic Update!





Citizens rally in support of single member districts.

Working for Fair Elections

Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections is a non-partisan grassroots organization that encourages citizens to become informed and active regarding issues critical to fair and verifiable elections, including election reform, campaign finance reform, media reform and redistricting. WE THE PEOPLE must be able to elect leaders who will serve the people, be accountable, and keep our democracy safe.

We educate the public about steps needed to attain these outcomes, and sponsor and support petition drives and other citizen initiatives to achieve these ends.

Formed in 2006, SAFE led the petition drive for paper ballots and audits of electronic ballot counts in Sarasota County to verify election machine accuracy. With the help of volunteers countywide, we gathered 14,500 petitions, put the referendum on the ballot, and passed it in November 2006 with a majority of voters of all political parties. After problems with paperless voting machines in several counties, Florida's Governor recommended that all Florida counties adopt paper ballots. After much opposition, the Florida legislature finally conceded. Now all Floridians have a check and balance voting system and auditable elections, but we still need a meaningful election-day audit to verify machine accuracy.

After the U.S. Supreme Court decision in Citizens United v. FEC January 21, 2010, SAFE realized we must address not only election reform, but media reform and campaign finance reform as well.

Not only did we actively support the Fair Districts Florida campaign to end gerrymandering in Florida, but we were early supporters of the national Move to Amend campaign to get the BIG MONEY out of politics, and not only overturn Citizens United, but establish that only human beings have constitutional rights and money is not speech. We continue to build support for Move to Amend, with the outstanding leadership of the Manasota Move to Amend Affiliate. <http://manasotamta.blogspot.com/> and <https://www.facebook.com/movetoamendmanasota/>

SAFE's current top local campaign is for single-member districts for County Commissioners and Charter Review Board members in Sarasota County. Please join us at www.keepdemocracysafe.org to stay on top of these issues, print out petitions, and help our petition-gathering efforts. With your help we can put the referendum for single-member districts on the ballot in 2017, and build support among citizens and organizations county-wide for Move to Amend.

Working to Prevent Gun Violence

By CAROL CONYNE RESCIGNO

The Sarasota chapter of the Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence is in its fifth year of advocating for safe-gun legislation in Florida and beyond through such means as securing background checks on all gun purchases and stopping "Bad Apple" dealers who sell most of the guns to criminals. Its mission nationally is "to create a safer America by cutting gun deaths in half by 2025" and to lead a national conversation about the real dangers of guns in the home and in our communities. Closer to home, the goal in 2017 is to pressure Florida legislators to deny those who would increase the danger of guns via such laws as Open Carry and Campus Carry. To that end, the Sarasota Brady chapter will be working with the Florida Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence, which was created after the Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando and includes more than 100 organizations around the state.

Sarasota's plans for the year, in addition to working with the Coalition, will include the following:

We are at the Bayfront between the Unconditional Surrender statue and Main Street every Thursday from 4 to 5 pm from September into May, encouraging passing motorists via signage to pay attention to gun issues. Some of the signs: Support Background Checks on all Gun Purchases; Love Your Child? Lock Up Your Guns. All like-minded people are invited to join us, every week or now and then. Just show up.



Protesting Whole Foods wetlands destruction

ANSWER Takes Action

By JULIANA MUSHEYEV

The ANSWER Coalition (Act Now to Stop War and End Racism) was founded just three days after the September 11th, 2001 attacks. We initiated the massive anti-war movement opposing the U.S. Invasion of Iraq, organizing protests of hundreds of thousands of people. Since then, ANSWER has developed branches all over the country, including our local branch, ANSWER Suncoast. Our mission is to resist racism, exploitation and war by building a mass movement to bring systemic change. We do this through political organizing, education, coalition building, and solidarity work.

OUR GOALS FOR 2017:

- Continue the #NatesList campaign for Transgender Student Rights in Sarasota Public Schools. #NatesList is a list of three demands created by transgender Pine View Alum and activist, Nate Quinn, ANSWER, and ALSO Youth. The Sarasota County School Board has refused to take a position on Nate's List. 75% of transgender students in the U.S. feel unsafe at school. Transgender students must be explicitly protected through the anti-discrimination policy. We will continue putting pressure on the school board, and to build stronger relationships with local LGBTQIA focused organizations so that they can guide our efforts.

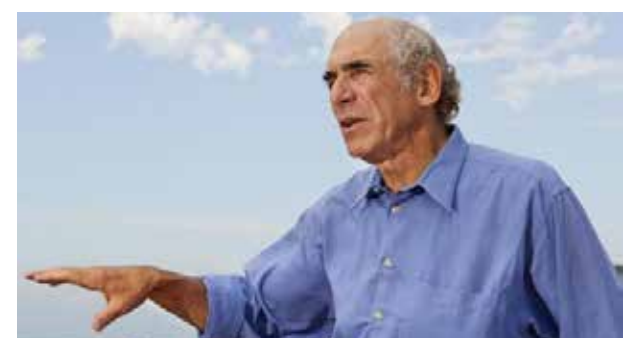
- Fight Donald Trump's racist program: protect immigrants, Muslims, people of color, and other marginalized communities, at home and abroad. We will not allow Trump's agenda to be normalized or accepted. We will build mass resistance to Trump's policies, create strategies to push for reforms, and educate ourselves and others.
- Stand up against police brutality and disproportionate policing. Push for police accountability. For the last three years, ANSWER has been working with Natasha Clemons, to get justice for her son, Rodney Mitchell, who was killed by the police during a traffic stop in 2011. We will continue the fight to get justice for Rodney, along with working closely with Black Lives Matter Manasota to stand up against disproportionate policing of Black and Brown people.
- Black people in Sarasota are arrested at three times the rate of white people. A recent report in the Herald Tribune showed that, locally, black people get longer sentences than white people for the same crime. We will be working in the coming year to examine what forms of accountability exist in the Sarasota Police Department, and how we can push for improved community-based oversight.
- Stand in solidarity with local, statewide, and nationwide environmental and climate justice movements. This includes #StopSabalTrail, #NoDAPL, and the mobilization against phosphate mining in Florida. Climate Change is a racial, economic and social justice issue. In January we will be actively opposing the expansion of phosphate mining by Mosaic in Manatee County.
- Stand for worker's rights, support the Fight of \$15's demand of \$15 and a union, and the demands of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. We have worked closely with and will continue to support the Fight for 15 Florida, as well as the CIW's call to boycott Wendy's for their refusal to sign the Fair Food Agreement.

If you would like to get involved with ANSWER Suncoast you can like our Facebook page or send us an email at suncoast@answercoalition.org.

Talking Climate

Plain-speaking and frequently outspoken, Michael Oppenheimer brings to Sarasota the sum of several decades of scientific inquiry into climate change. Once a Guggenheim Fellow, he focuses his research on the natural science and policy aspects of climate change and its impacts. Oppenheimer will speak at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota on Monday, March 20th at 7pm. Tickets are \$10 in advance/\$15 on the day of the event. Advance tickets are available at www.fogartyville.org.

Michael Oppenheimer is Professor of Geosciences and International Affairs at Princeton University. He is the Director of the Program in Science, Technology and Environmental Policy at Princeton's Woodrow Wilson School. He joined the Princeton faculty in 2002 after more than two decades with the Environmental Defense Fund, where he served as chief scientist and manager of the Climate and Air Program. Previously, he held the position of Atomic and Molecular Astrophysicist at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. He is co-editor of the journal Climatic Change and a long-time participant in the IPCC, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007.



Amendment 1: The Big Utility Showdown

By DIANE DESEMBERG

You can find Diane's regular blog at www.OccupyMySoapbox.com.

The largest utilities in Florida bankrolled Consumers for Smart Solar and Amendment 1. They want to maintain their monopoly control over energy in the State. Amendment 1 was looking to suppress competition from rooftop solar via constitutional ballot amendment. Thankfully, those in Sarasota and Manatee Counties as well as the rest of Florida saw through the ruse and voted it down on Election Day 2016. However, the story of Amendment 1 is a bit more complicated and Machiavellian, pitting the corporate and financial power of Big Utilities against the Power of the People.

As it stands now in Florida, only utilities can sell power to retail customers. Due to this restriction, landlords cannot sell power from solar panels to their tenants. It also effectively shuts down solar leasing. With leases, an outside company pays the high upfront cost of solar panels, and their customers sign long-term contracts to buy the power. Such leasing has made residential solar the fastest-growing part of the U.S. solar market. But it is simply not legal in Florida. Each utility has monopoly control of the sales and distribution of electricity.

For many years, both citizens and politicians have wanted to open up the utility monopolies to competition from solar companies. The Florida Center for Investigative Reporting interviewed Paige Kreegel, who was a State Representative back in 2009. He was chair of the state House's Committee on Energy. He considered himself a free-market Republican and he wanted to get government out of the way of the growing solar industry. But the rest of the Committee Members wouldn't touch solar energy and he found himself an outsider on the Energy Committee he chaired. It turns out that **Florida's utility companies have heavily funded Florida political campaigns - to the tune of \$12 million between 2010 and 2015.** Those donations included contributions to every member of the Florida Senate and House leadership and a whopping \$1.1 million to Governor Rick Scott's 2014 reelection campaign. According to State Sen. Jeff Brandes, "Here's how the power companies control the Legislature: they ask the chairman of committees to never meet on the issue."

To circumvent the lack of action in the Florida legislature, Floridians for Solar Choice attempted to place a constitutional amendment on the Florida ballot. They needed close to 700,000 petition signatures to get it on the ballot. With funding from the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, Floridians for Solar Choice hired a petition gathering firm. They collected

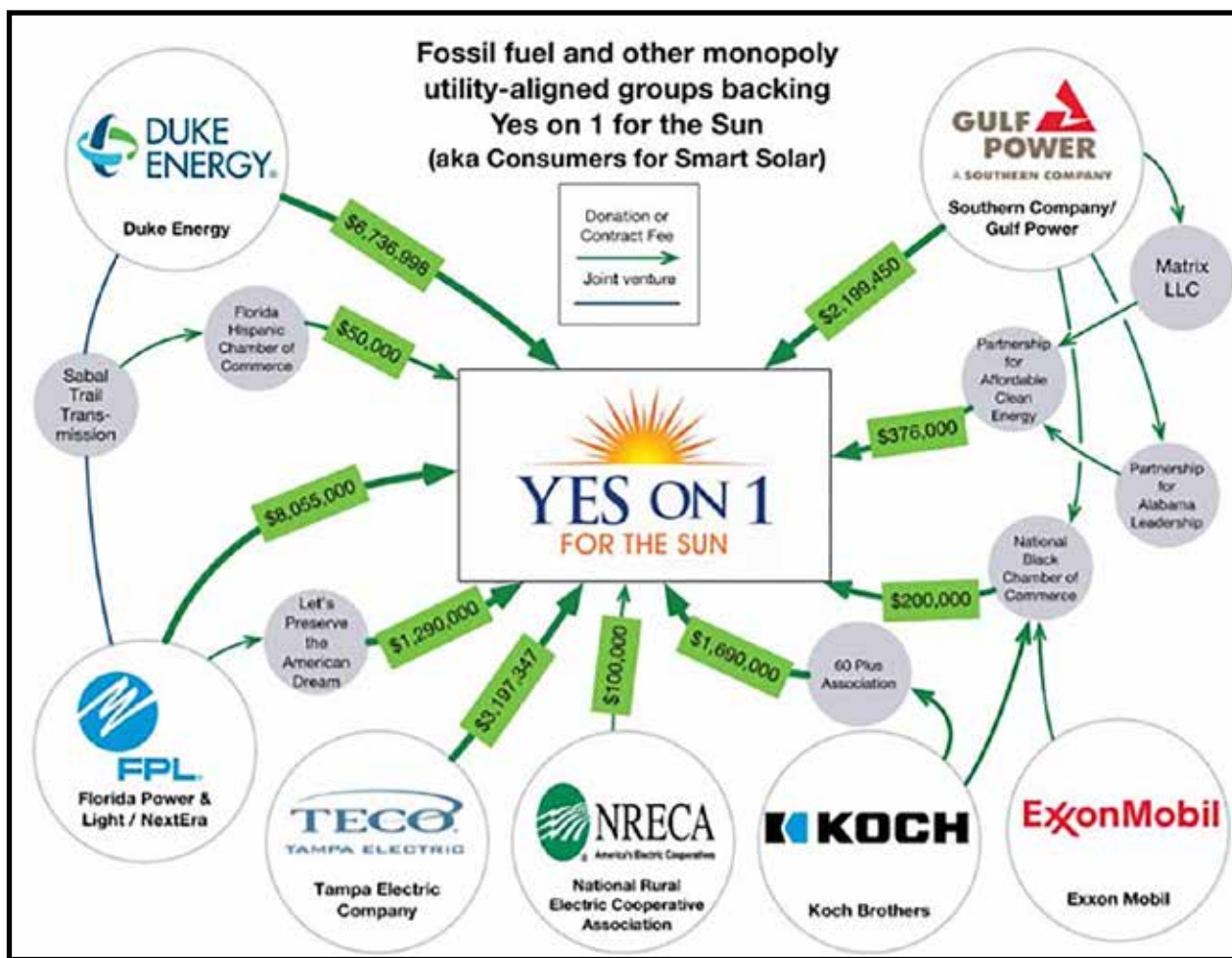
enough signatures to have the ballot wording reviewed by the Florida Supreme Court. That's when the monkey business started. Florida Attorney General, Pam Bondi, delayed sending the petition to the Florida Supreme Court for 30 days, the maximum allowed by law. This gave the Big Utilities time to ramp up their opposition briefs to fight the initiative in court.

Nonetheless, the wording of the Solar Choice initiative held up before the scrutiny of the Court. So the Big Utilities fired up a campaign of deception to confuse Florida voters about the initiative. The upshot was a competing amendment, the so-called Smart Solar amendment.

To explain the context for this competing initiative, Amendment 1, it might help to consider my roof. My roof is covered with solar panels. We have enough that we started producing slightly more electricity than we use. You may not be surprised to learn that FPL required us to maintain gobs of liability

requirements. So why did the largest utility companies in Florida spend over \$26 million on this amendment? The Amendment 1 provisions sounded pro-solar and pro-consumer, but in reality they were merely an attempt to protect the pro-monopoly status quo and bollocks up any future pro-solar attempts. There will be no rooftop solar revolution in Florida if the Big Utilities have anything to say about it.

It's going to be hard to follow the rest of the story because the protagonist, Floridians for Solar Choice, and the antagonist, Consumers for Smart Solar, sound like they are on the same side. Indeed, confusion and deception were an integral part of the utility-backed Smart Solar strategy. A leaked audio from Sal Nuzzo of the James Madison Institute speaking at the State Energy/Environment Leadership Summit spilled the beans about their strategy. He said that utilities created Amendment 1 as an act of "political jiu-jitsu" to "negate" the efforts of solar advocates.



Source: Energy and Policy Institute

insurance, FPL required us to install specific disconnect options to assure the safety of their workers, and the City required a permit and follow-up inspection. But you may be surprised to learn that we still get an electric bill from Florida Power & Light (FPL). Every month for many months, we have been paying \$9.42 to make use of the electrical grid, even though our net electricity use is less than zero. Monthly payments seem fair to me. We don't need a backup battery and FPL distributes our excess electricity to our next door neighbors, so FPL is providing a service. Is it a fair amount? I have no idea.

After hearing about my roof, it is immediately apparent that all of the so-called consumer protections provided by Amendment 1 are already in place in Florida. There is no need to clutter up Florida's constitution with language about allowing me to install solar equipment on my property. I can already do this. No need for the constitution to allow a charge for my use of the electric grid. FPL already charges me. No need for the constitution to require safe solar. FPL would not have allowed me to connect to the grid had I not followed their safety

At this point in the tale (2015), both the Solar Choice folks and the utility-backed Smart Solar folks were out collecting petitions. They had hired different firms to help gather signatures, but these firms had hired some of the same people to do the gathering. So one person was potentially gathering signatures for both petitions. And here's the kicker. When Solar Choice paid \$1/signature, utility-backed Smart Solar paid \$2. Then when Solar Choice upped their payments to \$2/signature, utility-backed Smart Solar upped theirs to \$4. If you were out collecting

signatures, which one would you ask people to sign first - the one that pays \$2 or the one that pays \$4. And in fact, that's exactly what folks on the street reported. On October 24, 2015, the Gainesville Sun published a letter from Greg Fussell,

"Recently as I was leaving the University of Florida's Health Science Center, a young man asked me to sign a petition for solar power. As I'm reading through the petition, I recognized that it's the Consumers for Smart Solar (CSS), a utility-sponsored petition, and not the Floridians for Smart Choice (FSC), which I prefer.

When I said I won't sign it, it's not my preference, he handed me the FSC petition. Now, I've never had that happen where one person had competing petitions. Consequently, I was compelled to ask why he handed me the CSS version first and not the FSC version. Wait for it — He said, "I get paid more for the CSS version."

I was disappointed to see how this played out, and as I watched, most that signed the petition signed the CSS utility-sponsored petition. I'm convinced it was because it was handed to them first."



Lynn Nilssen speaks at the No On 1 Press Conference

Julie Delegal in Jacksonville reported asking a “signature-collector straight up whether he was representing the utilities-backed amendment, he told me his was the one I wanted to sign, and emphasized the ‘pro-consumer’ aspects of the amendment. I didn’t sign, and I tore up my husband’s signature form before he could finish it.”

Despite the reported confusion between the two amendments, the Florida Supreme Court went ahead and permitted the wording of the utility-backed Smart Solar amendment. This was a dismal failure on the part of the Court. Their job is to ensure that such ballot amendments are not ambiguous. Justice Barbara Pariente, wrote in her dissent, “Let the pro-solar energy consumers beware.”

If two competing amendments appeared on voter ballots and they both looked pro-solar, the voters might be fooled into voting yes for both. But such a ballot was not meant to be. As of December 2015, the signature gathering company, PCI, was withholding 212,000 signed petitions. It was awaiting payment of expenses that the Solar Choice folks claimed were above what they had agreed to pay. Instead of getting signatures, the Solar Choice folks filed a lawsuit. And they missed the petition deadline for 2016. Floridians for Solar Choice would be aiming for the 2018 ballot. Meanwhile in November 2016, there would only be one amendment on the ballot - the utility backed Smart Solar amendment, now known as Amendment 1.

To make matters more confusing there was another pro-solar amendment on the August 2016 primary ballot. Amendment 4 allowed businesses the same property tax exemption for solar equipment, currently enjoyed by individuals. Most of us in Sarasota and Manatee Counties and across Florida support solar power and believe Florida, with its abundant sunshine, should be leading the way. Most of us would want to vote Yes on 4 in August and No on 1 in November. But that doesn’t make for a memorable campaign slogan.

While Florida’s pro-solar advocates were waiting for the August primary to wrap up, the utility-backed Smart Solar folks were racking up endorsements, but not in the traditional manner. According to the Energy and Policy Institute, the Big Utilities filtered money through non-profits in an attempt to make it appear like they had broad support. Five such groups are Let’s Preserve the American Dream, the 60 Plus Association, Partnership for Affordable Clean Energy, the National Black Chamber of Commerce, and the Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. The following chart, accurate as of October 28, shows the amounts flowing directly from the Big Utilities and indirectly, through their non-profit donation-intermediaries.

After Amendment 4 passed in August, a coalition of pro-solar activists rolled up their sleeves to defeat utility-backed Amendment 1. Local environmental groups headed by the Sierra Club banded together with solar contractors and Tea Party conservatives to educate the citizenry. In Sarasota, the call went out to hit popular

venues, such as farmer’s markets, with No-On-1 informational pamphlets. Twenty seven newspaper editorial boards came out in opposition to Amendment 1. Republican, Democrat, Libertarian, and Green Party groups came out against. When Early Voting started, Amendment 1 opponents talked to voters and handed out pamphlets at voting sites. And those red No-On-1 signs popped up all over town in very prominent spots. Such grassroots action took place in Sarasota and other hotspots across the state.

Meanwhile, Florida’s Big Utilities were worried. They donated additional millions to the campaign in order to run more television ads and send more slick mailers. On October 10th, the Florida Professional Firefighters endorsed the utility-backed Amendment 1. There was no vote by the affiliated firefighter membership; just an endorsement. Smart Solar went into overdrive featuring firefighters in hundreds of television ads implying that rooftop solar panels could be a fire hazard.

The firefighter’s endorsement must have been a backroom deal at the leadership level, because rank and file firefighters opposed the amendment. On November 4, the Florida Professional Firefighters reversed their endorsement. They said they had “communicated with hundreds, if not thousands, of firefighters over the last few weeks regarding their concerns with Amendment 1 and the real firefighter safety issues related to solar energy systems. It is clear to the elected Executive Board of this organization that our membership would prefer to pursue any future firefighter safety regulations related to the still developing alternative energy industry through legislative or rulemaking action, as opposed to a constitutional amendment that many believe to be misleading. We have requested that Consumers for Smart Solar stop broadcasting advertisements featuring firefighters and/or the logo of the Florida Professional Firefighters.”

Election Day served a sweet victory to those opposing Amendment 1. Anti-solar wording will not be inserted into the Florida Constitution (yet). Grassroots efforts won the day. But given the level of political involvement by Big Utilities, we may be confronted with a similar proposal down the road.

Let’s review that involvement. By October 28th, the Big Utilities had donated over \$26 million to the Consumers for Smart Solar campaign. There are a few additional things that galls me about this. They call themselves Consumers for Smart Solar. Here’s a question. How many of their donors were actually consumers? Twelve. Those 12 consumers donated a total of \$305. But even that is overblown, since 11 of those 12 consumers worked for or lived with consultants of Consumers for Smart Solar. That leaves one lone consumer. How much did that consumer donate? Ten dollars. Evidently as of October 28, of the \$26,118,915, only \$10 was collected from an actual unaffiliated consumer.

The second galling item revolves around the non-consumer donors to the campaign - the Big Utilities. In Florida, they are monopoly utilities.

That is to say, I can’t go pick a different electric company; I must buy from the one in my area. If I don’t like the political activity of my electric company, I am not free to choose another one. They can charge me to build a nuclear power plant and then not build it. Duke Energy did this with their Levy County plant. Duke Energy’s Florida ratepayers had no recourse; they had to stay with Duke Energy. That means that Florida utility ratepayers are footing the bill for this campaign. FPL claims that it is shareholders who pay these costs, but if I were a shareholder that wouldn’t sit well with me. And even so, where do shareholders derive such funds? Why from the ratepayers of course. Accounting sleight of hand might show that ratepayers did not fund this campaign, but that is mere chicanery.

Just to add a little jalapeno pepper juice to the wound, yesterday the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) approved a rate increase requested by my electric company, FPL, to the tune of \$811 million. In my ideal world, the PSC would have rejected the rate hike and told FPL to start planning for backup electric generation for the day when 75% of our electricity comes from renewable sources. They certainly have a lot to do and, in my ideal world, none of it would be political. But back to reality. After directly spending \$8 million on the failed anti-solar Amendment 1, they are now raising rates. And without responding to any of the issues raised by opponents, the PSC approved the rate hike unanimously. That is probably no coincidence. All of the members of the PSC were either appointed or reappointed by Governor Scott. And remember, Florida’s Big Utilities donated \$1.1 million to Governor Scott’s most recent reelection campaign.

There were some beautiful moments in this campaign. A highlight was the grassroots effort that eventually took down Amendment 1, despite its massive funding. But this type of effort takes us away from the positive work many of us want to be doing. Given the size of Big Utilities and the Big Money they are willing to distribute to every nook and cranny of our political system, everyday people’s concerns do not stand a chance. When people talk about wanting to get money out of our elections, Amendment 1 would serve as a prime example why. But campaign finance reform only goes so far. Florida’s Big Utilities have permeated the Governor’s office, the Public Service Commission, the Florida Legislature, non-profits that sound like they represent racial minorities and seniors, and perhaps even the Firefighter’s Union Leadership. They maneuvered around the Florida Supreme Court and ran television ads that shamelessly disregarded the truth about rooftop solar safety. Should they even be allowed to put a self-serving initiative on my ballot? Should they be allowed to charge me for such a campaign? Should they be allowed to work against sound environmental policies, by opposing solar energy and going against the wishes of the vast majority of Floridians? Citizens and legislators need to have the ability to take corporate power down a notch, if they see fit.

The story of Amendment 1 is just one data point. There are thousands of others. They all point to the difficulty we have maintaining our democracy, when corporations are persons, entitled by the U.S. Constitution to buy elections and run our government. Due to several U.S. Supreme Court rulings over the last 130 years, our democracy is under siege. We need a constitutional amendment explicitly stating that money is not speech and that corporations and other artificial entities do not have constitutional rights.

The next edition of *Critical Times* will hit the streets on April 1st. Articles/Event submissions may be sent to peacenter@gmail.com.