

## NCF and DEI Under Attack by DeSantis

BY NICKOLAS STEINIG,  
WSLR INTERN

Gov. DeSantis is in the midst of a political campaign to reform public education and excise “woke” culture through the removal of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs and the prohibition of teaching topics related to Black History and gender in public schools. His recent moves to leverage state power to reforge higher education in alignment with conservative ideology are matched by similar political efforts unfolding across the country—an effort that has received strong support from a consortium of conservative financial interests. Florida is among 17 states that have enacted legislation restricting the teaching of race.

In the latest chapter of this saga, DeSantis appointed 7 new conservative members to the Board of Trustees at the Sarasota-based liberal arts school the New College of Florida, all of which have so far appeared willing to enact the governor's political directives. The first moves of the board

were to terminate the college's sitting president and hire the former Republican speaker of the house as interim president. Richard Corcoran is being paid an annual salary of \$699,000—more than double what his predecessor was paid, and more than three times higher than what the state allows an administrator to be paid using tax dollars. When accounting for additional housing and automobile benefits, that number comes in at just under a million dollars. As such, the school is planning to pull from the non-discretionary dollars donated through the school's foundation to pay for the compensation package.

Even before Corcoran's eventual signing, the trustees chosen by the governor were already taking steps to remove DEI programs from the college. These programs are meant to promote



New College Students attaching streamers to the “Four Winds” sculpture in ACE Plaza during the Feb. 26 walkout. The streamers are meant to signify darkness encroaching on the school. Photo by Nic Steinig.

fair treatment to, and participation from, populations that have been historically under-represented. Among the most visible forerunners of the conservative deployment to remove these programs was Trustee Christopher Rufo. As a

*Continued on page 11*

## MHI Advocates for Environmental Justice

BY ALEX ANDRADE, SCHOLAR AT  
THE MULTICULTURAL HEALTH  
INSTITUTE

A coalition of local environmental advocates are working together to make improvements to the Dr. Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. Memorial Park, located adjacent to the Whitaker Bayou, in Newtown. Changes include the addition of a kayak launch, lighting upgrades (LEDs), and a new walkway. The permitting process is already in place and construction is expected to begin this year. The plans are the result of ongoing community assessments, community input and collaboration to create an interactive space and destination for visitors to enjoy the outdoors.

These changes arise from years of environmental research and advocacy, both locally and around the nation. In 2016, the 34234 zip code, which includes Newtown, had more emergency room visits due to asthma than any other area of Sarasota county. The Multicultural Health Institute, located in Newtown, helped to form the Newtown Health Disparities and

Environment Collaborative, an advocacy group addressing concerns about the health effects of air and water pollution. The group compiled public health data and conducted surveys on the presence and impact of air pollution. The Collaborative has raised community and government awareness about issues such as the fugitive dust emitted from industrial facilities located across from Booker High School.



MHI Scholars Julian Melchor, Stassi Kiouisis, Sarah Kerby, Program Director Rebekah Prieto, and Safekeeper Darlene Brown at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Park during the January 2023 Clean-Up.

According to researchers at the Environmental Protection Agency's Center for Air, Climate, and Energy Solutions, people of color across all income levels are disproportionately exposed to fine particulate matter (PM2.5). PM2.5 is a regulated air pollutant that can enter the lungs or bloodstream and lead to lung and throat irritation, trouble breathing, lung cancer, and neurocognitive effects. There still is not a clear understanding why North Sarasota asthma rates are higher, nor is it completely confirmed what pollutants are contained in Whitaker Bayou. However, preliminary analyses revealed dangerously high levels of arsenic, aluminum, copper, iron, lead, and zinc. These toxins, combined with recurring peaks of red tide in the Gulf, have been linked to both negative respiratory and neurological impacts. In an effort to reduce health disparities in Newtown, MHI has advocated for positive

changes in the local environment, including increased data monitoring, and raised awareness about the adverse impacts in North Sarasota.

The MHI will host an event focused on improving the local environment and its impact on health on April 24 and 25. Participants will learn about protecting the environment, engage in community conversations, and gain insight into what can be done to improve the area.

Events kick-off at 6pm on Monday, April 24 with an exclusive screening of *Dark Waters* at Fogartyville. The film chronicles New College alumnus and environmental attorney **Rob Bilott's** successful lawsuit against the multinational chemical company, DuPont. Bilott uncovered a connection between unexplained illnesses and deaths after exposure to damaging chemicals. Mark Ruffalo portrays Bilott in the film which received Best Feature Film at the 2020 Environmental Media Association Awards. Bilott will be attending the screening, and afterwards he will join in a discussion about protecting the environment from dangerous pollutants.

The next day, from 1-5pm, a panel of environmental experts, health advocates, philanthropic leaders, and community members will meet at the Powell Crosley Estates to discuss the local environment, community action and policies to help protect it. Bilott will join panelists **Justin Bloom** of the Suncoast Waterkeepers; three-time mayor of Sarasota, **Fredd Atkins**; **Christine Quigley**, public outreach assistant at the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program; and Director of Environmental Health, Emergency Preparedness, and Safety for the Sarasota Department of Health, **Tom Higginbotham**, in a conversation moderated by **Dr. Kameron Partridge Hodgens**, Director of Community Leadership at the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. MHI continues to promote changes that improve the health of vulnerable communities, advocating for individuals and their environment. For more information about MHI's work, and to register for the upcoming events, visit [www.the-mhi.org](http://www.the-mhi.org).

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# Sarasota Volunteers Transition Produce to Plates

BY JOYCE NORRIS

Transition Sarasota, a local non-profit organization, has started a new pilot program for collecting produce left over from farmers markets to give to local organizations to feed those in need.

**Did you know?** Forty percent of food produced in the United States is wasted and 38% of households in Sarasota are struggling to afford basic costs of living like food, rent, healthcare, and utilities? The US has a goal to reduce food waste by 50% by the year 2030, and now we are halfway into it. Feeding people using excess resources is a logical step. Transition Sarasota is working in Sarasota and Manatee counties to fill the hunger gap while creating community-driven solutions for a more connected and less wasteful local food system.

**How does it work?** Transition Sarasota volunteers box and pick up unsold, excess, or donated produce from local farmers markets and vendors. The produce is then distributed through local organizations that work with those experiencing food insecurity. Picking up product directly from markets, saves the produce from the compost heap. It can be used more quickly, providing fresh, healthy produce to people that would not otherwise be able to afford it.

**How much had been collected?** Through the generosity of market farm vendors like Mondragon Farms, Worden Farms, Aurora Fresh Produce, Honeyside Farms, Fresh Harvest, and Peach Pit Farm, Transition Sarasota has donated 3,500 pounds of fresh produce from farmers markets. That's over 10,600 plates of produce for hungry people! Food pantries and kitchens are typically oversaturated with packaged foods, so receiving freshly-harvested produce makes a big impact.

**Feeling Inspired?** Transition Sarasota also has a gleaning program. Over the past 13 years, volunteers with The Suncoast Gleaning Project have been going to local farms to harvest unwanted or excess produce to give to local food banks to feed those in need. For



*Transition Sarasota volunteers at the market with produce collected for redistribution.*

backyard tree owners, the Suncoast Fruit Rescue program is a great way to manage excess fruit and give back to the community. Owners register trees that produce more fruit than they need and Transition Sarasota volunteers help harvest and donate it to local food pantries. All of these programs contribute to solving the environmental problem of food waste. Volunteers, supporters, and fruit tree owners are always welcome!

**What's next?** Visit [Transitionsrq.org](https://www.transitionsrq.org) for more

information and see how you can donate your time or resources to help Transition Sarasota stop food waste and feed the community. By subscribing to their newsletter, you receive notification of all gleaning opportunities, events, and a monthly update of the many ways this organization is working toward local food equality and food waste awareness.

Transition Sarasota is committed to a vision of a sustainable, just, and thriving local food System. To learn more, visit <https://www.transitionsrq.org/>.



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# Joint Statement on Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism

At a time when the country is confronting deep-rooted racial inequity and having overdue conversations about our history, legislators in a number of states have moved to restrict teaching about oppression, race, and gender.

We strongly oppose these efforts to stifle education about racism and American history in schools, colleges, and universities. Along with more than seventy other organizations who have signed on to a statement authored by the AAUP, PEN America, the American Historical Association, and the Association of American Colleges & Universities, we affirm that Americans of all ages deserve nothing less than a free and open exchange about history and the forces that shape our world today. Read the joint statement below.

## Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism and American History

We, the undersigned associations and organizations, state our firm opposition to a spate of legislative proposals being introduced across the country that target academic lessons, presentations, and discussions of racism and related issues in American history in schools, colleges and universities. These efforts have taken varied shape in at least 20 states, but often the legislation aims to prohibit or impede the teaching and education of students concerning what are termed “divisive concepts.” These divisive concepts as defined in numerous bills are a litany of vague and indefinite buzzwords and phrases including, for example, “that any individual should feel or be made to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological or emotional distress on account of that individual's race or sex.” These legislative efforts are deeply troubling for numerous reasons.

First, these bills risk infringing on the right of faculty to teach and of students to learn. The clear goal of these efforts is to suppress teaching and

learning about the role of racism in the history of the United States. Purportedly, any examination of racism in this country's classrooms might cause some students “discomfort” because it is an uncomfortable and complicated subject. But the ideal of informed citizenship necessitates an educated public. Educators must provide an accurate view of the past in order to better prepare students for community participation and robust civic engagement. Suppressing or watering down discussion of “divisive concepts” in educational institutions deprives students of opportunities to

to learn and engage in critical thinking across differences and disagreements. These regulations constitute an inappropriate attempt to transfer responsibility for the evaluation of a curriculum and subject matter from educators to elected officials. The purpose of education is to serve the common good by promoting open inquiry and advancing human knowledge. Politicians in a democratic society should not manipulate public school curricula to advance partisan or ideological aims. In higher education, under principles of academic freedom that have been widely endorsed, professors are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject. Educators, not politicians, should make decisions about teaching and learning.

Knowledge of the past exists to serve the needs of the living. In the current context, this includes an honest reckoning with all aspects of that past. Americans of all ages deserve nothing less than a free and open exchange about history and the forces that shape our world today, an exchange that should take place inside the classroom as well as in the public realm generally. To ban the tools that enable those discussions is to deprive us all of the tools necessary for citizenship in the 21st century. A white-washed view of history cannot change what happened in the past. A free and open society depends on the unrestricted pursuit and dissemination of knowledge.



The Freedom to Write

discuss and foster solutions to social division and injustice. Legislation cannot erase “concepts” or history; it can, however, diminish educators’ ability to help students address facts in an honest and open environment capable of nourishing intellectual exploration. Educators owe students a clear-eyed, nuanced, and frank delivery of history so that they can learn, grow, and confront the issues of the day, not hew to some state-ordered ideology.

Second, these legislative efforts seek to substitute political mandates for the considered judgment of professional educators, hindering students’ ability

Signed,  
 American Association of University Professors  
 American Historical Association  
 Association of American Colleges & Universities  
 PEN America

NOTE: This statement was released on June 16, 2021.

Visit <https://www.aaup.org/news/joint-statement-efforts-restrict-education-about-racism#.ZBYd3y-B1bX> to see the other organizations that have signed on to this statement.

## This June 14, Remember Why We Have The Stars & Stripes

In 1777 the Congress adopted the flag we now have as the Official Flag of the USA. The date was June 14. By 1893 the day had become a popular day to celebrate the flag.

In 1916 President Wilson proclaimed the 14<sup>th</sup> as “Flag Day”. But it wasn’t until August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1949 that President Truman signed an Act of Congress making it “National Flag Day”.

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# A Push for Privatization

BY JOHANNES WERNER

Unprecedented education and healthcare privatization efforts are underway in Southwest Florida. Unlike the loud outcry against critical race theory, wokeness in public schools, masks, vaccines, and lockdowns, elected officials driving the shift from public to private are keeping quiet about it.

Sarasota School Board Chair Bridget Ziegler claimed ignorance on the subject during a February meeting after board member Tom Edwards made a motion to discuss HB-1. "HB ... What?" she asked. Ziegler is a close ally of Gov. Ron DeSantis and his education policies, and a national figurehead of "anti-woke" school policies. However, the otherwise outspoken Ziegler has been quiet about HB-1 and the privatization it triggers, even though the bill threatens to make a big dent in the public school budget.

same Sarasota school board meeting, board members voted 5-1 to approve the first pure for-profit school in the county. The Wellen Park Preparatory Academy in North Port is run by a national corporation. The school board needn't bother to vote on Wellen Park. A Florida law passed last year will soon shift the decision over for-profit projects from local school boards to the state education department.

## A key player in Sarasota

Meanwhile, a key player of school privatization recently landed in Sarasota, although in a position of higher education. Richard Corcoran, a former education secretary under Ron DeSantis, is the new interim President of New College of Florida. He is reported as saying that the public school system should be cut by one-third. During a speech at Hillsdale College, a private Christian school in Michigan, Corcoran suggested that once Florida manages to get \$1.5 million students to "cross the Rubicon" from public to private education, the loss of funding and forced consolidation would change public education so much even future Democratic governors couldn't change it back. Corcoran's ties to the education business run in his family: His brother is a lobbyist for a charter school management company, and his wife served as a board member of BCSI, a private-school initiative started by Hillsdale College.

## Next target: The public hospital

K-12 education is not the only privatization target. Local "medical freedom" activists are now trying to apply the school-board treatment to the biggest local healthcare institution. With support from Gen. Michael Flynn, three mask, vaccine and lockdown critics were elected to the Sarasota Public Hospital Board last fall. Board meetings now routinely feature testimony by aggrieved patients and family members, and the new board members demanded an internal investigation into Sarasota Memorial Hospital's pandemic protocols. The investigation found that the mortality rate at the Sarasota hospital was significantly better than the state and national average.

"It may be time to privatize this hospital," Flynn tweeted after the report came out.

Now, a Facebook page called "Sarasota Memorial Hospital - Transparency Project" is seeking support for an effort to strip the hospital of its taxation authority.

According to a Florida statute, the state legislature — which created the Sarasota County Public Hospital District in 1949 — is the ultimate arbiter over the



Hospital Board Meetings have been packed since several Medical Freedom activists were elected to the Board in 2022. Photo by Ryan Stanley.

special tax district. If a special district fails to comply with certain requirements, the "Uniform Special District Accountability Act" allows the governor to remove members of its board, and the legislature to "amend, merge, or dissolve" it.

Elected officials have yet to express support for such a drastic step, which would effectively privatize the public hospital. However, thanks to the Republican supermajority in Tallahassee, dissolution of the hospital's special taxation district could be within political reach over at least the next two years.

## Backlash ahead?

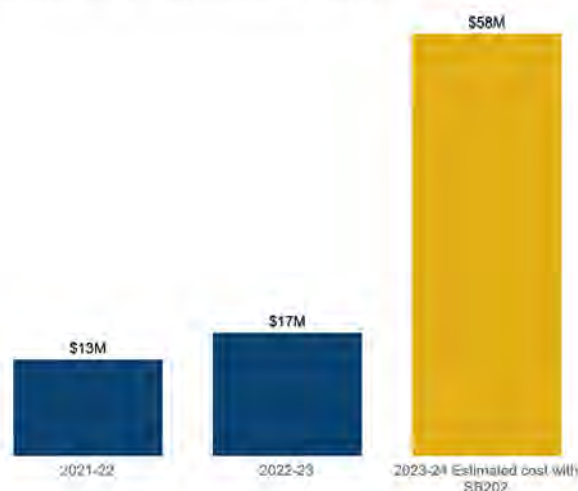
The education privatization movement "is a billionaire's movement" said Amy Frogge, a former member of the Nashville school board. "The privatization push is very well-developed by PR firms," Frogge told Salon.com "It's a billionaire's movement, and I believe that all the controversy about critical race theory and those issues are being stirred up in order to drive a 'failing schools' narrative."

But that's a difficult task. Public opinion continues to side with public schools and teachers (as well as with public hospitals and doctors and nurses). Local groups such as "Support Our Schools" and community members beginning to mobilize in support of the public hospital reflect this.

Opinions have shifted slightly towards the negative recently, but not more than in previous shifts. According to Gallup, 57% of Americans in 2022 believe the government should ensure health coverage for all, and — while they are concerned about cost — most Americans have high regard for the quality of their healthcare system. In regards to schools, 67% of Americans, have a "great deal", "quite a lot" or "some" confidence in public schools.

NOTE: In March, HB1 passed the Florida House (83-27) and the Senate (26-12) and headed to the Governor's desk.

Sarasota State Aid Rerouted through Vouchers



With the passage of HB1, Sarasota County schools may lose \$58 million in state funding in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Graphic courtesy of Florida Policy Institute.

At the February school board meeting, none of Edwards' four colleagues supported his motion and as of mid-March, the school board has yet to discuss the measure. HB-1, a top priority of the governor and legislative leaders, grants taxpayer-funded private-school vouchers of up to \$8,000 a year to every student in the state. Estimates of the actual cost vary wildly, but the bill is advancing quickly in Tallahassee. Skeptics believe that just in the first year, beginning this summer, \$4 billion in state funding would shift from public to private education — and that is a conservative estimate, if a pattern set by a similar Arizona law holds in Florida. In Sarasota County, public schools stand to lose \$60 million in state funding, according to the Education Law Center, a pro-public school think tank.

With HB-1, the governor and legislature are turning K-12 education into big business in Florida. During the

# Brady Continues the Fight to End Gun Violence

BY CAROL RESCIGNO

Sarasota's Brady chapter will continue its weekly rallies against gun violence every Thursday from 4 to 5 pm through April 6 before breaking for the summer.

These rallies, held at the southern end of the Bayfront parking lot, have been going on for close to a decade in the spring, fall and winter. Their purpose is to raise awareness about gun safety and all are welcome to join once, on and off or every time. Signs and Brady t-shirts are available when you get there.

A spring wrapup gathering will be held April 13 at 4pm in the Oasis Room of First Congregational Church, 1031 S Euclid Ave. (third building on the right after you enter the parking lot). You don't have to be a Brady member; come, meet people who care about this important issue and learn about Brady. The event is free and food will be provided.

To learn more about Brady Sarasota, reach us at [sarasota@bradyunited.org](mailto:sarasota@bradyunited.org).



# Corcoran's Pension Pay Day

BY CATHY ANTUNES

Ron DeSantis' appointment of Richard Corcoran to temporary President of New College of Florida is clearly part of his plan to advance an education culture war. DeSantis will use his unfolding battering of New College in his 2024 run for the White House. But putting Corcoran in the center of an autocratic take-down of New College may serve to focus public attention on corruption and failures that both DeSantis and Corcoran would like us all to ignore. Corcoran's failure and corruption regarding Jefferson County schools ought to be disqualifying for any subsequent leadership role in education. But Corcoran's epic Jefferson County failure on both ethical and educational fronts is being rewarded by DeSantis. Corcoran is slated to receive a lush \$1 million per year compensation package as New College President. Here's the kicker that no one is talking about: the impact on Richard Corcoran's pension from the State of Florida. Installing Corcoran as NCF President, with an exorbitant \$700K salary, means Floridians will be paying Corcoran a much higher pension for corrupt incompetence.

Richard Corcoran served as Florida's Speaker of the House from 2016-2018, and from 2019-2022 Corcoran was Florida's Education Commissioner. During this time, as both Speaker and Commissioner, Corcoran was an avid advocate for charter schools. Corcoran's wife, Ann, is a founder of a Pasco County charter school.

Home grown charter schools which are created and stewarded by a community can be excellent. We have a bunch of locally-created charters that work well in Sarasota. Corporate charter schools can be profit driven and work to line the pockets of affiliated companies and cronies. By being reckless with resources, corporate charters can drain school budgets by allocating funds for mercenary school building leases and unnecessary or unproductive educational products. Corporate charters cherry pick students, admitting high performers and leaving the difficult ones for the public schools to manage. With a student population skewed toward higher achievers, the outcomes of corporate charters may look superior. What happens when a corporate charter school must take all students - even lower achieving, difficult ones?

## Corcoran's 100% privatization of Jefferson County schools

Jefferson County has long been a school district with poor outcomes. As House Speaker, Richard Corcoran advocated for Jefferson County Schools to become the first school system in Florida entirely run by a charter school corporation. A believer that the private sector has the secret sauce to improve education, Corcoran promised through privatization, Jefferson County student outcomes would improve.

When it comes to litmus tests for educational excellence, third grade reading proficiency is often used as a definitive marker of success or failure. Richard Corcoran himself cited third grade reading proficiency as a critical marker for student success in his talk "Education is Freedom" given to a Hillsdale College audience.

In 2017, the corporate charter corporation Academica took over Jefferson County schools. According to the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA), in 2017 third grade reading proficiency for Jefferson County students was at 41%. Going by the name Somerset Academy, the corporation Academica ran Jefferson County schools through the end of the school year in 2022. In 2022, FSA results for Jefferson County third grade reading proficiency came in at 19%. So within five years, Corcoran's brain child, the Academica takeover of Jefferson County schools, tanked third grade reading proficiency, reducing the proportion of third graders who could read proficiently from 41% to 19%. The children used as guinea pigs for this political corporate charter experiment are paying a terrible price.

It's no wonder that Academica chose not to renew their contract with Jefferson County schools. No other corporate charters were interested in taking over Jefferson County Schools, either. Jefferson County's experience is evidence that when corporate charters have to take all children in

a school system, when they can't cherry pick their students, not only can privatization fail to deliver improvement for students, but privatization can actually make things much, much worse for them. Without the benefit of a cherry picked student population, Academica's incompetence was on display for the world to see. For that matter, so was Corcoran's.

Corcoran's Department of Education was to return control of Jefferson County schools back to the local school board. But meddling with Jefferson County Schools wasn't over.

## Bid Rigging a Consultant Contract

In the wake of Jefferson County Schools' worsened condition after five years of privatization, Corcoran chose to bypass the elected members of Jefferson County School Board to create a turnaround plan. Jefferson County School Board members were incensed that Corcoran was interceding in their budget and planning to use \$4 million dollars of Jefferson County Schools Federal Coronavirus Relief Funds on consultants instead of education and staffing.

The charter school corporation Academica had over \$15 million to run Jefferson County schools in 2021/22. Jefferson County school officials knew they would have to run the schools with much less - about \$8.5 million. They knew the district could not afford to spend millions in Federal coronavirus relief funds for consultants.

Corcoran was bulldozing the authority of local elected school board members, and he had a consultant in mind.

Trey Traviesa was a colleague of Corcoran's in the Florida Legislature as well as the private sector. Traviesa partnered with Corcoran and his wife in a business called Step to Success Inc. which was formed to provide "at-risk students the tools needed to succeed in kindergarten." Today Trey Traviesa is the CEO of MGT Consulting.

In November 2021 a Florida Department of Education employee was given specifications (aka specs) favorable to MGT and told to write a Request for Proposal (RFP) with the skewed specs. The RFP was issued and sent to 25 companies, allowing only one week for the firms to respond. MGT responded with a \$2.5 million bid. The only alternative proposal was submitted by Florida Department of Education deputies, which was scrutinized by the Inspector General's office. Ironically, Florida DOE bid submitters resigned, while Corcoran's role in MGT's bid escaped investigation by Florida's Inspector General.

After the bid rigging scandal became public in January 2022, Corcoran agreed not to use the Jefferson County Federal coronavirus relief funds on consultants. But he also imposed a requirement that Jefferson County Schools earn a "C" rating in 2022/23 in order to remain autonomous. Under Academica, in 2021/22, the district would have earned a "D" rating.

Corcoran wrote a letter to the Jefferson County Schools Superintendent, Edyie Tricquet, saying that the DOE would give control back to the local district. "While we at the Department are more than glad to provide you as much support as necessary, the long-deficient state of (the district) is of great concern for myself, the public and, most importantly, the students."

Corcoran said his "first, last and only priority has been to ensure the students of Jefferson County receive the high-quality education they deserve."

In March 2022, Corcoran announced that he would leave his position as Commissioner of Education at the end of April. Perhaps his departure shortly after the Jefferson County bid-rigging scandal reduced public pressure for a complete investigation by Florida's Inspector General into his actions regarding favoring MGT in the bid process.

## New College President

Richard Corcoran had been aiming to attain a position as a University President prior to his appointment by DeSantis as New College interim President. Corcoran was one of eight semi-final contenders for Florida State University President. His candidacy was brought to a halt when a letter

from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCC) to the FSU Board of Governors Chairman warned that if Corcoran didn't step down from his post as a Florida Board of Governors member, FSU's accreditation would be at risk. As a member of Florida's Board of Governors, Corcoran would potentially be voting on his own appointment as FSU President. Such an egregious conflict of interest was untenable to FSU's accreditation organization, SACSCC.

Now Corcoran has secured his appointment as interim New College President.

His salary and perks are impressive:

Base salary	\$699,000
Incentive Compensation (up to 15% of his base salary)	\$104,850
Housing Allowance	\$ 84,000
Car Allowance	\$ 12,000
Car Insurance included, unspecified amount* (for Corcoran and other approved drivers)	_____
Entertainment, Travel, Dues (prof assns, private clubs) included, unspecified amount includes "travel for Corcoran's spouse and children where attendance of same is in the best interests of NCF"	_____
Retirement Supplement*	\$104,850
Total	over \$1,004,700

\*To Be Funded by the New College Foundation

There's been so much attention on the salary, but to really understand the full picture, the full benefit, you have to appreciate the impact that compensation package has on Corcoran's pension.

Under the Florida pension system, for state employees like Corcoran enrolled before July 1, 2011, an employee's average salary for the last five years of service is used to calculate the employee's yearly pension payment, along with other factors like total years of service and class of service.

Before his appointment as New College President, Corcoran's three years as education commissioner at a salary of about \$280,000/year, and two years as speaker of the house at about \$30,000/year makes for an average of \$180,000/year. A significant basis for calculating his pension (a percentage of \$180,000/year based on years and class of service).

But the New College salary changes things dramatically. With one year of service as New College President (I'll use \$800,000/year - salary and incentive compensation), Corcoran's five year salary average jumps to \$334,000. If Corcoran stays on for two years, his five year average jumps to \$488,000. Three years and the five year average is \$592,000. The corresponding bump Corcoran's pension is robust - an 85% increase for just one year as New College President, a 171% for two years, 229% for three years. Bottom line, Floridians will be paying Corcoran much more when he retires, all due to his stint as New College President. And the longer Corcoran stays, the more we pay.

Such a rich payday for an Education Commissioner whose privatization ideology was so soundly and sadly shown to be a disaster for Jefferson County students doesn't add up. Some believe the state legislature's recent move to universal vouchers is being implemented to take the focus of the spectacular failure of Jefferson County's charter school privatization. One thing is certain: Jefferson County third graders who cannot read are paying the highest price for incompetent politicians' determination to trash public education.

NOTE: Florida's new Education Commissioner, Manny Diaz, worked for Academica.

# Celebrate National Poetry Month!

WSLR's Poets Unplugged series will be wrapping up on Saturday, April 8th. We'll get started a little earlier than usual because we'll be partnering with the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County to host the Sarasota Youth Poet Laureate and Program Ambassadors for a one-of-kind student open mic night at 7pm. Any students, ages 13-19, who are interested in performing at the student open mic MUST PRE-REGISTER as space is limited.

To register, email Samantha at [Communications@SarasotaArts.org](mailto:Communications@SarasotaArts.org). Upon registration, students will be asked to submit the poem or short story that they would like to perform. Please keep in mind that each student will only have about 5 mins. on stage.

Following the student open mic, stick around for our Featured poets for April - Onyx Hadwen, Tazz Shabazz and SpokenX. Local Spoken Word artist Melanie Lavender will be our host for the evening. The James Varnado Trio will close us out with some jazz & funk.

Tickets are only \$5 so get yours soon!



## wslr lp 96.5 fm

### WEEKLY PROGRAM GUIDE

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News · Public Affairs
World · Spiritual

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
12 mid.		Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	Eclectricity Ishmael Katz	All Mixed Up Syndicated	Dave Radio Dave Wilkens	In My Room Syndicated
1 a.m.	Deep Threes Syndicated					Synthelectico Syndicated	
2 a.m.	Music Automated playlist	Midnight Special Syndicated	Music Automated playlist	Upfront Soul Syndicated	Music Automated playlist		
3 a.m.							
4 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	Music Automated playlist
5 a.m.							
6 a.m.	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Background Briefing Ian Masters (Syndicated)	Donne Del Mondo Syndicated	Keeping Democracy Alive Syndicated
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.	Blues to Bluegrass John D.	Corduroy Sebastien Wegeng	Indie Psych Show Alecia Harper	Music with a Purpose Pat Monahan	Eclectic Blender Dave Pedersen	Latin Explosion Juan Montenegro	Saturday Morning Gospel Beat Jonah Ray
9 a.m.			ALTERNATE WEEKS				Interfaith Voices
10 a.m.	ArtBeat Kathleen Murray	Our Changing Environment J. Miller & J. Morris	Peace & Justice Report Tom Walker & Bob Connors	The Detail Cathy Antunes	Surreal News Lew Lorini & Steve Norris	TownTalk Tampa Bay	Manasota Arts
11 a.m.	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Democracy Now! Amy Goodman (Syndicated)	Radio Reset Sharon Preston-Folta	Law and Disorder Syndicated
NOON	Music of the World Marco Ciceron	Nuestra Musica Mariano	Afro Cuban Jazz Frankie Piniero	The Blue Groove Mark Gruder	Metropics Carlos Pagan	Complex Waveforms Mark Zampella	Folk Alley Elena See Syndicated
1 p.m.		ALTERNATE WEEKS				Juke In The Back Syndicated	
2 p.m.	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Thom Hartmann Show Syndicated	Attitude of Gratitude The GratiDude	Dadee-O's Collector's Corner Dadee-O
3 p.m.	Positive Friction John Haupt	Second Wind Seany G	Rhythm Revival Rev. Billy C Wirtz	Outta the Basement, On the Road Purple Mike	High Tide Susan Runyan	Everything But the Kitchen Sink Jazz Edition Art on the Air	Everything But the Kitchen Sink Art on the Air
4 p.m.				ALTERNATE WEEKS		Community Conversations Melanie Lavender	The Scenario Syndicated
5 p.m.	Music Museum Ed Foster	Synthetic Age JR	Indie-licious Sheila Jane	Jazz And More Brian Jones	Ted's Head Ted	Friday Happy Hour Bartender Tommy D.	
6 p.m.		ALTERNATE WEEKS				Afro Sonic Taxi Syndicated	
7 p.m.	Economic Update Richard Wolff	Ralph Nader Radio Syndicated	Ruthless Truth/Critical Times	Alternative Radio Syndicated	Critical Times Week in Review	Train To Skaville Syndicated	Discovery Road Louise Coogan
8 p.m.	Capitol Update State News		Capitol Update State News		Capitol Update State News	Global Village Syndicated	
9 p.m.	Yesterday's Dead Today Mark Binder	The Root Cellar Roger & Peter	Acoustic Waves James Hawkins	The Old Folk & Americana Festival	Velvet Radio Elissa Bello	Longboat Luau The Ho-dad	Ripper's Rarities Russ Yodice
10 p.m.	First Voices Syndicated	Bullwinkle's Corner Keith Winkle	Random Precision Alex	Music Is The Best Mark Markus			New Radio Ash H and Dadira
11 p.m.	Indigenous Nation Syndicated						Soul Kitchen Paul Junior
12 mid.	Down The Road Syndicated	Lumpytunes! The Head Lump, Rob Demperio	Eclectricity Ishmael Katz	All Mixed Up Syndicated	Dave Radio Dave Wilkens	In My Room Syndicated	New Radio Saloonee

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2PM 04/09 \$15

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**Lilly Jane Band**

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7PM 04/30 \$20/\$24

**BASSEL & THE SUPERNATURALS**  
neo-soul and funk



8PM 05/06 \$26/\$30

**ERIC ALEXANDER**  
WITH THE ALEX NAKHIMOVSKY TRIO  
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8PM 04/14 \$15/\$18

**JOHN RINELL'S Frank Sinatra Tribute**  
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7PM 04/16 \$22/\$27

**TREY HENSLEY AND ROB ICKES**

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7PM 05/09 \$26/\$30

**shayna steele**  
An electrifying vocalist combining a fusion on jazz, retro R&B and blues



8PM 05/12 \$15/\$18

**ABBY POSNER & BABYL**

Multi-instrumentalist Posner plays "genre fluid" music BABYL revives the essence of old-school piano-rock married with soul.



7PM 04/20 \$18/\$20

**BILL & The Belles**  
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8PM 04/21 \$25/\$28

**Celebrating MAHAVISHNU ORCHESTRA**

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8PM 04/22 Members - FREE!  
all others \$15adv/\$18door

**Earth Day Celebration with BIG NIGHT OUT**  
Latin, R&B and island dance music.



7PM 04/23 \$25/\$28

**Vance Gilbert**  
stunning artistry and soul, and contagious, unbridled joy



6PM 04/18

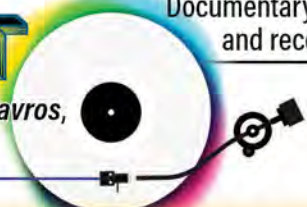
**HAZING**  
Documentary screening and reception



7PM-Midnight 04/28 \$10adv/\$15door

**DJ NIGHT**

Featuring **Austin van der Bleek, Michael Stavros, Markadakis and Shambala**



7:30PM 05/18 \$22/\$25

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8PM 05/20 \$15/\$18

**Passerine**

Shiny Things CD Release Party  
Join Sarasota's Amerikindgrass Folk outfit as they debut their 4th and newest collection of originals and folk deep-cuts



7PM 06/01 \$20/\$24

**MARK SCHATZ**  
on Bass+ Banjo (Nickel Creek, Bela Fleck+++)  
with award winning multi-instrumentalist **BRYAN MCDOWELL**  
*make for One Dynamic Acoustic Duo*  
and one half of Claire Lynch Band



8PM 06/09 \$30/\$33

**DONALD HARRISON JAZZ QUARTET**  
celebrated jazz saxophonist from New Orleans



Chef Richard's **Kumquat Kitchen** is serving dinners, desserts and snacks an hour before most of our shows

BY JUDE ZELZNAK

*Passionate, thoughtful and deeply reverent to music in its many forms, Brian Jones of “Jazz and More” opens up about the universal significance of musical connection and how he incorporates love into every second of his program.*

After moving to Sarasota in the summer of 2019, Brian Jones and his wife happened to attend a concert at Fogartyville Community Media and Arts Center. The eclecticism, casual energy and great music that define the venue made a positive impression on the couple, and they struck up a conversation with another patron who happened to be a programmer at WSLR. Jones’s curiosity, along with his passion for sharing and discovering music, inspired him to submit an application to WSLR to host a program of his own. “Jazz and More” hit the airwaves by January 2020. Now, three years later, Jones continues to uplift listeners’ drive time with “Jazz and More” every Wednesday from 4 to 6 p.m. on 96.5 FM.

Despite his bona fides as a jazz aficionado, Jones stresses that the “More” is just as important. “It is an eclectic mix of music that is grounded in jazz. It can be classic jazz, bebop, fusion, post-fusion, electronica,” he says. Classic and vintage rock, R&B, contemporary blues, and world music also make their way into his sets. “You’ll hear everything from Miles Davis and Charlie Parker to Jimi Hendrix, David Crosby, and Crosby, Stills & Nash.”

Having spent his career as a photographer and writer, Jones now works as an adjunct professor at Ringling College of Art and Design,

and brings his artistic eye to the creation of “Jazz and More” sets. In what he describes as an “organic, intense process,” he chooses music through the combination of active searching and natural, coincidental discovery, as one might do when seeking the perfect subject to photograph. Jones maintains the belief that the music he plays should uplift, inspire and epitomize love. “Love is the most important thing in the universe, and music represents the articulation of that,” he says. “It is a pure expression, maybe the purest expression of love.”

His love for and deep knowledge of jazz and its many iterations manifests in his dedication to showcasing artists who personify musical genius and genuine passion. Artists such as Samara Joy, Gary Clark Jr., Toby Lee and more bring to life the essence of love and talent that define “Jazz and More.”

Jones’s passion for community and connection is another important characteristic of his show. He creates thought-provoking playlists that are fun to listen to, but also highlight specific themes, emotions, or social and political happenings. “[My intention] is to provoke intense thought,” he says. “It can be spiritual in nature; it can be political. While I want people to relax into the groove, I also want their minds to be working and internalizing it in such a way that their spirits are elevated and their consciousness is raised.”

Jones’s perception of music relies on the concept of a “universal tone,” which he aims to embody in the music played on “Jazz and More.”



Host of ‘Jazz and More’ Brian Jones

“If you think about the universe, there is a communication, a tone, that echoes throughout,” he says. “You hear it in birds, in the language of dolphins and whales, in the intonations of human beings. In those tones there is energy without words. That’s the energy that I’m really trying to feel, sense, and share through the music I play.”

The energy expressed in the music played on “Jazz and More” also reflects the essence of family that Jones identifies within WSLR. “[I have a] holistic, reciprocal relationship with other programmers at WSLR. There’s an unspoken link or bond that makes me feel like I’m part of a family that’s providing something unique and special to the Sarasota area.” Jones has committed even more fully to his WSLR family by serving on the board of WSLR+Fogartyville.

Jones’s thoughtful and carefully inspired “Jazz and More” sets are sure to bring listeners these feelings of love, uniqueness and universal connection, while keeping them engaged with an ever-evolving catalog of artists, new and old, experimental and classic. Tune in to 96.5 FM during your Wednesday drive home from 4 to 6 p.m. to tap into the universal tone, relax into the groove, and more!

*“[I have a] holistic, reciprocal relationship with other programmers at WSLR. There’s an unspoken link or bond that makes me feel like I’m part of a family that’s providing something unique and special to the Sarasota area.”*

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# County Considers Cutting Mental Health Funding

BY ZACHARY FEHRINGER

Mental illness has caught the attention of elected officials in the past few years. Local, national, and international events such as the anxiety and isolation caused by COVID and the increase in mass shootings have taken their toll on the American psyche. Amid the mental malaise, Sarasota county commissioners met on March 8, to discuss gutting mental health funding.

Commissioner Michael Moran, once one of the loudest advocates for mental health funding on the county commission, enthusiastically supported the motion to create a mental health taxing district, as did Sarasota County residents. Seventy-nine percent of those surveyed in 2021 were in favor of the tax district. However, Moran withdrew support after learning the recommendations from the Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC) excluded funding for Teen Court of Sarasota. Teen Court of Sarasota's Chief Operating Officer is commissioner Moran's wife, Lori Moran.

Throughout the commission workshop, Moran suggested that BHAC was guilty of nepotism, giving money to organizations that could be linked to members of the committee. Moran claimed that he made multiple attempts to pull the "...fire alarm," to call attention to a conflict of interest, in which a BHAC official "had their fingers in both pies," influencing the scoring processes, while receiving thousands of dollars in funding from BHAC. *"Every layer that you put, and every distance you create from this board to applicants . . . those gaps are filled with people that have an agenda. Some of them have a serious agenda. And some of them have a financial interest. So this board needs to get tighter in that and make some tough decisions politically, some people need to be said no to and some people need to say yes to, and I don't think that's too complicated."*

## ORGANIZATIONS THAT MAY LOSE FUNDING

- \* Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Association, Inc.
- \* Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Suncoast, Inc.
- \* Boys & Girls Clubs of Sarasota and Desoto Counties, Inc
- \* Children First, Inc.
- \* Community Assisted & Supported Living, Inc (CASL)
- \* Florida Center for Early Childhood, Inc.
- \* Forty Carrots of Sarasota, Inc.
- \* Girls Inc of Sarasota County
- \* Jewish Family & Children's Services of the Suncoast
- \* The Loveland Center, Inc.
- \* NAMI - Sarasota & Manatee Counties
- \* Parenting Matters
- \* Safe Children Coalition, Inc.
- \* Sarasota Housing Funding Corp.
- \* Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County
- \* Women's Resource Center of Manatee, Inc.
- \* YMCA of Southwest Florida, Inc.

Regarding the relationship between himself and Teen Court of Sarasota, "I need to get an elephant out of the room, there's been some snarky comments about my wife and Teen Court. Let's be clear on that—there wasn't a penny that was going to Teen Court overhead . . . They had a three year fund through Florida Blue that ended, [it] was to subsidize that, to pay licensed people. Not one penny going to the operational overhead of the organization," said Moran.

BHAC explained it did not recommend funding Teen Court of Sarasota because their proposal didn't fit the needs identified, and the organization did not score well. Though Teen Court does offer sessions with licensed counselors, that's only a minor aspect of their operations. Their goal, according to their website, is to introduce area youth to activities and services that promote

feelings of self-esteem and self-improvement when they develop a healthy attitude toward authority. All organizational activities instill and teach the benefits of law-abiding citizenship and civic engagement. Their modus operandi is in the name, Teen Court, where first-offender youth are tried and sentenced by a jury of their young peers, rather than by a criminal court.

Moran's reaction to BHAC's funding recommendations? Defund many of the current county mental health programs. Moran argues that such programs are more in the realm of nonprofits. Taxpayer dollars should be going towards programs in one of three categories: counseling, basic human necessities such as food and shelter, and those which help reduce jail population and avoid incarceration, he said. Should Moran's proposal pass, organizations such as Children First, Safe Children Coalition, Sarasota Housing Funding Corporation, Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders Organization,

and Community Assisted & Supported Living Incorporated, stand to collectively lose nearly two million dollars in funding.

The commissioners regarded Moran's accusations of nepotism in measured terms, suggesting that such dramatic defunding would do more harm than good. The workshop was only a discussion, and no policy was passed. The County Commission will make the final budget recommendations in the coming weeks.

**NOTE:** The Next BHAC Meeting will be on Thursday, April 20, 2023 3 p.m.

There are currently two vacancies on the committee: one for a Family or Consumer Representative; one for a Managed Care/Insurance Representative. To apply to serve, visit: <https://www.scgov.net/government/advisory-councils/behavioral-health-advisory-council>

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# Coalition Mobilizes to Fight DeSantis' Censorship Agenda

On March 16th the Florida Education Association, the Florida Freedom to Read Project, and Families for Strong Public Schools (“petitioners”) filed a petition challenging the DeSantis administration’s actions that shutter classroom libraries and undermine public education. On behalf of teachers, librarians, students, and families, the petitioners are seeking an order holding the rules unlawful and directing the Florida Department of Education (“FLDOE”) to halt enforcement of these rules and to notify Florida schools that the rules exceed the FLDOE’s authority and will not be enforced. The petitioners’ challenge seeks to alleviate the burden on teachers and library staff, mitigate the harm on students and parents, and enable the reopening of classroom libraries across the state.

“Throughout Florida, teachers have been told to pack up books that were not provided by the school,” said Andrew Spar, president of the Florida Education Association. “In so many classrooms, most of the books have been purchased by the teacher. Teachers have hundreds or even thousands of books in their classroom library that are age appropriate, academically appropriate and content appropriate. With 50 percent of third graders not reading on grade level, we should expand access to books, not limit it. We are faced with no option other than to seek action on a wrongfully adopted rule that increases the work of teachers and limits access to reading for kids.”

Like the rest of DeSantis’ censorship agenda, these rules make it very costly and nearly impossible for teachers and librarians to do their jobs. These burdens obstruct a teacher’s ability to maintain materials to promote learning in their classroom libraries and impose burdens on library staff that may take years to overcome. As a result of the rules, teachers and school librarians or library media specialists have been compelled to self-censor out of fear of losing their job – or worse, being subjected to criminal allegations – simply for trying to provide a safe learning environment for all students. Classroom and school library shelves have been left barren, students are unable to find books reflective of a

diverse range of interests and from an inclusive list of voices, and parents have been silenced.

“Parents have the right to direct the education of their children, and this includes giving them the space to collaborate with their educators to provide additional reading materials in the classroom library,” said the Florida Freedom to Read Project. “The agency’s actions have attempted to create a divide between parents and educators. These new rules have removed our parental rights to allow our children to self-select their reading materials and created an unnecessary barrier to young, emerging readers. Parents, having not been heard in the board room, must now look to the law to get their power back.”

The DeSantis administration’s censoring of educators in Florida is part of the tsunami of anti-democratic book bans and attacks on public education happening in states and communities around the country.

“When state officials unlawfully attack teachers and librarians, ban books, and try to cancel history – endangering the ability of students in America to receive a quality education – we will use all legal tools at our disposal to fight back,” said Skye Perryman, president and CEO of Democracy Forward. “That’s exactly what we’ve done here in Florida. And it’s a battle we will fight in every state where lawmakers seek to suspend the freedom to read and silence and intimidate those who fight back.”



Many Manatee County teachers have covered their classroom libraries to make sure they are in compliance with the new Florida law requiring all library books to be approved by a certified media specialist. Making unvetted books available could lead to felony prosecution.



## Opinion: Private Education at Public Expense: From Bad to Worse

BY SALLY BUTZIN

Here we go again. The Florida Legislature is poised to create an expanded voucher program where every parent, regardless of income, can receive public money for private and religious education. HB1 also expands vouchers for homeschooling.

Public education is the bedrock of democracy. For 25 years the voucher system diverting public funds for private and religious education has chipped away at this bedrock. HB1 adds a sledgehammer.

Since the 19th century, American citizens have trusted in the covenant made between taxpayers and their government to use their money to benefit the welfare of the citizens, including maintaining an equitable system of free public education. Taxpayers have trusted that the government would provide oversight and accountability for the education of its youth.

Now for the first time in history we see taxpayer money being diverted to individual

persons through a private organization called Step Up for Students ([stepupforstudents.org](http://stepupforstudents.org)) with little or no transparency or accountability. We also see that voucher language has been manipulated to fool citizens. Here are some examples:

Vouchers are called “scholarships.” A more truthful term would be “scholar-gifts.” Students have not earned a scholarship in the traditional sense, but rather their parent is given a taxpayer gift to spend on a wide array of goods and services.

Education “Savings” Accounts should be called Education “Spending” Accounts. An ESA is essentially a debit card for many non-vetted purchases including home schooling.

The most egregious language twist is to call Step Up for Students a “charity.” No taxpayer has willingly donated their money to Step Up as they would for any actual charity such as the American Cancer Society. Corporations are not donating funds from their profits, but rather diverting taxes owed to the government to this private organization, now valued in the billions of dollars.

Finally, “parent rights” twists the intent of a democracy to assure the rights of all citizens for a secular school system that welcomes every student regardless of disabilities and gender preference. Private schools need not comply.

House Bill 1 is a top priority for the governor and Republican leaders. The bill’s sponsor, Rep. Kaylee Tuck, maintains that her bill is historic and transformational. She is correct.

This bill fundamentally transforms our public education system, which has always been the great equalizer. Despite dwindling funds and over-regulations, public schools continue to educate most of Florida’s children. Rather than working to improve public schools, the goal is to dismantle them brick by brick.

*Sally Butzin is immediate past President of League of Women Voters of Tallahassee, a retired educator and child advocate. She has been a champion for school choice and innovation with a level playing field that offers informed choice.*

# Opinion: It's Not Hard to Call it "Fascism"

**DALE ANDERSON – FOUNDER OF CHOOSE DEMOCRACY**

We must name it, in order to deal with it.

In 2017 Umair Haque, writing about fascism in America, quoted George Orwell who said, "The hardest thing to see is what's right in front of your nose."

This is the situation for millions of Americans as they watch the Republican Party continue to cripple our democracy using fascist politics. The reluctance to call what's happening a "fascist political movement" by political leaders, historians, the media, and the Democratic Party hinders our collective ability to respond appropriately to this mortal threat. Now is the time to call it out as fascism in every private or public opportunity we are provided.

Despite early indications of the fascist nature of Trump (Washington Post "How Fascist is Trump?" - 2016), major media outlets self-censored the use of the term fascist or fascism preferring the more "acceptable," less threatening (and more confusing) label of "populism". This has left the nation unprepared for the threat the GOP now poses for our democracy.

Opponents to the use of the word fascism express concern that the misapplication of the word "fascist" over the years has rendered it simply a generic insult. (Others counsel refrain from using the word as it will offend "non-fascist"

Republicans who don't agree with their MAGA members and may be amenable to withdrawing their support).

Although these concerns about the word fascism have some merit, they hardly outweigh the importance of comparing this political attack on our democracy to other historical fascist movements that ended democracies. No other word better describes the ideologies, tactics, and policies on display by the MAGA-GOP. The political hard work that pro-democracy groups must continually do for the public is to clarify the meaning of words such as democracy and fascism. Without ever mentioning the word fascism, we can hardly begin to explain it.

## A Theft from the Nation and Its Vulnerable Citizens

Umair Haque has been prolific in posting articles about the rise of fascism and implosion of capitalism in the United States. In 2017, he wrote, "fascism is best seen as a kind of theft from the nation. A deep and profound theft – the deepest theft of all. It proceeds as theft of rights, theft of norms and values, theft of democracy and theft of decency and humanity. And beyond that, the "In-Group" proceeds to rob those less powerful than them of . . . everything, without guilt or shame or fear. They steal their dignity, belonging, selfhood, work, social milieu, possessions, and lives."

Here in Florida, we are seeing such theft occurring right before our eyes. Within the past several legislative sessions, Republicans have proposed or passed laws that:

1. Attack, demean, and harm vulnerable minorities (particularly the LGBTQ community).
2. Ban books and whole categories of academic disciplines from schools and universities.
3. Criminalize women seeking basic reproductive healthcare.
4. Impose laws that suppress citizens' right to vote, assemble or protest.
5. Weaken protections for journalists / media reporting on state politicians and policies.
6. Use state power to punish businesses that publicly criticize state policies.

It's time to name what we are all seeing. It's Fascism. In private and in public we must refer to the Republican Party as a fascist political movement, and members supporting the party need to be recognized as fascist enablers. If you call it out and get pushback, simply list the actions taken by the Florida legislature above. Your argument will be compelling.

*Dr. Dale Anderson is a physician who has also served as the CEO of a large midwestern medical group practice and as a hospital executive in large health systems in New Mexico and Ohio.*

## NCF and DEI Under Attack by DeSantis

*continued from pg. 1*

senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Rufo has been widely credited for positioning critical race theory (CRT) as "the perfect villain" for furthering conservative politics. At the very first meeting of the board on Jan. 31, Rufo called for the dismantling of the college's Office of Outreach and Inclusive Excellence (OOIE) in a proposal called "Abolish DEI bureaucracies."

However, the OOIE office performed a variety of tasks necessary for the functioning of the institution that the trustees were not yet familiar with beyond just DEI work. Therefore, the trustees ordered staff to investigate to what extent DEI practices exist at the college and arrange for a vote to be held at the next session to remove them.

From a report compiled by the immediate Interim President assigned before Corcoran's arrival and presented to trustees on Feb. 28, the trustees learned that there were no DEI-based preferences practices in student admissions, faculty hiring, or administrative processes. The exception was a one-hour training session on diversity that only a fourth of faculty members had taken and a single staffer who oversaw DEI programs for students out of the four working at the OOIE.

"This is not a very impressive DEI bureaucracy," trustee member and student body president Grace Keenan commented at the meeting.

While Rufo admitted that DEI practices were less extensive than he initially expected, trustees moved forward with the plan "on principle." The one-hour training was removed and the OOIE was disbanded, with its members being transferred to other departments. The staffer who oversaw DEI-related work was fired without cause three days later. That staffer, who identifies as BIPOC and trans, is now considering a lawsuit for unjust and discriminatory termination.

At the same time, students, teachers, and parents across the state have been organizing demonstrations to challenge the educational reforms Gov. DeSantis is implementing and defend what they call educational freedom. On Feb. 26, a statewide walkout called "Stand For Freedom" was orchestrated by a coalition of activist groups and college students. This was then followed up by a larger rally held at New College before the Board of Trustees meeting on Feb. 28, where hundreds of students joined with community



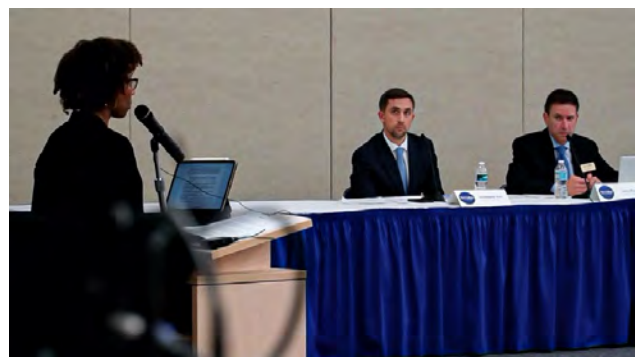
*New College students gathered outside of the Jane Bancroft Cook Library during a student walkout protesting actions taken by the Board of Trustees. The "Four Winds" sculpture is displayed on the right, adorned with dark streamers placed by students. Photo by Nic Steinig.*

members to protect academic freedom through protest.

Student organizers from New College have launched a GoFundMe campaign called "SaveNewCollege"

meant to support the creation of an umbrella organization dedicated to fighting for educational freedom and directly assisting at-risk students, faculty, and staff. As of the date of this publication, the GoFundMe has reached \$230,000, placing it \$20,000 away from hitting its next funding goal to "increase capacity with full-time staffing to launch a national grassroots organization."

For more information, visit [www.SaveNewCollege.org](http://www.SaveNewCollege.org).



*Chief Human Resources Officer Erica Worthy, Trustee Christopher Rufo, and Trustee Lance Karp at the Board of Trustees meeting held on Jan 31. Photo by Nic Steinig.*

When an organization or community is looking to make a change from the ground up, they will start at the grassroots. The grassroots is the place where things begin and grow.

It was certainly a grassroots effort to start and grow WSLR. We have come a long way in 17 years but we have never lost touch with our grassroots and feel it is more important now than ever to grow the grassroots and expand our impact in the community. The more people that are connected to us - as listeners, as volunteers, as programmers, as participants in our Fogartyville programming, as members - the greater our strength.

In the spring of 1970, Senator Gaylord Nelson created Earth Day as a way to force the environment onto the national agenda.

Twenty million Americans demonstrated in different U.S. cities, and in December 1970, Congress authorized the creation of a new federal agency to tackle environmental issues, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. No matter how dark things may seem, we must always remember that people do have the power to bring about change. We need to



work together, support each other, and continue to speak out against injustice. We need to not be afraid and to know that we are not alone.

There is magic and power in community radio. Since their beginnings in the US, grassroots radio stations have been a magnet for progressive causes and organizations, as well as political and artistic freedom. Exercising their First Amendment rights, programmers bring issues to the airwaves that are often misrepresented, if represented at all. Listeners are educated, uplifted, activated, enlightened, frustrated, surprised, or empowered by our programming. People of all ages become involved; excited about the fact that their community has its own radio station.

# GROWING THE GRASSROOTS AT WSLR + FOGARTYVILLE

**W**hen you tune in, you can recognize a grassroots community station. There is a *freshness* you'll not hear elsewhere due largely to the variety of voices and connections the station has with its community. The non-commercial nature of WSLR gives us independence uncommon in media controlled by commercial or corporate interests. We are Radio, Media, Entertainment + Community Fellowship that is **BY THE PEOPLE** right here in Sarasota. And **FOR THE PEOPLE**, anywhere in the WORLD. Just download our mobile APP!

WSLR+Fogartyville provides a place to try new things, express creativity, and connect with one another. We foster community by sponsoring events which bring community members and other non-profits together. WSLR provides a training ground for radio broadcasters, journalists, audio artists, and activists. As a media outlet we help to keep the public informed about bills and issues in national, state, and local government which directly affect them. Through our programming, the *Critical Times* newspaper and activist calendar, we encourage people to become more actively engaged in the community.

This *Earth Day* come out and engage with our community! Join us for a **FREE Community Celebration** from 4-7pm at Fogartyville. There'll be music by The Garbage-men, art, environmental education, native plant sales, vendors, and more. If you're a member, you can also join us for a **FREE evening concert** with seven-piece tropical style dance band *Big Night Out!*

● April 26 - May 2, 2023  
**WSLR +FOGARTYVILLE MEMBERSHIP DRIVE**  
**KICK OFF: APRIL 22, 4-10PM**  
**Earth Day Music and Arts Fest w/ Big Night Out**  
**FREE for Members!**

If you're not a Member, **JOIN US!** Call in during our Spring Membership Drive to support your favorite programming at 941-894-6469 or fill out the membership form and return it to: WSLR, P.O. Box 2540, Sarasota, FL 34230.

Sarasota Community Radio **96.5 WSLR** + Fogartyville *community media & arts center* Our impressive concert schedule, educational events, and expanded art offerings inspire creativity, fellowship and engagement – all made possible through your membership support.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS Valid for one year from date of gift	Student	Listener	Friend	Radioactivist	Supporter	Advocate	Partner	Concert Lover	Steward
Contribution Amount	\$15	\$40	\$60	\$96.50	\$120	\$500	\$1,000	\$2,500	\$5,000
Member Pricing on Event Tickets	1	1	2	2	4	8	All	All	All
Free Admission to Fogartyville Events, Valued up to \$25/ticket, 2 tickets/show max.				1	2	12	24	All	All
WSLR+Fogartyville Support Sticker	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊	🔊
Personalized Brick in the WSLR People's Patio								4"x8"	8"x8"
Private Party at Fogartyville for up to 100 people with live music and coffee, tea and soft drinks									🔊

Make your Membership **EVERGREEN** with a recurring Monthly Donation. Monthly donors receive special offers throughout the year.