

# The Delray Democrat\*

January– February 2018

## MESSAGE FROM JACKIE SINATRA, PRESIDENT DCDB

First, allow me to wish everyone a very happy new year! Thanks also to everyone who attended our holiday party and to all our new members! And a huge thank you to our volunteers who give generously of their time to the club! You're invaluable to us!

It is now 2018 and we Dems are in full swing! That's a good thing because we have our work cut out for us this coming year as we continue to combat the worst President, worst Cabinet, and worst Congress in the history of this country.

Prior to the passage of the trillion-dollar budget-busting transfer of wealth from working Americans to the obscenely rich, the media was largely focused on Trump's failure to pass any major legislation. This was a mistake. Not only was Neil Gorsuch confirmed to a stolen seat on the Supreme Court but Trump has nominated and the Senate has confirmed more federal judges to the lower appellate courts in his first year than any other administration, all of them extremely conservative and many of them unqualified.

In addition, Trump is dismantling regulations that

protect the environment, doing his best to destroy our healthcare system, and engaging in a foreign policy that minimizes America's role in the world, turns our allies against us and increases the likelihood of wars in the Korean Peninsula and the Mideast. Of course, that may even be his intention, in order to divert attention from the Mueller investigation and help to raise his historically puny approval ratings.

Then there's the stark polarization of our country, causing violence and hatred toward people of color, immigrants, LGBTQ communities, disabled Americans, Native peoples, women, yes and even the free press. It's nothing short of an overt war on our democracy. And, last, but not least, due to our president's cozy relationship, or great debt owed, to Putin, nothing has or will be done to safeguard our election process.

But this is bigger than Trump. If he were impeached tomorrow, Pence is no better, and maybe worse, as things will feel normal again and the media and folks may stop paying close attention. This is about the

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## **“IF YOU DON'T VOTE, YOU DON'T COUNT”**

**“If you don't vote, you don't count”** was both the creed and the epitaph of Vernon Ferdinand Dahmer, Sr., president of the Hattiesburg, Mississippi, NAACP, who was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan on January 10, 1966.

Democrats outnumber Republicans both locally and nationally, but we lose elections we should be winning easily because Republicans turn out in greater numbers. This is especially true in midterm elections.

If you don't vote, you dishonor the graves of the thousands who have died fighting for the franchise. Get registered if you're not already, make sure your friends are registered, and get out and get them out to vote.

Low turnout from Democrats last year gave Republicans the White House, but high turnout in Virginia gave Democrats the Governor's Mansion. And high turnout in Alabama prevented the election of Roy Moore in Alabama, a man as vile and bigoted as Donald Trump.

If we don't vote, we don't count, and when we don't get the vote out, we lose. But when we get the vote out, we win. It's as simple as that.

*Michael K. Cantwell*

**\*You don't need to live in Delray to read us or write for us. :)**

# Nothing to Brag About

*Mariane Kulick*

While Republicans are celebrating the passage of the tax bill much desired by their donors, the majority of Americans understand that there is nothing to celebrate.

It's easy to see why. The bill gives the vast majority of the benefits to the very, very wealthy (see the charts on p. 5) and to the big corporations, and it will add nearly \$1.5 trillion to the deficit. (Back when Obama was putting forth a stimulus package to save America from a Great Depression II, all we heard about from Republicans was how deficits are bad.)

It's worth noting that the modest tax cuts to the middle class will end in six years, while the immodest cuts to the wealthy are permanent. In fact, the majority of Americans making \$75,000 will actually be paying more taxes by 2027. This tax bill will hit hardest those in rural areas who voted for Trump. They were conned. This is revenue that is lost to the country. It is the money we need to govern with fairness to all.

The Republicans claim that the tax bill will “pay for itself” because the economy will be stimulated. This didn't happen with the Reagan or the Bush tax cuts, each of which helped explode the deficit (see “Republican Fairy Tales,” p. 3). Of course that doesn't bother Republicans, and in fact it's part of

their plan. They'll use the deficit to claim that we need to cut social spending.

Republicans such as our own Marco Rubio have openly said that they will have to cut Medicare and Medicaid. Senator Rubio seemed undisturbed at that possibility. It is worth considering, that according to an editorial in the New York Times, there is one sacred cow they will not cut. That is the Pentagon. To quote what they said, “...giving the Pentagon another huge increase defies common sense. The Pentagon already wastes about one in five of the taxpayer dollars it receives, according to a Pentagon-commissioned study.” So the Republicans will cut health care. They will cut education. They will cut funds for the disabled and the elderly in nursing homes. They will cut things like food stamps, but they will not cut the military.

So here we are, you and I, watching the inequality grow and all the pain that comes with it. No, Mr. Trump, America will not be great again, not with you as president, nor with the bunch of lackeys, calling themselves Republicans, beholden to their donors. Greatness comes with fairness and attention to the general good. It comes with good government that all could respect and admire, and maybe even trust.

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## What We're Reading

**John Nichols**, [\*If Trump's FCC Repeals Net Neutrality, Elites Will Rule the Internet—and the Future\*](#): “The media monopolists of the telecommunications industry hate net neutrality. They have worked for years to overturn guarantees of an open Internet because those guarantees get in their way of their profiteering.”

**Richard Kim**, [\*The GOP Tax Bill and the Crisis of American Democracy\*](#): “It just so happened that during the week that Republicans rammed a \$1.5 trillion tax bill through Congress without a single Democratic vote, Philip Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, was finishing up a fact-finding mission to the United States. . . .”

**Adam Hochschild**, [\*Ku Klux Klambakes\*](#) (reviewing two new books on the Klan): “All along, of course, even while

sticking to rhetoric of tolerance and inclusion, politicians have made winks and nods toward that dark river of which the Klan is a part. Richard Nixon had his Southern Strategy. Running for president in 1980, Ronald Reagan sent an unmistakable message by giving a speech about states' rights near Philadelphia, Mississippi. George H.W. Bush used the notorious Willie Horton campaign commercial. And now suddenly, it's no longer just winks and nods.”

**Sean Wilentz**, [\*The Damage Trump Has Done\*](#): “Despite its legislative setbacks of the past year, the presidency of Donald Trump has been stunningly effective in its core mission, the dismantling of modern American government as it has evolved since the Progressive Era of the early 20th Century.”

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GOP as a whole, willing to sell the American people out to their donors. It is not even covert anymore. They are engaged in a class war, and they are winning!

They are also engaged in a war on democracy, and they are winning this too – their control of state houses allows them to gerrymander state legislative as well as Congressional districts. We must fight back, and we need every body and every voice to win. We need to ensure that every single democratic voter gets to the polls or votes by mail (VBM). Besides the extremely important gubernatorial race and Senate race, we have many state local races to flip. In our House District #89, we have a chance to elect a Democrat! It is crucial that you vote, ensure all your friends and family vote, from governor on down to city commissioners and even school boards. NOTE: Municipal elections are March

13! We can take our country back! If you can invest some time or money, let us know. We need you! This is serious business, folks! Get involved!

Remember, our club meets every second Thursday of the month at 7pm at Pompey Park in Delray, 1101 NW 2nd Street, just a couple of blocks from Atlantic Avenue. Upcoming events include on 1/11, Meet the Candidates for City Commission and Mayor! Beyond that, we will offer presentations and discussions on Voter Suppression, Climate Change, Racism, and watch for a special evening with Professor Dr. Watson! Get on our mailing list for these and other opportunities, such as Phone Banking and Canvassing! This happens automatically when you become a member of the club! It's only \$20/individual and \$30/family. That's for one full year! The price of a small pizza! Why haven't you become a member? Call Mariane Kulick today at 561-243-8098!

## Republicans' Favorite Fairy Tales

*Michael K. Cantwell*

When George W. Bush was exploding the deficit with tax cuts for the rich, Dick Cheney infamously claimed, "Deficits don't matter, Reagan proved that."

Actually what Reagan proved is that deficits don't matter *when there's a Republican in the White House*. When there's a Democratic President, nothing matters more than the deficit -- just ask Bill Clinton or Barack Obama. That said, there's a kernel of truth in Cheney's lie, although surely it was not intentional. Deficits caused by Republicans don't matter *because we can always rely on Democrats to deal with them* and for ordinary Americans to pay for them.

Republicans' other favorite fairy tale is that tax cuts pay for themselves. They've been telling that one for 40 years. It's another lie, of course -- what tax cuts do is create deficits, something established by 40 years of empirical evidence.

Thus, during Ronald Reagan eight years in office, [the deficit tripled](#), from just under \$1 trillion to nearly \$3 trillion. No one worried about the deficit then.

And during George W. Bush's eight years in office, the deficit more than doubled, from slightly under \$6

trillion to [nearly](#) \$12 trillion. Of course, it wasn't the two Bush tax cuts alone - two undeclared wars and one unfunded Medicare expansion written by the Big Pharm helped W explode the federal debt.

Again, not a peep from Republicans . . . until Barack Obama took office during the worst economic crisis in nearly a century. Then all we heard about was that he was bankrupting the country.

The basis for the fairy tale that tax cuts pay for themselves is the claim that tax cuts create jobs. That is true, but what Republicans don't tell you -- and what the media doesn't tell you -- is that of all the measures government can undertake to create jobs, tax cuts to the wealthy are the **LEAST** effective.

That's the takeaway from the quarterly reports issued by the [Congressional Budget Office](#) that tracked Obama's Stimulus. And the kicker? The **BEST** job creators involved government spending in a variety of forms.

But Republicans don't really care about creating jobs for Americans. All they care about is giving more of your money to their sugar daddies.

# Democratic Leadership Needed on Advocating for a Sustainable Future

*Hal Stern*

On December 14 and 15, the Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Leadership Summit held its ninth annual meeting in Fort Lauderdale. The Summit is an annual conference held jointly by the four counties that comprise the Compact—Monroe, Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach. This year, 600 people attended the sold out conference. For some perspective, there were 50 participants at the first conference in 2007 (last year's summit was canceled because of Hurricane Matthew). This year's conference brought together business leaders, politicians, government officials and the engineering community to review current efforts to address climate change and sea level rise in our communities.

There were several takeaways from the Summit. All of the speakers recognized sea level rise as a major threat to Florida and Floridians. Business leaders are taking sea level rise into account in their business plans. Insurance companies and bond rating agencies are starting to adapt their pricing based on the fact that sea level is rising. Local elected officials spoke about how sea level rise has become an issue they are starting to address in terms of budgets and long range infrastructure planning. At this most basic level, all agreed that local governments do not have the financial resources or tax base to address these issues alone and that the state and federal governments need to be significantly more engaged in this process.

Our Party's platform calls for Environmental Justice for All Floridians. The platform calls for greater investment in renewables, opposition to fracking and any additional gas or oil pipelines through environmentally sensitive areas, increased recycling and moving away from the use of plastics. We need to take action to advance policies that will promote the Party's platform

and work to create a more sustainable future.

We should be advocating for a more aggressive environmental agenda on the local level. Municipal and County regulations need to take climate change and our responsibility for causing climate change into account. Palm Beach County and the municipalities in the County need to work more closely together and with our colleagues to the south to enact regulations and ordinances that promote sound environmental policies. The four Compact counties represent a significant portion of the State's population and economy. Our local leaders should explore how we can work better together to move the environmental agenda forward.

We need to be alert to what is happening in Tallahassee. The legislative session begins on January 8. There are several bills pending that will impact the environment both positively and negatively. We have seen how public opinion can shape the debate over important issues in Washington. We can have a similar impact in Tallahassee.

Finally, and most importantly, the most effective way to advance our Party's platform is to elect more Democrats to the State House and to elect Democrats as our next Governor, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Agriculture. And, of course, we need to re-elect Bill Nelson to the US Senate and defeat Republican members of Congress throughout Florida in order to stop the Trump Administration's efforts to eliminate environmental laws and regulations. Just today (January 4) the Trump Administration decided to permit offshore drilling off the Florida coast. These efforts to roll back 40 years of environmental progress will not stop unless we make it stop.

## You Must Remember This

In possibly the greatest Hollywood film ever made, there is a memorable exchange between Humphrey Bogart (as Rick Blaine, cynical owner of Rick's Café in Casablanca) and Paul Henreid (as Victor Laszlo, recent escapee from a German concentration camp and charismatic leader of the resistance to the Nazis):

*Rick: Don't you sometimes wonder if it's worth all this? I mean what you're fighting for.*

*Laszlo: You might as well question why we breathe. If we stop breathing, we'll die. If we stop fighting our enemies, the world will die.*

This is where we are today. If you feel discouraged or cynical as we fight to take the country remember Laszlo's words back, just remember this.

# Pictures Worth a Thousand Words

Michael K. Cantwell

The Republican tax bill well illustrates the contempt in which they hold ordinary Americans.

Republicans claim that their “tax cut” will benefit all Americans, but every analysis has concluded that a grossly disproportionate share of the money will flow to a tiny number of extremely wealthy Americans, with many middle class and poor households actually seeing their taxes increase after 2025.

Republicans know that, but believe most Americans are too stupid and/or ignorant to know that and thus will be seduced by a few extra bucks in their paychecks next year. Our job over the next 10 months is to show people how badly they’ve been ripped off and show Republicans how badly they miscalculated .

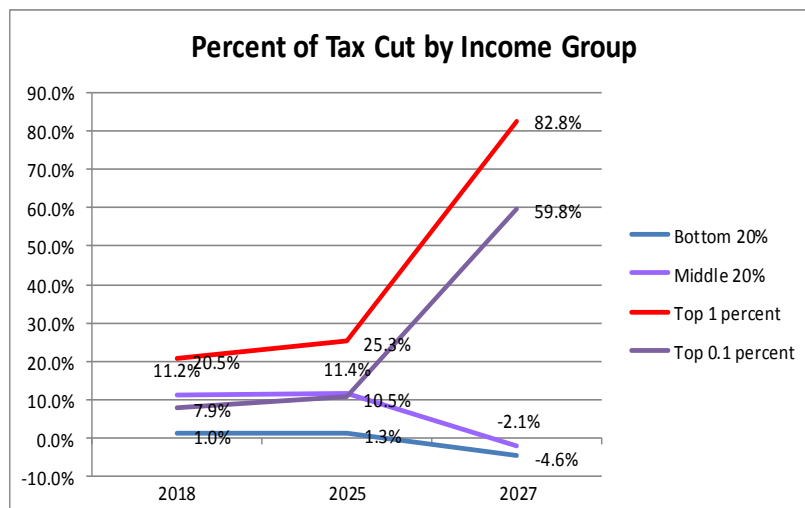
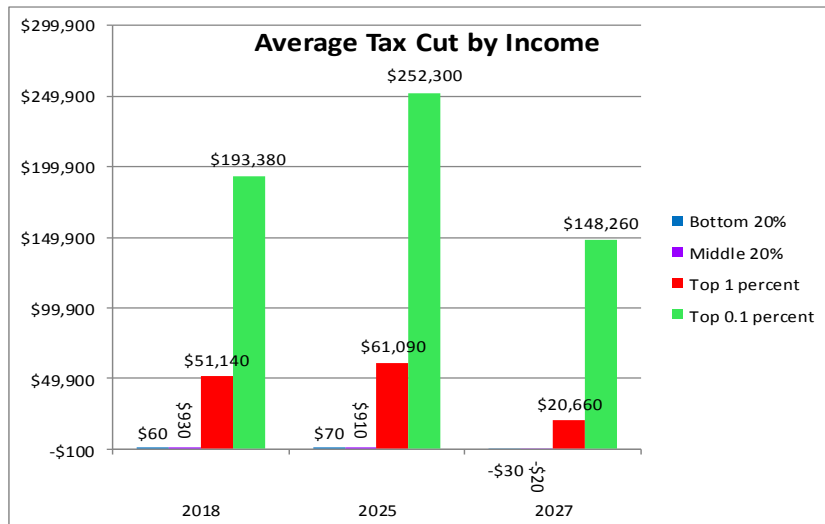
It’s already been widely reported, but the charts below, derived from a model created by the [Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center](#), help illustrate the scope of the theft

that has just taken place.

Thus, in the top chart, the average tax cut given to poor and middle class Americans is barely a blip. And after 2025, their taxes actually *increase*.

The bottom chart even better exposes this Republican bait and switch - look at how lines for the ultra-rich become almost vertical after 2025. Is there any reason other than insatiable greed that the 1% should be given 82.8% of the total tax cut - or that the top 0.1% should be given 59.8%

But the obscenity of giving nearly all of the tax cut to a tiny percentage of Americans is not the worst part of the bill -- it’s the hole (estimated to reach \$1.5 trillion) it will blow in the budget. Republicans admit that they intend to pay for that by cutting Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. And the only way to stop that is to take back Congress in November.



## Is It Time for a Maximum Wage Law?

*David Kulick*

Most of us support raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, which when adjusted for inflation is still below the original minimum wage law. Even so, that does put pressure on owners of a small number of fast food franchises because they cannot raise prices enough to offset the new wages. It even encourages large corporations to design robots that can reduce the number of workers by taking orders and preparing the food.

The real problem here is the concentration of wealth at the top and the failure of our capitalist system to provide a living wage. Rather than have to pass minimum wage laws, maybe we should tackle the wealth distribution inequality at the other end, and pass a maximum wage law. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the tax rate for the top bracket was over 90% and the economy was in very good shape.

What would a maximum wage law look like? A top tax rate of 95% would come very close to actually being a maximum wage law, and that is what we had, so perhaps that's all we need to do. However, the recent Republican tax bill accomplished exactly the opposite.

Is it fair to do this? Won't this stifle the desire to innovate and produce wealth? History shows that it doesn't, and the system is so skewed towards the wealthy that the income tax is just about the only way to move back towards some fairness. What is a reasonable amount of wealth that one person should be allowed to accumulate?

Are we really talking about an income tax, which is just about adding even more wealth to vast fortunes, or are we talking about a maximum wealth law? I think the latter. I think that things have already gone too far, and that it's time to seriously face the issue of some people having staggering fortunes while too many people lack sufficient food.

Wealth redistribution is a difficult subject, and perhaps it's best to stick with a maximum wage law. However, as we have just seen, the vast wealth of the big Republican donors pushed through a bill that did the opposite of what is needed. So, I really don't see a choice. The power of those huge fortunes is growing, and it's time to start a dialog on what we do about it.

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## GREED KILLS

*Michael K. Cantwell*

Unfortunately, and all too often, greed kills the needy and leaves the greedy laughing all the way to the bank. Exhibit 1 is the Republicans' deficit-busting hijacking of the American people known under the Orwellian title "Tax Cuts and Jobs Act."

The bill will kill the needy by causing them to plunge through a shredded safety net. How? By blowing what is estimated to be as much as a \$1.5-trillion hole in the deficit, it will inevitably lead to demands to cut Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, programs on which most Americans – and especially the needy – depend, often for their very lives.

In addition, the bill eliminates the Individual Mandate, an essential leg on which the Affordable Care Act depends in order to lower the cost of health insurance. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that insurance costs will skyrocket in 2019, leading four million Americans to lose their health insurance. That alone will

cause thousands of Americans to die prematurely and unnecessarily every year. And that doesn't include the death and devastation that will result from greed-motivated Republican climate denial.

It is said that quantitative changes suddenly become qualitative changes; for example, water grows colder and colder and colder, and suddenly it's ice. The day grows darker and darker, and suddenly it's night. Applying this dictum, it is fair to ask when the colossal greed of the obscenely rich, legalized by Republican legislation, can be fairly characterized as a criminal act.

Perhaps it is not murder, but surely it is reckless indifference to human life. And perhaps we can't frog march the miscreants out of Congress and put them on trial for crimes against humanity, but surely we need to vote them all out . . . and consign the Greedy Old Party to the dustbin of history.

# Saying “Yes” to Second Chances and Democracy: Florida’s Voter Restoration Amendment

*Jeffrey Coltman-Cormier*

Voting is dangerous. The simple act of indicating one’s preference for any given candidate, political party, or choice in a referendum can reshape political landscapes. As the most basic of democratic rights, the franchise is essential to the public’s ability to participate in the political process. This is why the disenfranchisement of former felons in Florida is an extreme threat to democracy.

Currently, 1.6 million Floridians — or 1 in 10 — cannot vote due to a past felony conviction. Although people often associate felonies with murder and other violent crimes, felonies are simply crimes that result in a prison sentence of one year and a day or longer. They include nonviolent crimes like drug possession, driving with a suspended driver’s license or even the failure to pay off too many traffic tickets. As a result, many Floridians are excluded from our political system. The notion that the right to vote is a privilege that can be permanently revoked without a second chance, rather than a right, is antithetic to democracy, which both allows and demands that people are empowered to shape political decisions and their lives.

People in neglected and marginalized communities who are least able to protect themselves in the criminal justice system suffer the brunt of disenfranchisement. Moreover, bearing in mind the racist foundations of the criminal justice system — from Black Codes to the War on Drugs — the disenfranchisement of former felons in Florida disproportionately affects people of color; this has been so since the state constitution was amended shortly after the Civil War to intentionally prevent the newly freed slaves from voting. Currently, former felons can petition for clemency, but under Gov. Scott this is rarely granted,

which is hardly a surprise since newly restored voters register as Democrats by a wide margin. To counter this biased democracy-harming agenda, the voting rights restoration movement in Florida is attempting to amend the state constitution to automatically grant former felons, excluding murderers and sex offenders, the right to vote upon completion of their sentences (including parole and probation). Similar provisions apply in more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of states in the United States (and in Vermont and Maine, felons can vote while in prison). Headed by both former felons and activists, the movement has been changing the narrative about voting and disenfranchisement.

A total of over 1 million verified and unverified petition signatures have been gathered in favor of a 2018 referendum on the amendment. To guarantee that the state-mandated requirement of 766,200 verified signatures for the amendment to be placed upon the ballot is met by February 1, we all need to participate by getting even more signatures. Signing the petition yourself and reaching out to your friends, families and communities are the best ways to get support for the petition. Then, once the amendment is on the 2018 ballot, we must bring awareness of it to as many Floridians as possible. The amendment must receive at least 60 percent of votes in favor to pass. Since voter turnout is generally less in midterm elections than in other elections, encouraging people to simply get out and vote in 2018 will be another important component of getting the voting rights amendment passed. With these goals in mind, let us all come together throughout the state in support of this amendment and bring Florida and our country one step closer to being a true democracy.

*The Delray Democrat* is the official publication of the Democratic Club of Delray Beach.

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**Editorial Board:** Michael K. Cantwell (Editor), Sandra Elaiszen, David Kulick, Mariane Kulick, Alan M. Milner, Linda Rubenstein, and Hal Stern.

**Address for submissions and letters:** editor@thedelraydemocrat.com; letters@thedelraydemocrat.com or by snail mail to *The Delray Democrat*, 15127 Jog Road, Suite 101, Delray Beach, FL -1251.

# Got Democracy?

Michael K. Cantwell

WHAT AMERICANS WANT	WHAT AMERICANS ARE GIVEN
<b>83% of Americans</b> (including 75% of Republicans) <u>support keeping the FCC's net neutrality rules</u>	By a vote of 3-2, the FCC eliminates net neutrality, handing over the Internet to a few huge <u>“gatekeepers who see the rest of us as products to be delivered to advertisers, not as citizens needing communications that serve democracy’s needs.”</u>
<b>53% of Americans</b> <u>“strongly agree” and another 23% “somewhat agree” that the wealthiest Americans should pay more taxes</u>	On a straight party-line vote, in the dead of night, and without any hearings, Republicans rush through a tax bill that dramatically reduces the tax rate on multi-millionaires, billionaires and multinational corporations. Many middle-class families will end up paying higher taxes.
<b>60% of Americans</b> <u>believe it is the responsibility of government to ensure that all Americans receive healthcare</u>	Republicans’ Reverse Robin Hood tax bill repeals the individual mandate. According to the Congressional Budget Office this will result in sharp increases in insurance premiums and will cause 4 million people to lose their health insurance by 2019. And in 2018, they’ll again try to repeal the ACA.

***Democracy is a nice idea. It’s worked in the past. America should try it again. Join us, and help make that happen.***

## Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2018 Membership Application

Date \_\_\_\_\_ New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

Name/names of household members \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Community/Condo Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number \_\_\_\_\_

(E-mail addresses are shared with the Palm Beach County Democratic Party so our members will be kept abreast of the latest County Democratic Activity. If you do not wish to receive this information, please initial here \_\_\_ and we will not share your E-mail address.).

Preferred method of contact: E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Mail \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Send newsletter by: E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ U.S. Mail \_\_\_\_\_

I/we are in South Florida from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ each year or are a permanent resident \_\_\_\_\_.

Payment: Individual \$20 \_\_\_\_\_ Household \$30 \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to Democratic Club of Delray Beach and mail to 15127 Jog Road, Suite 101, Delray Beach, FL 33446-1251. Thank you and Welcome to our Club.