

The Delray Democrat

May 2024 (# 68)

Are You Better Off Today Than You Were Four Years Ago?

Michael K. Cantwell

Ronald Reagan coined this question in 1980 and took it all the way to the White House. It quickly became a meme and is asked in every presidential campaign.

At that time, the term “meme” had itself just been minted. Evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins had been searching for a word to describe *cultural* evolution via the transmission of ideas, much as “gene” describes *biological* evolution via the transmission of genetic traits. In 1976, in *The Selfish Gene*, he settled on “meme.”

Answering Reagan’s question in 2024 requires little effort if you have been paying attention and remember the deadly clown show that was the Trump administration. It is the *nature* of the question that merits examination, for it reveals how America and Americans have devolved since the question was first posed.

Reagan appealed to naked self-interest and sowed division where once there was unity. The powerful had free reign to plunder and the vulnerable were abandoned. The Hobbesian dystopia was neither inevitable nor evolutionary. It was a conscious choice and it made us weaker as a country.

That *genes* are selfish does not mean *humans* must be selfish, Dawkins insists: “Organisms can behave altruistically towards other organisms—the better to forward the propagation of their own selfish genes.” We collectively benefit from “social institutions which encourage us towards moral behavior.”

Millennia earlier, Rabbi Hillel asserted that altruism is essential to being human:

If I am not for myself, who will be for me?
And if I am only for myself, what am I?

Reagan’s presidency was transformative but it represented a cultural *devolution*. He made us both worse and weaker and set the stage for the barbarian that is Trump..

(Continued on page 2)

Also in This Issue

Will You Be Better Off in Four Years than You Are Today..... 3

Send in the Clowns 4

Wages v. Inflation (Charts) 5

Republicans Use Back Door to “Out” Trans People 5

Fascism, not Socialism. Is the Threat 6

Thank Joe Biden..... 7

Thank a Democrat 7

2024 Membership..... 8

Cumulative Increase June 2022 to April 2024	
Wages	Inflation
8.0%	5.8%

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Wednesday’s Woman Is Full of Woe

June Sandra Neal

May 1, 2024, will be remembered in Florida as **Black Wednesday**, when, at the stroke of midnight, Florida’s repressive and potentially deadly six-week ban on abortions took effect. Since most women don’t even know they are pregnant at that time, thousands of women in this state will be facing enormous crises.

Ironically, that same day, the Arizona Senate voted to repeal its Civil War era law, a near-total abortion ban, which was restored just weeks prior by Arizona’s Supreme Court.

Good news, except that the vote was so close. The repeal came with just two Republicans joining 14 Democrats. Now Arizona’s women have 15 weeks to get an abortion and women in Florida have six. In both cases, it is untenable.

The health and welfare of half the population of the nation is dependent on a few religious zealots.

Since they got Roe v. Wade eviscerated and thrown to the states, we’ve heard too many horror

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 1)

America was built on the pioneer spirit and rugged individualism, but Americans have always been able to work and sacrifice together for the common good. We were united through the dark days of the Great Depression and the existential battle against Naziism and fascism. Together we clipped coupons and endured rationing.

The ethos of that era was “we must sink or swim together.” It made America Great, to employ a much misused meme. Under an effective and responsive government led by FDR, we beat the Nazis and built a middle class that was the envy of the world.

Reagan’s ethos was “I got mine, Jack.” Greed was glorified and a government that saved the world and created our prosperity was demonized and left to rot

Reagan used racist tropes like “welfare queens” and “strapping young bucks” to exploit and misdirect the blind, imponent rage of a White working class that had fallen behind. He conned them into believing their problem was government support of the poor when in reality their problem was government toadying to the obscenely rich. The class war Reagan launched on behalf of plutocrats demanding to pay lower (or no) taxes exploded inequality and pushed workers (including the newly minted Reagan Democrats) even further behind.

Reagan destroyed the middle and working classes and fractured the country but acted with a disarming bonhomie. Trump threw away the dog whistles, grabbed a bullhorn, and revealed the savage beast that civilization had spent centuries working to tame.

Our corporate media was shocked to find they had unwittingly helped elect the intellectually impaired, psychologically damaged creature they had wrongly believed to be unelectable. And they seem to be at it once again, turning an election that should be a slam-dunk into a horserace.

Our democracy survived four years of Trump, but it is unlikely it will survive a second term. See the companion article, [Will You Be Better Off in 2028?](#)

Trump’s colossally incompetent response to COVID greatly increased the death toll. Here’s how a study in the British medical journal [The Lancet](#) put it:

Instead of galvanising the US populace to fight the pandemic, President Trump publicly dismissed its threat (despite privately acknowledging it), discouraged action as infection spread, and eschewed international cooperation. His refusal to develop a national strategy worsened shortages of personal protective equipment and diagnostic tests. President Trump politicised mask-wearing and school reopenings and convened indoor events attended by thousands, where masks were discouraged and physical distancing was impossible.

The medical journal estimated that almost 40% of the 470,000 deaths that occurred during Trump’s tenure could have been averted. Some of those deaths are also attributable to the increased barriers to medical care under Trump. A Harvard [study](#) estimated that 2.3 million Americans lost health insurance during Trump’s presidency.

Today our president is a capable and compassionate man. Joe Biden broke COVID’s back by overseeing the vaccination of 200 million Americans in his first 100 days in office. KFF [estimates](#) that 1.9 million previously uninsured Americans gained insurance during President Biden’s first two years in office.

President Biden added more than 15 million jobs in his first three years and reduced unemployment to levels not seen in over half a century—and Black unemployment to levels never seen before. He has signed legislation that will fuel the economy for years, including the greatest investment in green energy and infrastructure in American history.

These historic achievements have been forgotten in the frenzy over inflation. Biden was unduly blamed for what was [a perfect storm](#) and given insufficient credit after inflation fell as fast as it had risen. [Since May 2023](#), the increase in wages, year-over-year, has outpaced inflation, and the cumulative increase in wages trails inflation only slightly over Biden’s tenure.

Not only am I better off today than four years ago; America and Americans are in a far, far better place.

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Editorial Board: Michael K. Cantwell (Editor), Char Lane (Managing Editor), Sandra Elaisse-Cantwell, David Kulick, and June Neal.

(Continued from page 1)

stories around the country: women with hoped-for pregnancies forced to carry babies that could not survive to full term—and later found they could have no more children. Women unable to get abortions who nearly [lost their lives](#).

But, the valiant efforts of **Floridians Protecting Freedom**, with help from the ACLU of Florida, Planned Parenthood, Florida Women's Freedom Coalition, Florida Rising, SEIU 1199 Florida, and Women's Voices of Southwest Florida, the Florida Supreme Court ruled that Amendment 4, which would provide a constitutional right to abortions in the state, will be on the ballot in November.

It states: “No law shall prohibit, penalize, delay, or restrict abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient’s health, as determined by the patient’s healthcare provider. This amendment does not change the Legislature’s constitutional authority to require

notification to a parent or guardian before a minor has an [abortion](#). “

Please mark these deadlines for voting in Florida:

- Deadline to send vote-by-mail ballots to UOCAVA voters: September 21, 2024
- Deadline to send vote-by-mail ballots to domestic voters: September 26, 2024 – October 3, 2024
- Deadline to register to vote: October 7, 2024 (no deadline to change party affiliation)
- Deadline to request that ballot be mailed: October 24, 2024
- Early voting period (mandatory period): October 26 through November 2, 2024
- **Election Day: November 5, 2024**

Will You Be Better Off in Four Years Than You Are Today?

Michael K. Cantwell

Democracy was on the ballot four years ago, and we dodged two bullets. Not only was Trump defeated, but he was thwarted in his violent and illegal efforts to overthrow the will of the voters, if only barely.

Trump is the only American president to refuse to vacate office after losing. He has threatened a “bloodbath” if he is not elected this fall. And if he is elected this November, it’s likely he will never agree to leave.

He is already [contemplating](#) running for a third term: if he is elected this November: “If I happen to be president and I see somebody who's doing well and beating me very badly, I say go down and indict them.”

At least some of the rightwing media has no problem with such a constitutional violation. An op-ed in [The American Conservative](#) titled [Trump 2028](#) breezily dismisses the Twenty-Second Amendment “as an arbitrary restraint on presidents who serve nonconsecutive terms—and on democracy itself.” Would someone please make Orwell fiction again?

The damage that Trump can accomplish in a second term is incalculable. This time he will be supported by [Project 2025](#), a coalition led by the extreme rightwing Heritage Foundation.

Project 2025’s goal is to “take back our government,” although “take over” is a more accurate description. Project 2025 Director Paul Dans [brags](#), “We are not tinkering at the edges. We are writing a battle plan, and we are marshaling our forces.”

Just as the Federalist Society provided Trump with a list of rightwing judicial activists to set the justice system back a century, Project 2025 has assembled a list of some 20,000 apparatchiks to staff a second Trump administration.

We are already reeling from a takeover of the Supreme Court by troglodytes. It’s unlikely our democracy or our planet could survive the establishment of an imperial presidency.

Project 2025 proposes to:

- Slash funding to the Department of Justice
- Dismantle the FBI and the Homeland Security
- Deploy the military for domestic enforcement
- Restrict access to abortion
- Infuse government with Christian nationalism
- Abolish the Department of Education, the Notice of Allowance, and the Commerce Department

This is what is at stake this November.

Despite High Student Suicide Rates, DeSantis Sends in the Clowns

June Sandra Neal

To Governor DeSantis and the Republican legislators: What the hell were you thinking? Allowing chaplains with no requirements for mental health education to counsel students? And once again, chipping away at our cherished church-state separation?

Yep, two more proposals to transform Florida into a Straight, White, Christian Nationalist theocracy are both homophobic—and dangerous—laws. The first, [HB 931](#), puts every Florida student in need of help at risk by allowing “chaplains”—no licensing, experience or training required—to counsel them.

In your April 18 2024 [press release](#), you called the chaplains “*additional* resources for students.” [emphasis added] *Additional to what?* Your shameful “Don’t Say Gay” law, your whitewashing of African American history and your denigration of immigrants were gag orders on school personnel to ensure they and the students couldn’t discuss race, gender identity and the struggles of immigrants. Then you fill the counseling hole you created with “chaplains,” honorifics which can connote anything from a master ‘s in divinity to a tin badge from a cereal box.

No one’s arguing that religion doesn’t play a role in the well-being of many people, or that some faith-based leaders may have training in counseling. The problem is just that; they are faith-based. And they are no substitute for licensed school psychologists and psychiatrists.

You’re clearly ignorant of the complexity of the issues our kids face: depression and other mental illnesses, child victimization, food and housing instability, homelessness, drug & alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, gun violence, bullying, domestic abuse and inadequate foster care. Some have had to assume parental duties for younger siblings. Others made tragic headlines with mass shootings. The struggle with sexual identity can be so overwhelming, some attempt, and succeed at, suicide. Schizophrenia can present as early as late teens—are your chaplains trained to pick up on the signs?

So, here’s the rub. Many religious sects condemn suicide. That’s like condemning having cancer. “[Suicide](#) ... remains one of the top three causes of death for those between

ages 10-34.” For those surviving self-harm attempts, condemnation is a deadly prescription. Even when it’s not overt.

Your pandered to the Straight, White, Christian Nationalists with [HB1069](#), with a law as far from mental health science as Big Foot: “[A] person's sex is an immutable biological trait and cannot be changed.” But there are hundreds of thousands of LGBTQ+ here.

Dead Kids Therapy. Known as Sexual Orientation Change Efforts (SOCE), these treatments were condemned in 2021 by the [American Psychological Association](#). Note they included conversion and reparation therapy and “using religious practices such as prayer, scripture study, exorcism, and confessing same-gender attractions. The APA affirms that scientific evidence and clinical experience indicate that SOCE put individuals at significant risk of harm.” The American Psychiatric Association issued a similar [statement](#).

“Risk of harm” can mean death. The [American Journal of Public Health](#) wrote that “LGBTQ youth who underwent conversion therapy were more than twice as likely to report having attempted suicide and more than 2.5 times as likely to report multiple suicide attempts in the past year.” [2021]

These quack treatments are torture. For the first time in its history, The U.N. Committee Against Torture (CAT) announced “Conversion therapy, when forced or otherwise involuntary, *can breach the prohibition on torture and ill-treatment*, [author’s emphasis] and youth lack adequate legal protection and are particularly vulnerable to involuntary or coercive [treatment](#).”

Your laws are forms of child abuse. In June 2023, the “Human Rights Campaign declared a [national state of emergency for LGBTQ+ Americans](#), the first in the LGBTQ civil rights organization’s over 40-year history. This was prompted by the [more than 560 anti-transgender bills](#) that have been introduced in the U.S. through July 2023, 80 of which have passed.” **You certainly contributed your share.**

Republicans Find a Way to “Out” Trans People Through a Back Door

June Sandra Neal

To Governor DeSantis and the Republican members of the Florida Legislature:

In January, you proposed [HB 1639](#) which would “out” trans people by forcing those updating their existing drivers’ licenses or state ID cards to designate their sex at birth, instead of gender. To make it more odious, the bill’s revision required all Florida group healthcare plans that cover gender transition to also cover “conversion therapy,” despite the dire warnings of nearly every major mental health organization. (See accompanying article on chaplains.)

With overwhelming public opposition, the bill failed. No problem; just go through the back door. In [a memo](#) dated January 26, 2024, the Department of Highway and Motor Vehicles rescinded the current policy that allows updating of gender markers. The memo instructed tax collectors to treat gender changes as a violation of existing fake ID laws.

“It was an end-run around public policy,” John-Harris Maurer, Equality Florida’s Public Policy

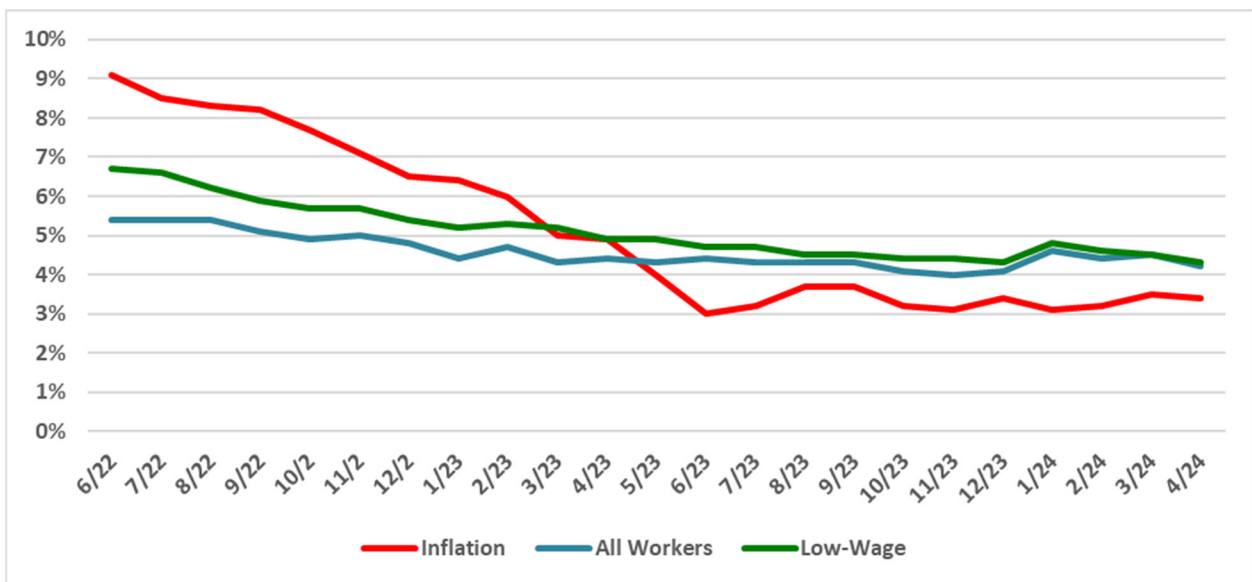
Director, told *The Delray Democrat*. “People updating existing licenses must list their sex as it appears on their birth certificates. Forcing trans people to carry an identification document that doesn’t align with who they are is not only insulting to their dignity but puts them at risk.” Think about dealing with police at a traffic stop.

You continue to trample on the fundamental principle of church-state separation, which has come to be guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments, to appease the religious zealots who are, ironically, blind to the protection those amendments give to their own faiths.

Consider life in those nations with official religions. Iranian women face execution should a part of their body be accidentally exposed when they’re outside their homes. North Koreans who fail to publicly adore Dear Leader “disappear.” Nazi Germany was a fiercely Christian state while it exterminated six million Jews.

Be careful what you ask for.

Year-over-Year Increase in Wages Outpaces Inflation Since May 2023



Data from [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) and [Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis](#).

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Fascism, not Socialism, Is the Threat

Michael K. Cantwell

Rick Scott is right that America is facing a grave threat, but it's not from what he ludicrously calls "socialism," and it's not coming from the Democrats. The real threat is fascism and it's coming from the Republican Party.

What Is Socialism?

Socialism is defined as an economic system that involves governmental ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods. Nothing Joe Biden (or even Bernie Sanders) has advocated even remotely approaches such a dramatic reorganization of society. Yet Republicans have been trotting out the socialist bogeyman ever since Franklin Delano Roosevelt saved America from *actual* socialism.

What Is Fascism?

Fascism involves an autocratic, racist, and repressive government headed by a dictator. Donald Trump is a would-be dictator who regurgitates Nazi rhetoric. He refers to opponents as "vermin" and the media as "the enemy of the people," he accuses immigrants as "poisoning the blood of our country," and recently he posted a [video](#) titled "What's Next for America?" that promised "the creation of a unified Reich."

It's not just the Nazi rhetoric. It's the Nazi tactic of the Big Lie. It worked in Germany and it's working here. A March 2024 [poll](#) found 36% of Americans and 70% of Republicans (up from 67% in 2021) now believe the 2020 election was stolen.

<u>Socialism</u>	<u>Fascism</u>
<p>1. any of various egalitarian economic and political theories or movements advocating collective or governmental ownership and administration of the means of production and distribution of goods.</p> <p>2a: system of society or group living in which there is no private property. 2b. a system or condition of society in which the means of production are owned and controlled by the state.</p>	<p>1. a political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.</p> <p>2. a tendency toward or actual exercise of strong autocratic or dictatorial control.</p>

Communism and socialism grew in appeal during the worldwide depression of the 1930s. In the United States, unemployment rose to 24.9%, those who kept their jobs saw their wages drop by 42.5%, and millions were homeless. Facing a violent revolution, FDR oversaw a political revolution by introducing the safety net programs that protect us to this day.

What Republicans call "socialism" is legislation that benefits ordinary Americans rather than the bank balances of the top 0.01%. By "ordinary," I mean anyone who might have been given jail time instead of a golden parachute (as was Scott) if they led a company that pled guilty to 14 felonies and agreed to pay the government \$1.7 billion in fines and damages for bilking Medicare.

Social Security, unemployment insurance, Medicare and Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act were all attacked as "socialist," but are as American as apple pie. They spring directly from the preamble to our Constitution, which includes among the enumerated duties of the new government to "promote the General Welfare." A [list](#) of legislation for which you can Thank a Democrat appears at the bottom of p. 7.

Trump's Big Lie did not emerge fully formed like Athena from Zeus's brow. The Republican Party has been undermining democracy for decades by purging voter rolls and enacting voter suppression bills. The claim that these measures are needed to prevent "voter fraud" *is itself the fraud*. It spawned and supports Trump's Big Lie of a stolen election.

Not only is there no evidence that organized voter fraud affects elections, but the attempt by The Heritage Foundation to prove the existence of voter fraud actually proves the reverse. Their online database [trumpets](#) "1,513 proven instances of voter fraud," but it covers more than four decades, so that all it "proves" is the existence of *less than one instance of voter fraud per state per year*.

It's understandable that the Republican Party needs to divert attention from its ruthless attacks on democracy. That's given birth to its most pernicious Big Lie, namely, that the country's greatest threat is "socialism." This one goes back to Hitler, but when he denounced the socialists and communists, *they actually existed*. They were rival political parties, not phantasms conjured up to frighten credulous fools.

Thank Joe Biden

The American Rescue Plan Act begins the recovery from the Trump Depression:

- Local governments provided \$360 billion to keep front line public workers on the job and paid.
- Expanded and extended unemployment payments protect workers until the economy reopens.
- Over 200 million Americans are vaccinated against COVID in first 100 days, thanks to \$160 billion funding for supplies and vaccines.
- Investments in Affordable Care Act allowed more than 18 million Americans to obtain health insurance, savings tens of thousands from premature, preventable deaths.
- Increased and expanded Child Tax Credit cut child poverty by 35% in 2021.
- Helped create more jobs (6.7 million) during the first year of any presidency.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act passes with 17 Republican senators voting in favor. Florida's senators vote against the bill, although they and our governor are happy to take credit for the money and services it provides.

- The largest investment in infrastructure in over a decade.
- The largest investment in clean drinking water and wastewater infrastructure in U.S. history.
- The largest investment in clean energy transmission and EV infrastructure in U.S. history.
- The largest investment in public transit in nearly six decades.
- The largest investment in bridges since the construction of the interstate highway system.
- More than 40,000 projects already off the ground.

The Bipartisan Safer Communities Act is the first gun safety legislation in nearly three decades.

The PACT Act is the biggest expansion of veterans' benefits in over three decades. The Act has already sparked \$200 billion in private investments in the United States.

The Inflation Reduction Act is the greatest investment in green energy in U.S. history. It reduces the deficit by authorizing Medicare to negotiate with drug companies, closing tax loopholes, and providing \$80 billion to the IRS for additional tax enforcement.

The CHIPS Act invests in microchip production to make America more competitive with China and reduce our reliance on foreign sources for a vital component used by the defense industry. The Act has already sparked \$200 billion in private investments in the United States.

Thank a Democrat

1964 Civil Rights Act
1965 Voting Rights Act
Affordable Care Act
AmeriCorps
CDC
Family and Medical Leave Act

Food Stamp Act
Freedom of Information Act
GI Bill of Rights
Medicare and Medicaid
Minimum Wage Act
National Labor Relations Act

National Science Foundation Act
National Voter Registration Act
(a.k.a. Motor Voter Act)
Social Security Act
Unemployment Compensation Act
Workers Compensation Act

2024 Membership

Char Lane

It's May 2024 and the Primaries are just three months away (August 20, 2024) and the November 5, 2024 General Election is now less than six months away. It's time for some serious work to elect Democrats to save our democracy.

If you haven't already done so, it's time to renew your DCDB membership for 2024. Membership is on a calendar year basis and your dues help provide funding for operational projects, such as *The Delray Democrat*, our meetings, other operational supplies, and signage for our sign waving events. Meetings are at 7 PM on the third Thursday of each month at the Palm Beach County Democratic Party office, located at 220 Congress Park Drive, Suite 140, in Delray Beach. Our meetings are hybrid so you can also join via zoom. Meeting notices are sent out in the weeks before the meetings, and include Zoom links to register for and/or join the meetings and links to our various websites.

Our goal is to educate people as to the importance of voting, why they should vote Democratic and why they should use Vote-by-Mail as a critical tool in support of this goal. With all that's been going on we'll have to work exceptionally hard to help keep our democracy intact and protect it from being decimated by Trump and his cohorts.

Getting out the vote is our most important mission. You can help by making phone calls, texting, writing postcards, canvassing, or becoming a precinct leader. You can register people to vote and help people sign up or reenroll to vote by mail. You can volunteer for projects to benefit the community. There's so much work to do between now and November 2024 and we'll need your help.

If you're a member of the Democratic Club of Delray Beach and haven't already done so, please renew your membership for 2024. If you're not a member of the Club, please consider joining.

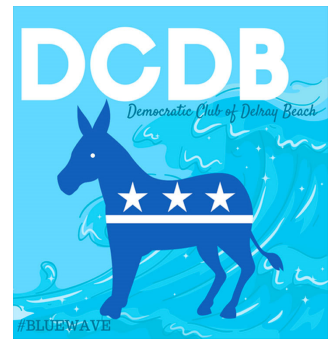
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Visit us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/992741928168620>.

Become a member of the DCDB: complete and mail the Membership application or click on the QR code below. You can also give me your membership application/renewal at our meetings.



Democratic Club of Delray Beach 2024 Membership Application and Renewal



Date _____ New _____ Renewal _____

Name/names of household members _____

Address _____

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 _____ Text _____

Send newsletter by: E-mail _____ Hand delivery _____ U.S. Mail _____

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

Payment: Individual \$25 _____ Household \$35 _____ Donation _____

Please make checks payable to Democratic Club of Delray Beach and mail to P.O. Box 8224, Delray Beach, FL 33484. Thank you and welcome to our Club.