League of Women Voters of Manatee County

Voters’ Guide to Candidates in the Primary Election—August 30, 2016 Manatee County

Featuring the background and viewpoints of candidates in the following primary elections:

- Manatee County Commission District 1
- Manatee County Commission District 5
- Manatee County School Board District 1
- Manatee County School Board District 3
- Manatee County Property Appraiser
- U.S. Representative District 16
- State Representative District 70
- State Representative District 73

and also:

- Amendment 4: Solar equipment tax exemption

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The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, and works to increase understanding of major public policy issues.
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About this guide:
• What’s missing: US Senate: Local LWV’s do not cover statewide races. In the fall, the LWV of Florida will publish a separate guide to those offices and the amendments. Not every contest will appear on your ballot. Check your district numbers on your voter’s card. Nonpartisan contests do not indicate the political party of the candidates. (updated from printed edition, 7/28/2016)
• Watch the local candidate debates on METV broadcast channels or YouTube. To watch online: visit www.metvweb.com – click on the YouTube link
• Only voters registered with a party affiliation may vote in partisan primaries, with one exception: If a primary will be the final result, due to the lack of opposition in the general election, all voters in that district may vote, regardless of their party affiliation.

Your vote counts! You can vote early, by mail or at the polls. Learn before you vote, and vote the full ballot!

For more information on the elections and candidates, visit:
www.lwvmanatee.org (scroll down to Voter Information Center)
www.votemanatee.com
www.bereadytovote.org
U.S. House of Representatives, District 16

Vern Buchanan
Republican

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Background:
I am the only Florida member of Congress to serve on the powerful House Ways & Means Committee, which has jurisdiction over tax policy, international trade, health care, welfare, and Social Security. I am chairman of the Human Resources Subcommittee, which oversees federal assistance for families, children, the disabled, and the unemployed. I also serve on the subcommittees that oversee Social Security and Medicare.
I am a self-made businessman who grew up with five siblings in a blue collar household in a small town near Detroit, Michigan. I served six years in the Air National Guard and worked my way through college. I received my B.B.A in Business Administration from Cleary University and my MBA from the University of Detroit. I have been married for 40 years to my college sweetheart, Sandy. We have two sons and two grandchildren.

In what community organizations have you been active?
Ringling Museum of Art, Mote Marine Laboratory, Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Boys & Girs Clubs of Sarasota County, WEDU/PBS Channel 3, Florida Winefest, Juvenile Diabetes, United Way of Sarasota County, American Heart Walk, American Diabetes Association Tour de Cure.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I am running to fix a broken political system in Washington that our founding fathers wouldn't even recognize. Washington's shameful dysfunction must end - or the American Dream will become something kids read about in history books. We need to restore sanity and competence to Washington. That starts with strong leadership and members of both parties showing they are more interested in governing than scoring political points. I have the honor of serving as the Chairman of Florida's 29 member bipartisan congressional delegation third largest in the country. And on issues such as Veterans Health Care, Flood Insurance, International Trade and Citrus Greening - we've been able to come together and tackle these issues in a cordial and productive manner.

What do you see as the most Important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if re-elected?
The most important role of the federal government is to protect our national security. We need to defeat Isis and put a moratorium on Syrian Refugees. We need to require social media screening for any foreigner who wants to enter America. And we need to secure the border.

Additionally, we face the challenge of a nearly $20 trillion debt, a stagnating economy, and a lost decade of real wage growth. The first bill I introduced was a constitutional balanced budget amendment to require Congress to balance the budget over ten years. I have also worked to grow the economy by helping small businesses create jobs by reforming the tax code and reducing overly burdensome regulations.

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U.S. House of Representatives, District 16

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Background: I was raised by a single mother, a public high school teacher. After college I followed in her footsteps and taught geography, economics, and political science in public high schools. This experience led to opportunities as an educational consultant, advising colleges and universities across the Southeast. During this time I earned an executive MBA and worked with business leaders throughout the country. I was eventually able to turn my lifelong love of flying into a fulltime job and for the past decade have been a pilot for a major airline. My wife, Julie, is a practicing ob-gyn in the community where we live, Lakewood Ranch.

In what community organizations have you been active? Take Stock in Children Board of Directors and mentor; Kiwanis International; Harvest United Methodist Church; Lakewood Ranch Democratic Club; Air Line Pilots Association.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience, and skills do you bring to this position? The people of the 16th District deserve a representative who puts them first, not special interests, and who serves them with honesty and integrity. I understand the problems faced by middle-class and working families and know what it’s like to have student loan debt and take a second job just to pay the bills. As a result of my experience with the legislative process working for the Georgia General Assembly, I decided that politics was the avenue for positive change in America and that one day I would be an agent of that change. As their Representative, I vow to fight for the people of the 16th District, answer only to them, and ensure that their voices are heard in Washington.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected? Jobs and the economy: Over the past 30 years, wages have increased only 8% while the wealth in this country is being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. I will work to reduce this income inequality by supporting good jobs at home in our community and tax relief to working families and ensuring that our educational system enables our workforce of tomorrow to compete on the global stage. National security: We must keep America strong and safe by engaging with the world, not withdrawing from it. I will strongly support efforts to maintain and strengthen our global alliances to defeat ISIS and terrorism worldwide, ensure that our military is on the cutting edge, and stand up to dictators while defending our core American values and guiding principles. Veterans: We must honor our veterans by ensuring they have access to timely and high-quality healthcare and that they are able to transfer to successful civilian careers. Social Security and Medicare: We must keep the promises made to our seniors so they can retire with dignity and peace of mind. Many depend on Social Security for the great majority of their income and many nearing retirement age have no other retirement savings. I will resist any attempts to privatize Social Security or turn Medicare into a voucher system. Immigration: As the son of an immigrant, I support a pathway to citizenship that keeps families together and that enables millions of workers to come out of the shadows. Gun violence: We urgently need sensible laws to curb the epidemic of gun violence that has shattered so many lives, especially here in Florida. I vow to work to protect our citizens, not the interests of the NRA. Equality: Women are paid 79 cents for every dollar men make. I will work to close this gap and pass the Paycheck Fairness Act. I strongly support women’s rights to make their own healthcare decisions and will oppose any efforts to repeal Roe v. Wade, block access to healthcare facilities, and defund Planned Parenthood. Our strength is in our diversity, and I will do everything possible to ensure basic rights for all citizens, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs. Environment: Climate change is a serious issue facing Florida. I will support legislation to reduce our carbon footprint and develop and deploy clean, sustainable energy technologies.
U.S. House of Representatives, District 16

Jan Schneider
Democrat

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Background:  
Education: Yale University -- Ph.D. (Political Science); Yale Law School – J.D.; Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs – M.Phil.; Brown University – BA summa cum laude in 3 years. Politics: Actively involved in law and politics from local to international levels for many years; ran closest race of any challenger in Florida against former Secretary of State Katherine Harris; author of books and dozens of articles on contemporary legal and political issues.

In what community organizations have you been active?  Boards: American Society of International Law, International Law Association (American Branch), Council on Ocean Law, DAVA, Law of the Sea Institute, Roshan Cultural Heritage Institute, United Nations Association of the National Capitol Area, Gulf Coast Marine Institute South, Henry Lawrence Youth Foundation, Lemon Bay Conservancy, Protect Our Waters, Sarasota Commission on the Status of Women, Sarasota-Manatee National Association for Women, and Seniors for Pets.  Other: Council on Foreign Relations; Friends of Art and Preservation in Embassies; Pierian Spring Academy, and others.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?  Why would anyone want to be a member of a body with approval ratings below 10% and gridlocked by partisan polarization?  The answer, in a word, is “hope”.

The hope is that better Congressional representatives can make Congress better.  To achieve this will not only entail electing better informed citizens who will represent all the people, instead of being beholden to the wealthiest few, PACs and corporations.  It will also require changing the way Congressional elections are financed, if necessary by a Constitutional Amendment and/or a meaningful system of public financing.  I will draw on decades of experience in practicing law, teaching and championing political causes to work toward these objectives.

Being from one of the oldest (in terms of median age) Congressional districts in the country, I also have a special set of concerns.  The first “Baby Boomers” hit age 65 on New Year's Day 2011, and the rest are roaring toward retirement at 10,000 per day for 19 years.  This prompted my recent book on Baby Boomer Law and Politics: A Federal Policy Guide for Seniors – and Future Seniors.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?  
The decline of the middle class is the primary socio-political issue of our times. Remedial measures include enacting tax relief that favors the middle class; creating good jobs by investing in infrastructure, education and clean energy; raising the minimum wage to a living wage; and closing corporate tax loopholes.  I will also urge strong actions to ensure bank accountability (including reviving Glass-Steagall protections).  A decades-long activist for environmental protection, I support investment in alternative energy sources and opposes fracking.

Congress should pass new bans on assault weapons and high capacity magazines, require comprehensive background checks, close gun control loopholes and enact no-fly-no-buy measures. Congress should also protect a woman’s right to choose and full constitutional equality (LGBTQ). On the other hand, privatizing Social Security, converting Medicare into a voucher system and/or privatizing the Veterans Affairs Health Care System would be dreadful mistakes. In campaigning back in 2001 I adamantly opposed the United States becoming embroiled in a war in Iraq, and I will continue to resist involvement in risky, costly and counterproductive foreign military interventions.
Florida House of Representatives, District 70

Christopher Czaia
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Background: I have been a member of the Tampa Bay community for 40 years, along with my four beautiful daughters. The son of a Foreign Service officer, I spent my early years traveling the world, and have come to appreciate this great nation that guarantees the rights of ordinary citizens. I am a former Eagle Scout who attended Eckerd College and graduated from St. Petersburg Junior College with an AA degree in communications. I went on to attain my BA in International Relations from Florida International University in Miami, and upon graduating returned to our community.

I received my Juris Doctor degree from the Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Lansing, Michigan. Upon being admitted to the bar in 1992, I worked for a local St. Petersburg law firm, and later chose to work as a public defender in the 12th Judicial Circuit in Manatee, Sarasota, and Desoto Counties. I currently have a private practice.

In what community organizations have you been active?
Community Organizations: Current board member: Healthy Start Coalition of Manatee, Palmetto Youth Center, Gulf Coast Latin Chamber of Commerce. Former board member: Community Redevelopment Agency of Palmetto, Advisory Council of the Adult Farm Workers Program, Manatee County Heart Association, Manatee County School Foundation, Manatee Opportunity Council. Former Member: Daughtrey Elementary School, SAC, Eagle Scout, Boy Scouts of America. I was also the former head of the Manatee County Democratic Party, and in 2010 I founded UnidosNow, a community-oriented social justice group that serves to empower Latinos to achieve their American Dream.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I am running for this seat because I see how much it’s been economically depressed by its legacy of segregation and I know I can work to turn things around for its residents. I have experience investing in many local organizations that build opportunity. I believe my background in using resources and bringing the right people together can serve district 70 towards a brighter future. My background as a practicing attorney and a public defender has helped me understand that many people, especially people of color who suffer injustices that keep our community economically and socially depressed. I’m running because I want to break that legacy.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected? The most important issue affecting this district is the legacy of systemic racism and segregation which has left it economically and socially depressed. I would address this issue by investing in local leaders willing to take the community out of the shadows and connecting them with as many local resources as well as support necessary to raise a strong new generation of leaders. You can’t talk about empowerment without talking about money for economic investment to grow good local jobs that can build our community. Also, too many of our communities have been places with poor air and water quality, as well as ground pollution and littered natural environments. You only need to look at places like Flint, Michigan to see how much we can hurt our communities when we don’t respect our environment. As your next representative of district 70, I will make sure that our community never becomes a dumping ground.
Florida House of Representatives, District 70

Dan Fiorini
Democrat

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Background:
Born in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Florida resident since 1987 and resident of Pinellas County since 2000; single. Attended Southeastern University, Washington DC--Government Management concentration; Owner: Tyrone Frame and Mirror, St Petersburg, FL.

In what community organizations have you been active?
President, the Wave Condominium Association, Home Visit Inspector; DARE (Dachshund Adoption, Rescue and Education); Member, Greater Pinellas Point Civic Association; Member, Florida Rail Passengers Association; Contributing Member, WUSF Public Broadcasting (NPR); Founding Sponsor of St Pete Pride; Founding Member of the Stonewall Democrats of Pinellas County; Past Board Member, ASAP (AIDS Service Association of Pinellas); Member of the Pinellas County Democratic Executive Committee; Member of the Democratic Environmental Caucus of Florida; Business Sponsor, American Stage; Business Sponsor for Studio@620; Contributing Member to HRC (Human Rights Campaign); Past Vice Chair, Hernando County Tourist Development Council.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I’m not a career politician or an attorney. I’m a straight talking businessman who has had enough of gridlock. As a former Legislative Aide in Tallahassee, I know how to get things done. I have a proven record of passing legislation. My background also includes union and urban planning background. I began my professional career as a municipal urban planner specializing in human service and physical development planning. As a grant writer, I was awarded grants to establish numerous programs and, later, became the first Executive Director of Vision New Britain in New Britain, CT.

My career highlights include:
- Former Florida House Legislative Aide to State Representative Helen Spivey, where I researched, drafted and participated in passing legislation
- Former Legislative Liaison to Congress for the Secretary of the Air Force; I worked in the Office of Advanced Technology, United States Special Operations Command
- Former Director of Public Affairs for Connecticut’s largest independent union, CUTW (Connecticut Union of Telecommunication Workers)
- Presently, owner of Tyrone Frame and Mirror, a successful picture frame business in Pinellas County

Endorsements: I have been endorsed by the National Organization for Women (NOW), St Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman, former State Representative and environmentalist Helen L. Spivey, St. Petersburg City Councilwoman Lisa Wheeler, Community Activist Corey Givens, Jr., and the Democratic Environmental Caucus of Florida, West Central Chapter.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?
My number one priority is to restore funding to Planned Parenthood.
I support: Fight for 15 Living Wage movement; Wage theft legislation; Trade with Cuba; Light Rail and Electric Bus; Solar and wind initiatives; Head Start and early childhood programs; and Federal Medicaid dollars to insure everyone.
I oppose: Special interest sales tax exemptions; Private toll roads; Fracking or oil drilling of any kind in the state or offshore.
Background: Born and raised St. Petersburg Florida (52 years). Married to my soul mate Melissa Newton for 25 years. We have four children: Anthonio, Brandon, Wengay Jr., and Chelsea, and six grandchildren. Elected to City of St. Petersburg Council, November 2007; re-elected in 2011 - 8 years of Governance. Term limited, January 2, 2016.


Government Experience: Elected Official, City of St. Petersburg--8 yrs of governance; Community Development Block Grant Committee, Consolidated Plan Ad Hoc Application Review Committee, Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority, PSTA Legislative Committee, PSTA Nominating Committee, Chair, Youth Services Committee, Budget, Finance and Taxation, Public Services and Infrastructure, Housing Services, Emergency Medical Systems Ad-Hoc, Co-Sponsored Events, Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, Metropolitan Planning Organization, Pinellas Planning Council, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council, TBRPC Legislative Subcommittee, Florida League of Cities – Personal, Finance and Taxation, Florida League of Cities – Florida Black Caucus Of Local Elected Officials (FBC-LEO)City Council Vice-Chair 2012

In what community organizations have you been active? Member of the Westminster Heights Neighborhood Association, Downtown Rotary, Midtown Rotary, Friends of Weedon Island Board of Directors, Pinellas County HIPPY Program Advisory Committee, Chair. Served on boards for the Boys and Girls Club, Job Corps Advisory, Carrera After School Program Advisory, First Tee Program, 5000 Role Models of Excellence and Suncoast Tiger Bay Board of Directors, Meals On Wheels, Gulfport Chamber Of Commerce, St. Pete Lil Devils Advisory Committee, Member of NAACP, Pinellas Democratic Black Caucus, Florida Black Caucus Of Local Elected Officials, City of St. Petersburg's Nuisance Abatement Board, Duces Live Main Street Board, Kind Mouse Board, Newt's Annual Appreciation Bar-B-Que.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position? I’m running for Florida House District 70 because I want to continue to work hard representing the community that has given my family and me so much love. Real leadership is about self-sacrifice, commitment and truly caring about people. I'm the only candidate with ballot name recognition in 65% of the House District 70's voting precincts, and the voters know me. I will serve the entire district, from Round Lake (St. Petersburg) to Newtown (Sarasota), and everything in between. It would be an honor and a privilege to serve you in Tallahassee.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected? Education, Living Wage Jobs, Affordable Housing, Medicaid Expansion and our Infrastructure. Will support or propose legislation that would fully funds these areas of greatest need.
Florida House of Representatives, District 73

Joe Gruters
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Background:

I am a fourth generation Sarasotan. My great grandfather, William Hobson, moved the family to Sarasota in 1922 to serve as the chief tent maker for Ringling Circus.

I graduated from Cardinal Mooney High School in 1996 and am a graduate of both the Florida State University and the University of South Florida (MBA). I have worked in public accounting for the last six years, and am a licensed Certified Public Accountant and owner of Gruters CPA.

I have worked for Congressman Vern Buchanan (FL-13) in both corporate and political roles. I began in 2000 and served as Campaign Manager for Buchanan’s successful 2008 re-election campaign. I am married to Sydney Gruters and we have two boys, Spencer and Jack, and a baby girl, Elizabeth Rose.

In what community organizations have you been active?

For the last 20 years I have been working at the grass roots level, as both a party activist and leader, including having served as Congressman Buchanan’s Campaign Manager, as President of the Young Republicans, as a volunteer on numerous campaigns, as Vice Chairman of the Republican Party of Florida and for the last 7 years as the Chairman of the Republican Party of Sarasota County.

I am an active member of the community and local government. I previously served as Chairman of the Sarasota Planning Commission, on the Board of the Florida Sports Foundation and served on as Treasurer for the Sarasota Humane Society. I currently serve on the Board of Trustees for Florida State University. I also serve on the University of South Florida Community Leadership Counsel at the Sarasota Campus.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?

As a CPA and small business owner I understand the cost of business regulation and taxes on working families. I love our area and will do everything I can to continue to make Manatee and Sarasota the best possible place to live and work.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?

We need to continue to work on improving the economy and I will be a consistent advocate for policies that promote growth, expands opportunities and improves our quality of life. A strong education system improves the overall well being of the community and we need to empower parents with school choice, eliminate common core and keep Florida colleges and universities affordable and competitive.

LWVM voting tip #1: Be sure to vote in the Primary Election! Even if you do not belong to a political party, there will be plenty of voting opportunities on the ballot for you. Many races are nonpartisan, and some partisan races will be open to all voters. There will also be an amendment on the ballot.
Florida House of Representatives, District 73

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Background: I was born in Chicago and raised in the near north suburb of Niles. I've lived primarily in the Chicago area except for 10 years in Colorado, outside Denver. Lakewood Ranch is now my home; I've lived in Florida for the last 15 years, being a resident of Florida District 73 for 10 years. I recently married Alicia Evans, my political soul mate and Chief of Staff. I have two grown children and three grandchildren living in the Chicago area. I am a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, joining soon after High School, and serving from 1965-1967 during the Vietnam era. I received my undergraduate degree in Business Administration from the University of Illinois, Chicago and a Masters of Business Administration from DePaul University in Chicago. I retired from IBM a few years ago, where I was a Contracts Negotiator for 15 years. Before that I was a Section Chief for the Federal Deposit Insurance Company (FDIC) negotiating troubled assets from failed banks for 6 years. Prior to that my business career of 25 years was in Banking. Additionally, during 50 years of working I was also a small business owner of a retail shop, and am still engaged part time in a couple of small businesses.

In what community organizations have you been active? Presently, I am the President of the Lakewood Ranch Republican Club and have been on the LWRRC Board for four years and a member for six years. Previously, I was the President of Tea Party Manatee and on their Board for seven years. I have worked on several political campaigns in Florida, including Governor Rick Scott, U.S. Senator Marco Rubio and Presidential campaigns. I am a strong activist, and belong to numerous Patriot groups including the Sons & Daughters of Liberty (aka the Florida Alliance), FreedomWorks, American Heritage, Americans for Prosperity, and Concerned Veterans of America. I am an active member of the Manatee County Republican Executive Committee.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position? I am running for one primary reason, to move this Country back to the principles that made this country great. The Principles of:
- Free Enterprise, not big money influence and cronyism.
- Fiscal Restraint and Responsibility, not runaway spending, deficits and debt.
- Limited Constitutional Government, not overly excessive Regulation, Legislation by the Executive or Judicial branches, or out of control Bureaucracies.
- Individual liberty and responsibility, not collective imposition and government tyranny.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office and how would you deal with them if elected? The most important issues facing the Legislature today are: the influence of dark money on our candidates and legislators; the enticement of big money on our elected officials; the neglect of the Peoples’ will in favor of the establishment, the elites, and the ruling political class. I would correct this by being a principled legislator who will not abandon my core values in favor of monetary gain, power or prestige. I do not have personal ambitions. I am not running to start a lifelong career in politics, I simply want to honorably represent the People of my District and do right by them. I would always put their well-being over the power brokers who wish to benefit only themselves. Money doesn’t matter to me, power doesn’t matter to me, personal ambition or monetary gain does not matter to me, but making a positive difference in the lives of my constituents does matter to me – immensely. I want to be a Champion of We the People because politicians have forgotten them. As I Legislator, I would consider every piece of legislation through the eyes of a Public Servant. I would consider the legislation through the filter of my core values and guiding principles. I will not consider them by who donated or will donate to my campaign. I will not be guided by lobbyists, and I will never put their interests above the interests of We the People.
Manatee County Commission, District 1

Corie Holmes
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Background: I am a Manatee County native and a graduate of Manatee High School. I received a degree from the Law Enforcement Police Academy at Hillsborough Community College. I have 12 years experience with the Manatee County Sheriff's Office as a certified deputy and volunteer with dual certifications in Law Enforcement and Corrections. In 2005, I left the Manatee County Sheriff's Office to work for Criminal Defense Attorney Mark Lipinski as his in-house investigator. I opened my own business in 2010, offering investigative consulting to attorneys for police and other justice-related issues. I'm a trainer and safety officer with Manatee County Schools Transportation Department. My mother is a resident of the City of Palmetto and longtime resident of North Palmetto area. My father is also a longtime resident of the north Palmetto area. He now resides in South Carolina. I have five siblings: an older brother, older sister, and three younger sisters.

In what community organizations have you been active? NAACP, SCLC, Manatee County Black Chamber of Commerce, IMG Academies, ACT-Active Concerned Teens, and current Board Member with New Path Academy.

Why are you running for office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position? I am running because District 1 deserves a commissioner who is not a rubber stamp for corporate welfare. I bring what District one has been missing for entirely too long: honesty, fairness and integrity. I have the passion and skills necessary to communicate effectively with people from many walks of life, and I come with a commitment to be wise and prudent with the people's hard-earned money.

What are the most important issues facing this office, and how would you address them if elected? The budget is the most important issue facing citizens from every walk of life in Manatee County. Our county is facing a major budgetary crisis that the current BOCC and County Administrator are only this year admitting to. Even so, they are not discussing the need to replenish our dwindling Emergency Reserve Fund. The county continues year after year to increase its bond debt while, at the same time, the Emergency Reserve Fund has been depleted to levels too low for comfort. I want to establish a Blue Ribbon Commission that includes representatives from the stakeholders to find a way to replenish the Fund. Once we have a plan for accomplishing that, we need to take strong measures to prevent it from becoming a slush fund for special interests.

It is also high-time for good governance and leadership. This is precisely why we are experiencing a budget crisis in the first place. It has become standard operating procedure for county government and administration to ignore the warnings of citizens about problems involving the budget and instead “kick the can down the road” until there is a crisis. In the past we saw the regularity of this indifference regarding the county's bankruptcy of the Indigent Care Fund, and it has been the rub for nearly a decade regarding the political will to vote for maximum allowable developer’s impact fees under state law. Even now, the county refuses to vote for maximum allowable developer’s impact fees. Instead, it has proposed a regressive sales tax that will punish the least wealthy the most.

As District 1 Commissioner, I will demand that the county undertake a cost of services study, which has not been conducted in Manatee since 1986. We also need to re-think how we approach the continued increase in Manatee’s population, because what we have been doing is not sustainable and runs the risk of bankrupting the county. Where does all the property tax revenue go? You would think with so much development in the county, Manatee would be awash in revenue but it is not. This is why I’m calling for a cost of services study, and I am asking voters to start demanding it. After we have conducted such a study, I’d like to develop policy based on that hard-won research—and not the usual guessing games and pandering to corporate welfare.
An important issue facing Manatee County is its continued growth. As a former Florida House of Representative member and former Speaker Pro Tempore of the Florida House, I have the skills to work within our governmental system and to make tough choices as needed.

In what community organizations have you been active?

Univ. of South Florida Community Leadership Council (Past Chair)
Employers Support for the Guard and Reserves (Past Chair)
Hernando DeSoto Historical Foundation (Past Chair)
Manatee Insurance Agents Association (Past Chair)

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?

I am running to ensure that Manatee County’s growth is properly managed and to work to continue to improve our quality of life and make Manatee County an even better place to live.

As a former Florida House of Representative member and former Speaker Pro Tempore of the Florida House, I have the skills to work within our governmental system and to make tough choices as needed.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?

An important issue facing Manatee County is its continued growth. I will work to properly and smartly manage this growth, thus strengthening and diversifying our economy and creating new jobs.

**LWVM voting tip #2: Be an Early Bird!**

You can vote in the Primary Election at any one of these locations from Saturday, August 20 thru Saturday August 27, from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm.

- Lakewood Ranch Town Hall, 8175 Lakewood Ranch Blvd, 34202
- Palmetto Library, 923 6th St W, Palmetto 34221
- Rocky Bluff Library, 6750 US Hwy 301, Ellenton 34222
- Supervisor of Elections Office, 600 301 Blvd W, Bradenton 34205
- West Manatee Fire & Rescue, 6417 3rd Ave W, Bradenton 34209
Manatee County Commission, District 1

Priscilla Whisenant Trace
Republican

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FB:  Priscilla Whisenant Trace

Background:
I was born and raised in Manatee County. I attended Palmetto High School and after graduation went to the University of Florida. I returned home to Parrish with a B.S. Degree in Horticulture. After marrying my high school sweetheart, we started Ellenton Nursery Inc. in 1981. Our son Blake was born in 1983. I am proud to say he is carrying on our family business. This provides me with the time to serve my community and run for office.

In what community organizations have you been active?

- Past President of Palmetto Elementary SAC
- Past President of Palmetto High SAC
- Started FNGLA plant sale at Manatee County Fair
- Past President of Manasota FNGLA
- Served on Past Extension Agent’s Boards
- Past President of the Manatee County Agricultural Museum
- Past President of the Baptist Campus Ministry
- Past Sunday School Teacher
- Presently serving on Commercial Horticulture Agent’s Board
- 2015 Agriculturalist of the year
- Member of the Palmetto Friends of the Library
- Board Member of the Manatee County Agriculture Museum
- Member of the Manatee County Fair

What are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?

I am running for this office because I feel that my knowledge of District 1 will enable me to help make good decisions. We are at a crossroads. With the influx of new people our way of life is being threatened. We need to make sure we protect our environment and wildlife. Our roads and bridges need improvements to keep up with the growth. With my experience in land use and business, I know I can aid our County.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?

One of the most important issue is communicating and working together. The lack of communication with the State, local municipalities, and the residents is becoming a huge problem. I want to become Commissioner to help bridge this gap. By improving communication, we can start working on the obvious issues of traffic, infrastructure, under-funded emergency personnel, and growth.

If elected, I would like to meet with all municipalities, community leaders, and state reps to form a plan and prioritize issues so we can implement the plan to preserve the quality of life and work together.
Manatee County Commission, District 5

Vanessa Baugh
Republican

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Background:
I was first elected to the County Commission in 2012 and am Chairman of the Board this year. My husband, Don, and I own Vanessa Fine Jewelry in Lakewood Ranch and have been in business for 16 years. We have been married for 24 years and have 4 children and 10 grandchildren.

Also, I am on the Port Authority for Port Manatee and a member of the Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization as well as serving 2 years as Chairman of the Tourist Development Council.

In what community organizations have you been active?

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I have had my own successful business for almost two decades and in the worse economic times that we have seen in our lifetime. I know what it is like to keep a budget balanced, meet payroll, and deal with the growing impact of government regulations. I know what is needed for business to create jobs, keep taxes low, and strive for fiscal responsibility. Also, I have been involved in Manatee. You must be involved in the community if you want to be a leader in the community.

In the past 4 years as a County Commissioner I have gained better insight to the shortcomings of the County and the need to increase law enforcement and public safety. We need someone who has a good relationship with FDOT to work to build new roads and repair others in order to ease the traffic problems caused by old roads and the growth we are experiencing. You have to be able to build relationships and compromise to increase a better quality of life for our residents.

There are a lot of big decisions in Manatee County that the Commission will be faced with in the near future such as hiring a new County Administrator, several Director positions and, healthcare needs, just to name a few. This is not the time to be weak, it is a time for strong leadership and experience to keep moving us forward. It is a time for good communication with the residents and working together.

What are the most important issues facing this office, and how would you address them if re-elected?
Job creation: We must get people working and earning a fair wage. We must diversify our economy by pulling in new businesses to Manatee County and not depending strictly on tourism and real estate. We need to look at the county budget line by line and cut where we can, be fiscally responsible in order to keep taxes low, better fund law enforcement and make those tough decisions in order to improve the quality of life in Manatee. Build new roads and repair those that we already have to help with the congestion. Lobby the State of Florida on home rule and no more unfunded mandates.
Manatee County Commission, District 5

Kathleen Grant
Republican

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Background:
Education:  JD cum laude, Fordham University; MBA in Finance, New York University; BA, Mount Holyoke College.
Experience:  25+ years in financial, legal, strategic planning and communications positions with corporate leaders, including J.P. Morgan, MetLife, Altria, Hill & Knowlton, Fleishman-Hillard and Shearman & Sterling.

In what community organizations have you been active?
- 7 years as treasurer for Lakewood Ranch Community Development District 2
- 5 years as board member, including 3 years as treasurer for Watercrest Condominium Association
- 7 years as mentor with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Sarasota

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I am running for this office to give Manatee County District 5 residents a voice on the county commission, a voice that will be accountable to the voters, not just moneyed special interests. My decisions with respect to zoning and development, or tax and spending issues, will be based on reasonable and achievable priorities – most importantly, the safety and welfare of citizens, while always balancing costs and benefits.

I believe my financial and legal education and experience clearly demonstrate that I have the skills and knowledge needed to effectively and intelligently approach and manage the issues facing the county. I also have the commitment to make a positive difference on the County Commission.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?
I believe the most important issue facing this office is budgeting and spending. I will institute real zero based budgeting, in which the budget of every department and office must be fully justified from a “zero base.” I will not accept budgets based simply on a comparison to the prior year. I will not accept across the board salary increases for every department and office without comparable market-based information.

I will also not approve any unbudgeted expenditure during the year that is not required for the safety and welfare of citizens, such as the annual $28,000 “tax refund” to the city of Bradenton for Pirate City, or $300,000+ for a satellite building services office on leased property. Most importantly, I will not abdicate my responsibility to determine tax and spending priorities for the county to an unelected body, such as was done with the recent infrastructure sales tax referendum.

With respect to zoning and development, I will not approve zoning changes that are simply for the benefit of a few, but to the detriment of area residents. I will not approve development that cannot be accommodated by infrastructure (schools, roadways) that is either existing or funded and scheduled. Finally, I will prioritize infrastructure improvements that are needed for safety reasons.
Manatee County School Board, District 1

Xtavia Bailey

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Background: I was fortunate to be raised in Manatee County, where I attended the public schools, graduating from Manatee High. I am married to Edward Bailey and we share two children, Amara, 14 and Edward Bailey Jr., 12, who both attend schools in Manatee County. My husband is a veteran, a sergeant in the United States Marines Corps. We are committed as a family to serving our community. My mother always expressed the importance of education and mother-in-law realtor Nettie Bailey helped many minorities receive their first home. I worked my way through college receiving an A.S. in Medical Assisting and a B.A. Criminal Justice Leadership from Keiser University. Graduate from MTI Police Academy.

Work Experience: Currently Co-Owner of Exb Inc. One Stop Credit Repair financial services. Former Florida Regional Director and teacher of the Amer-I-Can Life Skills and Anti-gang program. Financial Advisor/Trainer at JPMorgan Chase Bank Credit Card Division, Accounts Manager at JPMorgan Chase Bank Mortgages & Automobile loans, Procurement Specialist for Asset Management LLC.

In what community organizations have you been active?
I have had leadership roles in dozens of community organizations, including: Manatee County American Association University of Women, North Manatee Kiwanis, Manatee County Children’s Service Advisory Board, Take Stock in Children Community Council, NAACP Youth Council Advisor, Manatee County Superintendent Budget Review Committee--Lands and facilities& Operations, Bradenton Boys and Girls Club, Volunteer Life Skills Instructor for Juvenile Males at Port Manatee Jail, Family Safety Alliance, Leadership Manatee, Manatee Chamber Young Professional.

Why are you running for office and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I am running for office because of my passion for education, and my wish to serve the community. I want to make sure that all children and families who desire an education are provided an opportunity to achieve success through a great educational system. I understand that the community--the taxpayers-- want accountability and transparency in the decision making for our district. I have worked in community mentoring and in positions directly affecting young people for over 15 years. I have been an advocate for children’s safety, early childhood education, and encouraging children to seek out opportunities for a better future. I believe my experience serving on many boards and in the classroom would be a great asset to the board.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how you would deal with them if elected? Our children must come first. Every child in Manatee County must be afforded an opportunity to have the best educational system. Parental participation is critical to the success of students. I propose that we build strong relationships between the district, parents, and the families of our students. I believe children begin learning at home and we must promote, encourage, and empower our parents to be involved in every aspect of their child’s learning development. Partnering to focus on early learning development and grade level reading to help increase graduation rates.

Support our teachers. We have some of the best teachers in the entire state. We must support them and let it be known that we as a district will encourage them and supply them with the resourcesthey need to educate our children. We must find a way to pay our teachers more than our neighboring counties or we will continue to lose the new ones after the first two years.

Engaging our community: As a board member; I will be a good steward of taxpayer’s dollars, ensuring fiscal responsibility and balancing affordability with the financial needs of our schools. I will focus on schools being built that are needed to satisfy growth and forward-thinking; using cutting edge technology, and a multi-purposeSTEM technical high school that will ensure our students will be on the path to success for the future. I will do this through conservative leadership, accountability, fiscal responsibility, and transparency.
Manatee County School Board, District 1

Gina Messenger

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Background:
As a product of Manatee County Schools, my love for education started at a young age. My grandmother was an educator for many years in Manatee County, and she helped my parents instill a love of learning in me. After receiving my degree in education from the University of Central Florida, I embarked on the challenge that is teaching in Title I, low income, public schools. Throughout my years of teaching, I discovered how important education is, especially for low-income children. Through education, families can grow out of poverty. I believe that all children can learn and be successful because I saw it in my own classroom.

During my time as an educator, I have been able to share ideas effectively as a teacher, mentor, and team leader. My focus was always to create a positive environment in order to make it a great place for children to learn. As a school board member, I will bring these same qualities to the board room. With no business conflicts of interest, I can consider all factors for each issue fairly, listen to the community, and put the children's interests first. Now, as a new mom, education takes on a whole new meaning. My daughter will one day begin school here in Manatee County. I want for her what I had here growing up: a beautiful place to live and learn. Education is a field that takes heart and dedication. As a school board member, I understand what it's like to be a teacher, mentor and a parent. I believe in being involved in our schools and community and would love the opportunity to become our next School Board Member for District 1.

In what community organizations have you been active?
None. I am not a politician who has sat on many boards. Our School Board needs an educator, not a politician.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I have knowledge of the public school system with 6 years as a public school teacher in Title I, low-income, schools teaching at-risk students in multiple counties. While teaching in Marion and Orange County, I taught in many different types of communities. I have experience with rural and inner-city schools. In each school, I worked with parents and other teachers to ensure maximum learning. I would like to take these skills to the Manatee County School Board so that all communities are represented.
I was also a mentor teacher to many teachers entering the field and was also a Team Leader. My hands-on approach to working with teachers would be beneficial to the school board. I would like to use these skills to visit schools and local communities to learn about and address their concerns for their students.
Furthermore, I was rated “Highly Qualified Teacher” in Orange County, 2013 -2014 school year. I am a results oriented person, and I always expect my students to excel. I would bring this expectation to the board room, expecting great things from this county and helping along the way to achieve our goals for greatness.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?
Our school district is facing many issues. We are having a hard time retaining great teachers and our reading scores are far below that state’s average. Trust is a large part of the district’s problem because the community has seen many deceitful board decisions. With no bias, loyalties, or special interest groups, I can listen to my constituents and reflect their opinion in my school board votes. The community needs to see where their tax dollars are being spent and what their tax dollars are spent on; therefore, I support reinstating an oversight committee that can look at that more carefully. Furthermore, we need to ensure that the maximum amount of money is reaching our classrooms. As a teacher, I can more easily prioritize our needs because I have seen what is effective in a classroom.
Manatee County School Board, District 1

Linda Schaich

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Background: Prior to moving to Florida, I owned and operated 5 contractor equipment rental centers and two John Deere Dealerships in Southern California. Federally Licensed IRS Enrolled Agent.

In what community organizations have you been active?
- Mote Aquarium, 10 years as guide at aquarium and also mobile unit
- Boys and Girls Club Volunteer, leading to a paid position
- Gulf Coast Railroad
- Pelican Man Bird Sanctuary
- President of Community Foundation – Calif.
- Vice President of Education Foundation – Calif
- Los Caballeros (Hispanic Youth Diversion Project) – Calif
- Optimist Club – Calif

Why are you running for this office and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?

I am the only candidate in my district that can say that for the past 8 years I have attended and spoken at most of the board meetings and workshops. My experience on the following school district committees qualifies me for the challenging job of managing a budget of $700 million:

- Sales Tax Committee
- Budget Committee
- Land and Facilities Committee
- Superintendent Search Committee

When running for this same position in 2012, I was one of the first people to bring to light that the school district administration and the board were covering up deficits. Within 6 weeks after the election, the district finances imploded, eventually revealing that the district was hiding deficits totaling about $50 million.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?

The present administration has serious issues of trust to address. I would hope that while on the board, we could establish accountability by the district. The ultimate goal is to gain more local control of the school district. Our teachers and students have been punished for the district mismanagement of their funding.

LWVM voting tip #3. Did you know you can vote by mail? It's the most convenient option for casting your ballot. Request a mailed ballot by calling (941) 741-3823, or request online at www.votemanatee.com. You can see your sample ballot now. Visit www.votemanatee.com, and click on "My Sample Ballot"
Manatee County School Board, District 1

Edward G. Viltz

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Facebook: Edward G Viltz for School Board
Twitter: @VoteViltz

Background: Personal history, education, occupation, family, etc.
My initial involvement in the Manatee County education community was as a consultant to a failing Title I charter school serving Manatee’s poorest communities. I was a major contributor to the development and implementation of a plan that turned around the school’s performance from an “F” to an “A” (by Florida State standards) in three years. I have worked for the last six years mentoring and teaching math to “at risk” students at the Team Success School. My work assisted in the 2014 math proficiency being higher than the county and state average. Previously, in Washington, D.C., I worked with the Small Business Administration, and with the One America initiative to open a dialogue on race relations nationwide. I was an invited guest at the White House on several occasions and attended the inaugural balls of three U.S. Presidents.

Through work with the US Department of State, I established the first wireless Internet connection and computer learning center for an African secondary school in Livingston, Zambia, and coordinated a school-to-school partnership with the Thomas Jefferson High School in Washington D.C. In the nonprofit sector, I successfully served as the first president of the nonprofit top-level Internet domain (.ORG) and established a worldwide reputation for outreach to developing countries through education, training and technology initiatives. This followed a successful 20-year career as an IBM executive and entrepreneur. I have a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology and a Master’s degree in Organizational Management. I attended the Harvard Graduate School of Business as a member of the “IBM Presidents Class” and was also a 1993 inductee into “Who’s Who in Black America.” I have been an active resident of Manatee County for over 10 years. I have three grown children (all with graduate degrees) and am a proud grandfather of six.

In what community organizations have you been active?
I served on the Board of Governors at Syracuse University (School of Information Studies) and Fielding Graduate University. I have also been a visiting professor and guest lecturer at Florida A&M University, Howard University and Florida Memorial University. I am currently a member of the Centerstone (Manatee Glens) Board of Directors and a member of Bradenton Kiwanis

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
Our School Board is about to encounter many critical forks in its road. It faces a community that is demanding a change in the status quo. Simultaneously, new systems are being proposed to automate antiquated processes, additional programs are pending that can potentially revolutionize learning, growth in student population is accelerating, and key decisions are coming about the future of our schools. The paths we need to take, and the decisions we need to make, over the next 4 years demand a School Board with members experienced in negotiating change, choosing the right paths, and guiding others to find their right paths.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?
The most pressing are: getting the half cent sales tax extended to help provide required financial resources, more focus on the needs of the students versus political agendas and re-establishing trust between the board and all community stakeholders. The issues require a change agent that can build consensus through transparency and collaboration without a political agenda. This will be a welcomed responsibility.
Manatee School Board, District 3

Charles Conoley

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Background:
I am a 30-year, Florida resident with 28 years spent in Manatee County as a Community Banker, 12 years serving as the founding President, CEO and Director of Horizon Bank, and I continue as CEO and serve on the Board of Directors for the public holding company, Manasota Group, Inc. (HZNB). I also served as the SVP/Senior Credit Officer and part of the Executive Management Team of the $1 Billion, Barnett Bank of Manatee County (now part of Bank of America), as well as stints as a loan officer with the old American Bank of Bradenton and First National Bank of Indiana. I recently accepted a position with Florida Capital Bank as a Senior Vice President, specializing in government guaranteed lending for commercial enterprises (primarily SBA loans and USDA Rural Development Business & Industry loans), having held a similar position with 1st Manatee Bank the past five years.

My wife Josie and I have four children, three of which graduated from the Manatee County School system, with two still in college. Born in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in Columbus, Indiana, I am a product of a large family (7 children!) of very modest means, and educated in a public school system, finishing 7th in a class of 480 and becoming a National Merit Scholarship Finalist winner. I graduated with a B.S. in Industrial Management from Purdue University (West Lafayette, IN) and also received a MBA in Finance and Accounting from Indiana University (Bloomington, IN).

In what community organizations have you been active?
Served on many boards (Junior Achievement of Manatee County Board of Directors for 12 years, Red Cross of Manatee County, and Sertoma Club of Bradenton as examples) as well as coaching youth sports including Basketball and Little League Baseball at Bray Park in West Bradenton. I have logged several hundred hours as a teaching volunteer for Junior Achievement, having taught real world economics to students at Sugg and King Middle Schools, as well as to students at Palmetto High School and Rowlett Elementary School.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
With all my children now out of school and in a career that allows me a great deal of flexibility in regards to time to devote to community service, I feel I am in a unique position to give back to the community by protecting our tax dollars and at the same time add real value to the future education of our young residents. I believe my extensive background in finance, strategic planning, budgeting and large project management, as well as my many years serving on both a public Corporate Board as well as numerous not-for-profit community Boards, would make me an ideal candidate to bring professionalism and a deep level of understanding to the financial management and strategic planning of our local School Board.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?
Fiscal Management and Strategic Planning are the key issues, and will continue to be the key issues facing our School Board. Sound financial principles are needed to attract and retain teachers of high caliber and provide facilities that are modern and safe for our students to have the best chance for success, keeping in mind that our local residents tax dollars (property and sales tax) are significant expenses to our citizens and the School system needs to be prudent in the use of these monies.
Dave “Watchdog” Miner

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Background: Born St. Petersburg, FL; Honorably Discharged United States Marine Corps Vietnam Veteran. Graduate of Amherst College, B.A., and University of Detroit Law School, Juris Doctor. Career: Assistant City Attorney, Corunna, Michigan; Resident Asst. State Attorney, Desoto County, Florida; Asst. Manatee County Attorney; Owner of Law Office of David W. Miner. Family: Wife, Marsha; daughter Sarah and son Joseph, both graduates of Manatee Public Schools. Awards: Zeta Phi Beta “Children’s Advocate of the Year” Award; Father of the Year; Sunshine Brigade Hero; SCLC “Drum Major for Justice” Award; Florida Attorney of the Year Nominee.

In what community organizations have you been active? Currently serve (unanimously elected) as Chairman of the Central Florida Public School Boards Coalition, consisting of 13 school districts and representing the families of over 1 million students; Past Chairman, Board of Trustees & Board of Christian Education, Sunday School Teacher, Congregational United Church of Christ; President and Director of Manatee Children’s Services; Director and Chairman of Manatee County Bar Association Constitution Bicentennial Committee; Chairman Manatee County Cable Television Advisory Board; Director Manatee Opportunity Council; Treasurer Manatee Healthy Start; President, Amherst College Alumni Association, SW Florida; Director, Sarasota/Manatee SCLC; Big Brother, Big Brother/Big Sisters; Governor, Southwest Florida – Florida Association of School Advisory Councils; Director, Florida Coalition for Assessment Reform; FAIRTEST; First Amendment Foundation; Marine Corps League, VFW, American Legion, DAV; Bradenton Kiwanis; Immediate Past President Anna Maria Island Kiwanis.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position? Our School District must continue the progress it has made during the four years I have served on the Board. When I joined the Board, the Superintendent had just resigned, the district was operationally millions of dollars in debt and operationally transparency was grossly lacking. With reforms that I helped institute, we have become fiscally and operationally stable, our operations and finances have been opened up to review by an audit committee composed of volunteer C.P.A.’s, our graduation rate has increased, and our award winning Manatee Technical College has become the envy of the nation.

I am the candidate who drafted Resolution 16-2 to eliminate “developers’ 50% impact fee discount”, who was instrumental in restoring a requirement that elementary students get at least 20 minutes per day for recess the candidate who drafted education reform legislation (“Truth in Testing” - Parents Right to Know Act); earned the nickname “Watchdog”.

My passion for children and improving their education is evidenced by my many years involvement in School Advisory Councils and attendance and speaking at School Board Meetings for over a decade before being elected. My willingness to contribute my understanding of the law, budgets, and other issues along with my persistence has prompted many reforms in School Board conduct. Continuing my commitments to the students and staff of our District, I have visited all 33 elementary schools, 11 middle schools, 7 high schools and 12 charter schools as well as the 4 campuses of Manatee Technical College.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if re-elected? The overriding issue for the School Board will always be to provide the highest quality education for our students. Achieving this requires always putting students first, allowing teachers to teach, requiring transparency of all district finances, voicing objection to state and federal declared policies seeking to take away local control of education, insisting that employees be treated fairly and receive fair wages and that teachers be treated and paid as professionals. We need to increase the compensation of all of our employees to be fair to them and to preserve their employment in our District.
Manatee County School Board, District 3

Misty Servia

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Background:
I have lived in the Sarasota/Bradenton area my entire life. I earned a bachelor of Science from FSU and have worked for 28 years as a certified planner in the private and public sectors. I am currently employed by King Engineering, am married to Joaquin Servia for 21 years, and together we have raised three, who have all attended Manatee County public schools.

In what community organizations have you been active?
Involved for 10 years with our local schools as a parent, mentor, and committee member. Deeply involved in our community – Manatee Community Federal Credit Union, Take Stock in Children, Manatee County Housing Authority, Manatee Tiger Bay, Bradenton Area EDC, Lakewood Ranch Business Alliance, Pace Center for Girls, Humane Society of Manatee County, Manatee Habitat for Humanity.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
I believe our school district urgently needs to re-establish and rebuild trust with the community, and to plan more effectively for the future. I don’t believe the current board member for District 3 is doing that. I am uniquely qualified to help lead the Board in this effort, because I am the mother of three Manatee school students (including one with special needs); have volunteered for the district for more than a decade; and have worked for almost three decades in a profession focused on looking out for the community.

My experience includes vast and frequent interaction with public and private sector leaders at all levels and years of managing large project budgets and communicating with diverse groups of people. I know the district as a parent, business woman, mentor, and special needs advocate. My entire career has been devoted to doing what is best for the community by protecting the health, safety, and welfare of all residents.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?
We need to rebuild trust between our School Board and community – most importantly by doing more listening, and less talking as a School Board. To achieve this, I will host regular town halls, at times convenient to working parents/residents. I will listen better and conduct better research, with the goal of making more informed decisions the first time, and ideally saving our district time and money.

Manatee needs to become a leader in pushing to end high-stakes testing so that smarter alternatives can be explored and applied. We must make sure our kids are meeting rigorous standards and being prepared to compete in a global market – but without the anxiety and inaccuracy of high-stakes testing. We can work to accomplish this through leveraging efforts with our chamber and maybe even other school districts. We also need to ensure our local policies of implementing state laws are favoring our kids to the greatest extent possible.

We must coordinate our efforts locally, regionally and statewide, to be more effective advocates at the state level for needed changes. I will push for a system that provides regular two-way communication with our legislators to discuss what is, and is not, working for our District. We need to ensure our legislators better understand that many state initiatives are not serving us well. We need to push for better state funding for our public schools and more control at the local District, and make sure that our teachers are being rewarded in the right ways for the right things.
Manatee County Property Appraiser

Chester C. Bullock
Republican

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www.vote4bullockmanatee.com


In what community organizations have you been active?
Served as Treasurer, Douglas Jacobson Residents Fund (Home for Veterans). Local neighborhood Community President. Treasurer for Southwest Florida Honor Flight. A previous School Board member. Scout Master for 14 years.

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?
Operating the office of the Property Appraiser at an effective level of service to the property owners of Manatee County.
Having transparency for the Property Appraiser Office so that ALL Property Owners will feel they are treated fairly, honestly and equally.
Helping our Military Veterans. Our Military veterans are experiencing tougher times than when they were serving our country without thinking of themselves. They need help to survive NOW!.
Taking account of our Senior citizens who are on fixed incomes. Many of our Seniors are having hard times and need some extra help. Compassion for our Seniors is needed NOW!
Helping all the residents of Manatee County to have a fair and equal representation when facing the appeals process. Appeals should not be held in a dark basement with Tax Payers feeling intimidated for wanting their side of the story heard.
All residents of Manatee County should to be able to get answers to their questions without having to wait for long periods or feeling as if they are bothering someone for calling to get their questions answered.
Open Town Hall meetings, and for the Property Appraiser Office to regularly go out and visit with the people they serve. The Property Appraiser's Office needs to know what are the NEEDS of the Property Owners?
Business entrepreneur for 40 years. Overseen businesses with as many as 50 to 500 employees. Knowing how to get the right pricing for equipment and materials without wasting money. Keeping employees enthusiastic about getting the job done correctly the first time, consequently saving money. Being informed about new technologies and procedures. Hands on managing of the Property Appraiser's Office. Set the work example for employees.

RIGHT PERSON. RIGHT TIME!

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if elected?
- Educating our ALL Property Owners of why and how their property appraisals are calculated.
- Transparency of what and how the Property Appraiser office operates.
- Making sure the Appeal process is FAIR to all Property Owners.
- Devoting a full time attitude and work ethic to making sure the County is served properly and without bias.
- Making sure the Property Appraiser Office is operated at a cost efficient level.
- Helping our Veterans and Seniors when they are over burdened with the appraisal and appeal process.
Manatee County Property Appraiser

Charles E. Hackney
Republican

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Background:
I am a lifelong Floridian. I and my wife, Niki, reside in Ellenton.
Following four years in the United States Air Force, I attended Manatee Junior College and earned my bachelor’s degree in Real Estate from Florida State University.

Prior to becoming your property appraiser, I spent 15 years as an independent appraiser serving several large clients and banks in the County. I took office as the Manatee County Property Appraiser in 1993. While in office, I earned the Certified Florida Appraiser (CFA) designation awarded by the Florida Department of Revenue. I am a member and past president of the Florida Association of Property Appraisers, a member of the International Association of Assessing Officers, and was an SRA Member of the Appraisal Institute from 1985 - 2004.

In what community organizations have you been active?

- Manatee Community College Board of Trustees (9 years)
- Kiwanis Club of Bradenton - Past President
- Manatee Community College Foundation (20 years)
- Hernando de Soto Historical Society – Past President (1986 Hernando de Soto)
- Bradenton Jaycee member

Why are you running for this office, and what qualities, experience and skills do you bring to this position?

From the first day on the job as your property appraiser, I have been committed to running the office as efficiently and in as cost-effective a manner as possible in order to save taxpayers' money while at the same time providing the best possible quality service to our citizens. I am very proud of what the office has accomplished since my election in 1992 and it is my desire to continue to serve the citizens of Manatee County.

I believe in leading by example. Integrity, a commitment to excellence and dependability are among the qualities I look for in the staff I hire to serve the people of Manatee County. I have staffed the office of the Property Appraiser with competent and experienced individuals and then entrusted them to demonstrate an attitude of courtesy and professionalism to the public we serve.

I have dedicated thirty-nine years of my professional and public life to the appraisal of Manatee County real estate. There is, I believe, no substitution for experience.

What do you see as the most important issues facing this office, and how would you deal with them if re-elected?

The biggest challenge facing our office is continuing to provide fair and equitable assessments on all County parcels during a time of rapid growth as we are now experiencing. We are proud of our on-going focus on maximizing the use of technology to produce a tax roll in a cost-efficient manner. For example, the use of aerial photography for inspecting some properties has resulted in a cost savings to taxpayers in reduced fuel and other fleet costs.
AMENDMENT FOUR

Origin: The Florida Legislature; passed unanimously by both House and Senate.
TITLE: Solar Devices Or Renewable Energy Source Devices; Exemption From Certain Taxation And Assessment.
BALLOT SUMMARY: Proposing an amendment to the State Constitution to authorize the Legislature, by general law, to exempt from ad valorem taxation the assessed value of solar or renewable energy source devices subject to tangible personal property tax, and to authorize the Legislature, by general law, to prohibit consideration of such devices in assessing the value of real property for ad valorem taxation purposes.

BALLOT SUMMARY IN PLAIN ENGLISH:
Amendment 4 would allow for a tax exemption for businesses who install solar panels or other renewable energy equipment on their business. So the value of the solar panels would be exempt from both the tangible personal property tax and real property taxes. Currently, the value of renewable energy equipment is only exempt from real property taxes on residential property.

A YES VOTE WOULD: Promote the use of more solar energy, both commercial & residential. Help Florida homeowners and businesses produce their own electricity. Potentially encourage businesses to invest in renewable energy devices.

A NO VOTE WOULD: Maintain the status quo. The value of all solar panels and other renewable energy equipment would continue to be subject to tangible personal property tax. The value of solar panels and other renewable energy equipment installed at businesses would continue to be subject to real property taxes. The solar industry would continue to underperform in Florida.

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