

The Delray Democrat

How to Lose Florida Again¹

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When I moved from New York to Florida in 2014, I looked forward to having my vote make a difference for the first time in my life.

Obama had won Florida twice, but it was too soon to color it blue. Way too soon, as it turned out.

Rick Scott was reelected later that year, narrowly defeating Charlie Crist. In 2016, Rubio was reelected and Florida delivered its 29 electoral votes to a rough beast. Scott and DeSantis were elected in 2018, and the rough beast took Florida by an even greater margin in 2020.

One might argue that with a record like this, we don't need help learning how to lose . . . we need help learning how to win. Yet if it's true that those who do not learn from the mistakes of the past are condemned to repeat them, we will never win until we learn why we lose:

- **We engage in purity tests.**
- **We form into circular firing squads.**
- **We fail to support the Democrat who emerges from the primary**, either by staying home, voting for a third-party candidate and/or actively encouraging others to do the same, and/or telling others that you're going to hold your nose and vote for the Democratic candidate.
- **We expend all our efforts** telling voters *how* to vote for the Democrat, but expend little or no effort telling them *why* to vote for the Democrat.

Unfortunately, we're already repeating them.

I recently posted an article on the Florida Democratic Party Leaders Facebook Group, titled "Is Charlie Crist our Joe Biden?" pointing to a number of parallels between the two men. For example, a major factor in Biden's election was public perception of a race pitting a competent, decent human being against an incompetent, heartless miscreant. I suggested a similar construct would play out in a Crist-DeSantis race.

On the other hand, Biden was far from my first choice in the primaries or the first choice of those of us who self-identify as members of what Paul Wellstone memorably labeled "The Democratic Wing of the Democratic Party." I expected the same would hold true with respect to Crist, and I didn't have long to wait.

Negative comments fell into a number of categories: some people inveighed against the Republicanization of the FDP, arguing that we should become an actual leftwing party and stop nominating milquetoast centrists. That's something that we can, and should debate, and I'd

¹ *The Delray Democrat*, [October 2021](#), p. 6.

certainly apply that label to Patrick Murphy, but Andrew Gillum was no milquetoast centrist and we lost that race.

A final group of commenters perfectly satisfied three steps on my checklist of how to lose Florida. They insisted that they would NEVER vote for a Republican, ignoring the fact that Crist hadn't been a Republican for more than a decade. It was unclear to me whether they were also ignoring, or were simply ignorant of, Crist's record as a governor, when – as a Republican – he restored the voting rights of more former offenders than *any* prior governor, Republican or Democrat.

One commenter, a state committeeman, even wrote that not only would he stay home if Crist were nominated but “will encourage everyone I know to never vote for a former Republican governor” (his zeal somewhat overwhelming his syntax), and then added, “the only thing worse than DeSantis winning is if Crist wins. We can't let the Democratic Party be taken over by Republicans.”

That's the kind of stupidity that led me to vote for Barry Commoner in 1980, only to watch Reagan replace the New Deal with the Raw Deal and appoint three of the five Supreme Court justices who selected George W. Bush in 2000.

That's the kind of stupidity that allowed the 2000 election to go to the Supreme Court. Had but 538 of the 97,488 Floridians who voted for Ralph Nader voted instead for Al Gore, he would have been elected and the country would have been spared the cost of Bush's trillion-dollar wars and the ignominy of our use of torture and other violations of international humanitarian law, not to mention the appointments of John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court.

And that's the kind of stupidity that, in 2016, elected one of the foulest creatures to pollute both the Oval Office and our democracy, giving him the opportunity to appoint more federal appeals court judges in four years than anyone, including three Supreme Court justices.

I don't presume to know who would be our strongest candidate against DeSantis (or Rubio for that matter), but I do insist that “Vote Blue, No Matter Who” is not merely a slogan, as one commenter derisively claimed. It is the only way our party, our democracy, and our planet, can survive.