CONTRA REPUBLICANA

Volume II

the "Citizen" Letters

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Local Politics
& Florida History
2023 to 2026

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Collected editorials from ***"The Levy County Citizen,"*** newspaper of record for Levy County, and letters from the public archives of the Florida Department of State.

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Williston Highlands, FL
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our national rascals seem to receive all of the attention these days, but we must never forget that our local and state rascals should also be subjected to the same sort of close and constant supervision.

As a lifelong proponent of the printed word, I'd like to thank the editors and the general manager of The Levy County Citizen for publishing a diversity of this community's voices on actual sheets of paper for distribution to locations throughout the region.

It's my sincere hope that future conditions will allow them to continue fulfilling this essential social function.

Pastorialus Publius

October 2026

Letter (excerpt)

"And now my dear Sir, all hands to work, to set all the parts of the great acquired machine into some order, which I fear is all going to pieces without sufficient force in the commanding spring."

Shadrach Plebieanus
April 22 1783

"Constitutional Liberalism"

I've always tried to model my own liberalism on the principles and values I find in the Preamble of the United States Constitution. More than once, I've had to remind my conservative friends that this inspirational sentence consists of much more than just the three words, "We the People..."

I read its first stated purpose, the formation of a "more perfect union," as a clear declaration of inclusion, one that is undeniably progressive in its explicit call for continuous improvement.

The phrase, "establish justice" stands on its own as both a

purpose and a value, but it also encourages me to see constitutional equality (fully articulated in the Fourteenth Amendment) as an essential element of American justice, and it reminds me that no citizen should place their own interests above those of their fellow Americans.

When competing desires for individual and collective freedom create conflicts, I reflect upon what course of action will best "insure domestic tranquility" in the long term. I also see this principle as an unambiguous warning against the forms of ideological absolutism that can

tear civil societies apart (as the testimony of our recent experiences will bear witness).

I'm unable to ignore the word "common" in the phrase, "provide for the common defense." To me, it speaks to a communal purpose for our use of collective power. It must be in the service of protecting all citizens, not simply those who are fortunate enough to possess surplus property, and certainly not to unjustly advance the financial interests of individuals engaged in risky international commerce.

The penultimate principle is one that I rarely hear advocated

by my conservative friends. This directive is, "to promote the general welfare." I take it to mean that the goal of our constitutional government is to improve the lives of its citizens, all of them, and that this is to be done through the institutions of the democratic republic defined within this enlightened document. My interpretation of this foundational principle leads me to reject the dangerously flawed notion that we must shrink our democracy in order to give a few private interests dominion over this explicitly stated constitutional purpose.

I welcome thoughtful rebuttals to my arguments in the hopes of encouraging the type of productive conversations that every engaged citizen ought to be having. In the meantime, I remain thankful that I live at a time and in a place where I am still able to "enjoy the blessings of liberty" and I take the responsibility to pass these on to our posterity very, very seriously.

July 6, 2023

Levy County Citizen

"Return to Rosewood"

I'd like to thank Professor Dunn for his efforts to redress the silence that defined the history of this county for so long. I also feel

the need to respond, with appropriate shame and horror, to the hate crime that was perpetrated against this nationally-known scholar last Fall.

As we await sentencing, the question still echoes, "Do we really live in a place where this sort of thing still happens?" The jury has answered, "Yes."

Thankfully, it appears that justice is being served in this Rosewood assault, and I trust that it will be some time before Mr. Emanuel once again has the opportunity to use his truck as a deadly weapon to engage in racial violence. Despite everything, I see

meaningful progress in this outcome.

It's been only thirty years since Rosewood's long silence was broken by Minnie Lee Langley's heart-wrenching first-hand account of that cold January night when, as a tiny ten-year old, she hid among the overgrowth alongside other neighborhood children and watched her town, home to perhaps 300 American citizens, terrorized by a murderous mob of armed white supremacists, then burned to ashes and erased from the face of the earth.

Just days before the assault, the Gainesville Sun had announ-

ced a rally of the klan. Six weeks afterwards, a Grand Jury in Bronson determined there would be no prosecutions. Then, no one spoke of Rosewood... for almost seven decades...

Lessons learned from our local stories are as essential as they are universal. Though quite different in scale and scope, Dr. Dunn's recent experience provides us with harsh evidence that some aspects of our grim history are still with us. We mustn't let shame or fear blind us to the value of cautionary tales, even recent ones. Honest narratives, stories that are truly bound up in the deepest

heritage of the land, have real power. If we listen to them carefully, they can help us become a more resilient, more tolerant community.

August 31, 2023
Levy County Citizen

Subject: "HB7-22"

Mr. Clemons,

The appellate court has rejected your "Stop Woke Act." The court's ruling describes this bad-faith attack against my constitutional rights as a "sin" against the First Amendment. Earlier, the district judge went so far as to

characterize your bigoted legislation as, "positively dystopian."

Crafting state law should be a sober endeavor and I urge you to take your civic responsibilities much more seriously. All I'm asking is that you keep your deplorable prejudices to yourself and please stop depriving Floridians of their constitutional rights. After your term, it will take years to repair the social damage you've inflicted on this state.

PS: I take comfort in the fact that your corrupt effort (*re:* SB7050 s.99.012) to put a thumb on the

electoral scales for your political ally has also ended in failure [*c.f.* Gov. DeSantis' abortive presidential campaign].

March 08, 2024
@FlHouse.gov

"Pork Chop Supremacism"

The closing of the recent session in Tallahassee brings to mind the history of the "Pork Chop Gang." They were a powerful group of conservative state legislators who represented this region during the nineteen fifties and sixties. For many years, these segregationist lawmakers successfully deprived millions of Flori-

dians of their rights through unconstitutional legislation and tactics of fear (often in covert coordination with the nation's most infamous terrorist group).

One of their most effective tools of oppression was the "Johns Commission," named after one of their members, senator and former acting governor Charlie Johns from Starke. Under the guise of rooting out communism and homosexuality, the John's Commission investigated civil rights advocates, college professors, and other political opponents using tactics described by UF historian

Michael Gannon as, "formal legislative harassment."

What seems particularly relevant here, was the reactionary nature of their politics. The post 9-11 expression "They hate us for our freedoms," encapsulates the pork-choppers' opposition to newly enfranchised citizens trying to exercise their civil rights at the ballot box. The very idea of constitutional equality was so abhorrent to this group of legislators that they were willing to use any means, fair or foul, to destroy it.

In recent years, it appears that the expansion of human rights and effective access to voting have

triggered a similar reactionary blowback. New bills that specifically target pro-democracy groups and loving couples echo the sunshine state's darkest days. The governor's new militia should remind us of the time when the resources of this state were directed against its own citizens. Recent anti-diversity initiatives threaten to erase, and even falsify our history. More importantly, we must remember that the "Pork Chop Gang" claimed to be executing their god's will. We can only hope that their descendants arrive at a less destructive interpretation of that will.

March 21, 2024
Levy County Citizen

Subject: "SB254"

Mr. Clemons,

The Florida Supreme Court has ruled SB254 unconstitutional. Your bigoted attack against parents' rights and children's healthcare has failed. This particular brand of backwards and sadistic cruelty towards Florida's children should never ever have been a part of anyone's legislative agenda in the first place. You now own this complete failure of moral judgment. It's yet another dark

chapter in your compromised public legacy.

June 14, 2024
@FlHouse.gov

Subject: "SB774"

Mr. Clemons,

The federal court has ruled that SB774 violates the first amendment rights of candidates and local elected officials by compelling content-based speech.

It's wrong to violate citizens' constitutional rights. I shouldn't have to tell you that, but once again, here we are.

@FlHouse.gov
June 16, 2024

Subject: "Don't Aid & Abet"

Mr. Clemons,

Your contempt for the supreme law of this land has been a matter of public record for some time now and I remain extremely thankful for the federal judiciary's protections against the worst of your ideologically-driven legislative attacks. Although I have no specific information regarding your future intentions concerning this issue, I must assume that you're still working to deliver the highest office of the land into the hands of a convicted felon. I simply want to discourage you from aiding and abetting a

criminal. I can only hope that you'll finally begin to understand the dangerous situation you've helped create, although I'm not overly optimistic. Still, I find some comfort in your imminent departure from the position of responsibility that you currently occupy.

August 11, 2024
@FlHouse.gov

Subject: "HB1645"

Mr. Clemons,

It's my sincere hope that you and your family escaped hurricane Helene unscathed. Many didn't. A rational reaction to devastating

meteorological events would be to understand the underlying science behind these growing threats. Unfortunately your HB1645 has effectively silenced meaningful deliberation on climate change in Florida. You've stripped us of a life-saving resource, in the form of honest information. The outcome of your irresponsible legislation will certainly be more fatalities, only adding to your personal legacy of shame and disgrace.

September 30, 2024

@FlHouse.gov

Subject: "Frank Artiles"

Mr. Clemons,

A constitutionally authorized jury just convicted Frank Artiles on three criminal felony counts. During the trial, Pat Bainter testified under oath that Data Targeting, Inc. had hired Artiles to commit the electoral crimes listed in his indictment. Data Targeting, Inc. was the single largest recipient of financial support from your own political campaigns.

It was your choice to fund criminal voter siphoning scams that undermine the integrity of our state elections. Deceiving the electorate is apparently consistent with your personal values.

However, from my perspective, your corrupt involvement here simply stinks to high heaven.

October 2, 2024

@FlHouse.gov

Subject: "Campaign Question"

Mr. Johnson,

Congratulations on your primary win. November is approaching and I hope you'll be willing to address the concerns of a voter who must choose a candidate for the District 22 legislative seat in the upcoming general election.

On May 30, 2024, in the case of The People of the State of New

York v. Donald J. Trump, a constitutionally authorized jury unanimously convicted the defendant on thirty-four felony counts of falsifying business records. On July 15, 2024, at the Republican National Convention, this same individual was selected as a candidate for President of the United States.

As a Constitutional Conservative, please explain your position regarding convicted felons occupying the Office of the President. I look forward to your response to my inquiry with great anticipation. Thank you.

October 3, 2024

@johnsonforflorida.com

Subject: "Second Attempt"

Mr. Johnson,

I assume your campaign did not respond to my 10/03/24 inquiry due to an accidental oversight, so I'll use this opportunity to restate my concern in a more straightforward manner. Your honest reply to just one simple question should provide me with sufficient information to assess your critical judgment, your moral character, and your overall fitness for public office. Do you support Mr. Trump? Yes, or no?

Thank you in advance for helping me make this important decision, and please take care of yourself and your family as Hurricane Milton approaches.

Oct. 7, 2024
@johnsonforflorida.com

Subject: "Oath of Office"

Mr. Johnson,

When I registered to vote, I took the oath specified under Art. VI. Sec. 3 of the Constitution of the State of Florida to protect and defend the Constitutions of the United States and Florida.

I still take my oath very seriously and I honored it last

November, when I voted against a convicted felon under indictment for an act of insurrection against the United States of America.

Others chose to violate their oaths and they delivered the highest office in the land to a criminal with a well-documented record of constitutional violations. In so doing, they aided and abetted the obstruction of constitutional justice.

Just hours after taking office, this criminal issued the executive order, "Protecting the Meaning and Value of American Citizenship," a blatant attack against the constitutional rights of American

citizens, based upon self-evidently fraudulent claims regarding the judicial history of Amendment XIV.

Amendment XIV of the Constitution of the United States *still* remains the law of the land. The Executive *still* has no power under Art. II to amend the Constitution. This power is *still* reserved under Art. VI for a two-thirds majority of the federal legislative bodies and those of the several states.

Support for criminal attacks against the Constitution of the United States constitutes a violation of your oath of office.

Speak out against this violation immediately, or your silence will forever be interpreted as complicity. Your personal honor depends on it.

Jan. 6, 2025
@FlHouse.gov

"Felony-Convicted Ex-Legislator Discharged"

District 22's disgraced former state representative, Joe Harding (R) was released from federal prison following his conviction on six counts of wire fraud and money laundering as part of his attempt to defraud the Small Business Administration of

$150,000 in COVID-19 loans. He was sentenced to four months incarceration, two years probation, and a $300 fine. Harding served all but 30 days of his prison term and was released last April. In 2021 Harding introduced the "Parental Rights in Education Act," widely known as the "Don't Say Gay Bill," and in 2022 he introduced another measure targeting gay children, but that bill didn't move forward. Harding received national notoriety and wide-spread censure for his vigorous efforts to oppose constitutional equality. He is currently out among the

community, serving his federal probation sentence.

Williston Progress
Friday Jan.24, 2025

Subject: "SB4C"

Mr. Johnson,

Your attack against the U. S. Constitution has evidently failed. On April 4, Federal District Court Judge Williams determined your SB4C merited a temporary restraining order to prevent its implementation based on its violation of the Supremacy Clause and the Commerce Clause in a decision that cited "imminent harm." The judge extended this

block at yesterday's hearing, noting continuing damage from your corrupt legislation, with the recent illegal arrest of a Georgia-born American citizen presented as a specific example. This level of legislative incompetence is simply unacceptable. It looks and smells exactly like criminal malfeasance. Stop attacking the U. S. Constitution.

April 19, 2025
@FlHouse.gov

"Legislative Malpractice"

Our state legislators have yet to explain why they keep violating the U. S. Constitution. Take SB4C

for example. This anti-immigrant bill was passed during February's special legislative session, with "Yes" votes from both Mr. McClain and Mr. Johnson. In an April 4 decision that cited "imminent harm," U. S. District Judge Kathleen Williams determined that it merited a temporary restraining order to prevent its implementation, based upon violations of the Supremacy Clause and the Commerce Clause. Just last week, Judge Williams extended the block, citing continuing harm caused by this illegal legislation, with the recent arrest of a Georgia-born American

citizen presented as specific evidence.

This particular brand of anti-constitutionality is not new to our legislature. In other decisions, federal judges have described bills such as 2022's deceptively-named "Individual Freedom Act" as "positively dystopian;" 2023's Election Omnibus Bill as "Florida's latest assault on the right to vote;" and 2023's "Protection of Children Act" as "overly vague and unconstitutional." Last year, the Federal Court's final ruling on the "Parental Rights in Education Act" warned that the Florida

Legislature had, "no license to discriminate."

Legislative malpractice incurs a double cost for Florida's taxpayers. We must pay to defend our rights, then pay again for the state to defend its unconstitutional laws.

Many of us here in Levy County still respect the Constitution and value the Social Contract that it embodies. We understand that our nation's founding document offers us "words to live by," not just loopholes to be sidestepped.

Friday May 02, 2025
Levy County Citizen

"Our Outlaw Attorney General"

During the regular legislative session Rep. Alex Andrade (R-Pensacola), chair of the Florida House Health Care Budget Subcommittee, raised two particularly troubling questions. Did Gov. DeSantis' pick for Attorney General, James Uthmeier, commit felony wire fraud when he redirected $10 million from Centene's court-ordered Medicaid settlement towards a "dark money" political action committee; and were those public funds used to help determine the outcome of the recent election to amend our state constitution?

Evidence of criminal intent was apparently compelling enough for the committee to initiate an official investigation. However, on April 24, after A. G. Uthmeier and representatives from the organizations involved in the case refused to appear before the House panel, the investigation was prematurely dropped. A frustrated Andrade complained in an interview with Florida Politics, "In the real world, if someone defrauded the state or a charity out of $10 million, they'd go to prison. Certain bad actors within the DeSantis administration lied about the use of these funds and conspired to funnel this

money to a PAC. Those people deserve to go to prison." Rep. Andrade has since reported the committee's findings to the U. S. Department of Justice.

In an entirely separate matter, just last week a U. S. District Judge found Mr. Uthmeier in contempt of Federal Court. It seems he violated a temporary restraining order when he directed Florida's law enforcement officers to defy the court's ruling. I may sound somewhat old fashioned for asking this, but isn't the Attorney General sworn to uphold the law?

Friday June 27, 2025
Levy County Citizen

"The Companies They Keep"

Last Fall, former state senator Frank Artiles was convicted on multiple charges stemming from an illegal scheme to run a ghost candidate in the 2020 election for Florida Senate. Artiles' indictment, trial, and incarceration directed a spotlight on Data Targeting Incorporated, the company that hired him to commit his crimes.

An investigative report by the Gainesville Sun uncovered evidence that this same organization used similar tactics in the Florida Power and Light voter-siphoning scandal, the one that

corrupted our district's 2018 election for state senator.

Incidentally, filings with the Florida Department of State indicate that our previous Florida House representative, Chuck Clemons' election campaign helped finance Data Targeting's efforts by providing them with over $250,000 in funding between April 2020 and November 2022.

More recently, campaign records filed by his successor, Chad Johnson, reveal $155,455 in payments to another entity called Front Line Agency Incorporated.

Front Line's officers maintain control over an opaque alphabet

soup of conservative dark money committees and affiliates, and are perhaps best known for helping disgraced Alabama jurist Roy Moore deny multiple allegations of statutory rape.

One example of the type of service they provide is the deceptively-named political action committee, Florida Blue Dog Progressives, through which they conducted false flag attacks against a fellow Republican who opposed the state's abortion ban.

This PAC was funded by a single $125,000 contribution from Florida First Forever, a pass-through corporation created by the

father of Front Line's CEO, with expenditures totaling $122,167 paid out directly to Front Line.

Like it or not, our personal reputations are often defined by the company we choose to keep.

Friday July 25, 2025
Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us" chapter 1

There are many among us who truly cherish our right to vote in free and fair elections. We still remember November 2010, when a bipartisan majority of Floridians elected to amend our state constitution, guaranteeing that

"No apportionment plan or individual district shall be drawn with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party." Together, we inscribed our shared pro-democracy values into the law by resoundingly rejecting the corrupt practice of voter suppression known as gerrymandering. It all seemed so clear.

It was still clear in 2015, when the state Supreme Court ruled that an influential group of anti-democracy state legislators had willfully violated this constututional prohibition. The Florida Senate's confession in that case is now a matter of public record. Our

Fair Districts Amendment had successfully protected our right to vote.

Today, its protections are less clear. Opponents of democracy are more empowered and much more unprincipled than they were back then. Just last month, Florida Supreme Court Chief Justice Carlos G. Muñoz, a DeSantis appointee, issued a ruling acknowledging that the governor's 2022 redistricting map had been drawn with unconstitutional "intent to favor." However, the increasingly politicized court declined to enforce our law and

their gerrymandered map still remains in effect.

Exploiting this illicit advantage, Governor DeSantis recently proclaimed, "We are going to have to do a mid-decade redistricting," and Speaker of the Florida House Daniel Perez (R - Miami-Dade) began convening his "select committee on congressional redistricting."

One of the most identifiable characteristics of the anti-democracy movement is its contempt for the will of the voters. There's no more effective way to demonstrate this contempt than

through bad faith politics and unconstitutional gerrymandering.

Friday August 29, 2025

Levy County Citizen

Subject: "SB4C"

Senator McClain,

I am requesting a response from your office regarding the U. S. Supreme Court's July 9 ruling on the unconstitutionality of your vote for SB4C. The court's decision indicates your inability to legislate within the dictates of our nation's system of laws, and makes it clear that changes must be made to prevent similar failures of judgment in the future.

My question is as follows: What steps has your office taken in the aftermath of this ruling to improve what is clearly a flawed decision-making process?

A prompt reply to this serious concern would be greatly appreciated. Moving forward, I encourage you to take your civic responsibilities much, much more seriously.

Wednesday September 3, 2025

@FlSenate.gov

"The Anti-Amendmentists"

There was once a time when Florida's constitutional amendment process was the model of

direct democracy for the entire nation. After adoption of the 1885 constitution, all that was required to pass a ballot amendment was approval by a simple majority of the electorate. In 1968, just over 55% of the state's voters ratified our current constitution, which expanded the franchise even further by empowering citizens to initiate amendments.

Since then, this right to actively participate in our own governance has been steadily eroded. Partisan opposition to democracy has succeeded in transforming Florida's amendment process into one of the most

restrictive in the country. The unraveling began in 2005, when a majority of lawmakers in the Republican-led legislature overwhelmingly supported House Joint Resolution 1723. This bill created an amendment proposal that was presented before voters on the 2006 ballot. It introduced the new requirement that all future amendments must be "approved by vote of at least 60 percent of the electors voting on the measure."

Ironically, this legislative initiative passed with only 57% of voters supporting it. Lawmakers continued to undermine the citizen-initiated amendment proc-

ess with shorter timelines, prohibitive costs, and onerously punitive procedural burdens. In 2023, a group of anti-democracy legislators proposed to increase the threshold for passage even further, by requiring over two-thirds of the voters to pass an amendment. Fortunately, this bill never made it past the rules committee.

Last session, Sen. McClain and Rep. Johnson voted for HB1205. We're currently awaiting the outcome of litigation that argues their bill's crushing fines obstructed a local Medicare advocacy group's right to initiate a

new amendment. The court's decision may help determine whether or not "the power to propose the revision or amendment of any portion or portions of this constitution by initiative is reserved to the people."

Friday October 3, 2025

Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us" chapter 2

Voter suppression rears its ugly head again. The governor seems determined to attack our right to vote in free and fair elections. He's currently demanding an unprecedented mid-

decade reapportionment for the express purpose of redrawing voting districts to benefit his political allies. At best, this alarming scheme is unconstitutional. At worst, it's yet another lurch into lawless authoritarianism.

There's a clear and present danger that Mr. Desantis could succeed with his illegal assault against democracy by exploiting our state's deep pool of political corruption, the inevitable consequence of years of single-party rule. Recently, we've all become aware of the embezzlement of Medicaid funds for the purpose of

undermining our amendment votes in the last election. That's just the tip of the iceberg.

From the Senate's 2016 violation of the "Fair Districts" amendment, to 2018's FPL-funded voter-siphoning scandal, to the "Big Lie" deceptions of 2020, to former senator Frank Artiles' multiple felony convictions for electoral crimes, to 2024's unconstitutional "Election Omnibus Bill," voters of this district have endured an ongoing pattern of attacks against our voting rights, all perpetrated by the governor's fellow partisans.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court's rejection of SB4C last July presents a compelling argument that neither Senator McLain nor Representative Johnson can be trusted to defend our constitutional rights. Both of their legislative records document the faithlessness of their oaths.

Instead, it's become incumbent upon each of us to condemn this governor's perverse initiative with as much vigor and unity as we can possibly muster. The right to vote is our most fundamental freedom. We can't allow the opponents of democracy to take

this precious freedom away from us.

Friday February 20, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Show Your Papers!"

Well, it seems as if the anti-democracy folks have been at it again. Recently in a one-party initiative, our legislators passed HB991 and our governor signed it into law. Yet another performative and unnecessary anti-immigrant bill, our state's new "Show Your Papers" law will actually require U.S. citizens to locate, purchase, and present one of a narrowly restrictive list of personal documents, such as birth

certificates and passports before we'll be allowed to cast our votes in local elections.

Advocates for democracy, including the Florida League of Women Voters and similar groups, have already filed lawsuits against the state, demanding relief from the undue constraints this illegal legislation places on our individual voting rights. They argue that these new requirements violate the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution by imposing unlawful burdens on our fundamental right to vote and by creating restrictive new voter registration requirements. Next

year, "Show Your Papers" will be enforced retroactively against currently registered voters, which will wrongfully prevent many of us from re-registering and increase our chances of erroneous removal from the voter rolls.

Fortunately for us, this particular effort to disenfranchise Floridians won't go into full effect until next January after the primary and midterm elections are over, giving "we the voters" one clear chance to repair the civic damage caused by this ill-considered legislation. Just for the record, both Sen. McClain (R) and Rep. Johnson (R) did their part in

helping inflict HB991 on their fellow Floridians.

Friday May 1, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us" chapter 3

They actually did it. The anti-democracy folks actually went ahead and attacked our constitution's "Fair Districts" amendment. They chose to cheat, not compete.

Last Wednesday, Sen. McClain (R) and Rep. Johnson (R) helped pass H0001. This illegal bill was introduced by the governor in a special session for the specific

purpose of violating Florida's constitutional requirement that: "No apportionment plan or district shall be drawn with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent." A brief glance at their new district map reveals this unconstitutional intent.

I probably don't need to remind anyone that political gerrymandering is still against the supreme law of Florida, or that this criminal legislation effectively nullifies Floridians' right to choose our own representation. Legal responses to the legislature's latest act of lawlessness are just now beginning to emerge. Pro-

democracy organizations, such as Common Cause, have already announced plans to challenge this transgression in open court. Others will soon follow. These groups know that justice will always stand on the side of democracy, even when the governor's hand-picked judges will not.

I may never fully understand what motivated our local legislators to swear a solemn oath and then shamelessly violate that oath, but over the past decade I guess we've all had to bear frequent witness to this same sort of unethical behavior. It seems to

occur regularly among partisans who have rejected America's constitutional values to embrace the morals of a felon.

In a just world, their unpatriotic and illegal assault against free and fair elections would have already permanently stained the personal reputations of everyone involved.

In this world however, even as we're forced to endure these increasingly desperate attempts to prevent us, Florida's voters must determine for ourselves whether or not there will be electoral consequences for this craven attack against our democracy,

Friday May 8, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us"
chapter 4

Friends asked if I'd help them stay abreast of democracy's latest defenses against our rogue legislature's unconstitutional new geography, so here goes:

Last Monday, election attorney Marc Elias filed suit in Florida's Second Judicial Circuit Court for Leon County, seeking to block the governor's illegally gerrymandered voting map on behalf of Equal Ground Education Fund, with

support from the National Redistricting Foundation.

Later that evening, at the same courthouse, a group of disenfranchised Florida voters from across multiple districts filed their complaint for "injunctive and declaratory relief." The case names Secretary of State Cord Bird, the Florida Senate, and the Florida House as defendants. The voters' legal challenge is supported by two national pro-democracy organizations, the UCLA Voting Rights Project and the Campaign Legal Center.

Early Tuesday afternoon, the original champions of 2010's Fair

Districts Amendment, Common Cause, the Florida League of Women Voters, and the Florida League of United Latin American Citizens, also filed suit in the Second Circuit Court. Many of us still remember when this same coalition prevailed with their heroic defense of Fair Districts in 2016, after anti-democracy state senators first attempted to violate our new law. Election attorney Norm Eisen is currently registered with the court as a member of this legal team.

The Plaintiffs' arguments against the state's lawless actions are all self-evident. The question

isn't simply whether or not political gerrymandering violates Florida's system of laws. It was; it still is; and it continues to be illegal here. The question then becomes, what occurs when a governor and a legislature conspire to violate the state constitution?

We're just at the very beginning of what could be a prolonged and contentious legal defense of our collective and individual right to vote, so we'll be watching anxiously as the sausage of justice is slowly ground out before us. If only there had been some way we could have avoided

this entire unconstitutional mess. If only our feckless state representatives had somehow discouraged our anti-democracy governor's lurch into criminality. If only...

Friday May 15, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us" chapter 5

Legal defenses against the partisan scheme to attack our constitution and steal elections are still moving through the Second Circuit Court. After Leon County Circuit Judge Lee Marsh was asked to recuse himself because of

a connection with the state's lead attorney, the case was reassigned to Judge Joshua Hawkes, a DeSantis appointee. On Wednesday, Hawkes requested that the three major suits against the state be consolidated into a single case.

On Friday, plaintiffs' attorneys presented evidence that the governor's own mapmaker had expressly stated that the new voter maps were drawn to favor the Republican party (in violation of Section 20 of Florida's state constitution, which prohibits "intent to favor or disfavor a political party"). They argued that contiguous Tampa Bay, Orlando,

and South Florida urban districts were unconstitutionally carved into surrounding rural regions for the specific purpose of disenfranchising Democratic voters. Regarding intent, they noted that even before its filing with the legislature, the map had been leaked to Fox News with districts already labeled in red and blue. Regarding process, the plaintiffs criticized the extraordinarily rushed three-day legislative schedule for deliberations.

The state's attorneys claimed that the United States Supreme Court's recent decision to deny the precedence of the 1965 Voting

Rights Act had effectively legalized racial gerrymandering. They argued that our state constitution can no longer prohibit them from redrawing districts for the purpose of "abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process." Asserting racial gerrymandering as a state's right, the defendants then introduced the unpersuasive argument that because of this, Florida voters' "Fair Districts Amendment" must be entirely invalidated.

Judge Hawkes speculated that he has a choice to keep the new

map, or throw it out and replace it with Desantis' 2022 map (which the Florida Supreme Court has already deemed unconstitutional). By Friday's end-of-session, Hawkes had not issued a ruling.

In related Friday news, Capitol Police were ordered to arrest state representative and United States Senate candidate Angie Nixon, for attempting to speak with Mr. DeSantis about his partisan scheme to attack our state constitution and steal elections. No actual charges against the popular pro-democracy advocate seem to have been filed, but our anti-democracy governor continues

with his callous refusal to honestly address this alarming scandal of his own making.

Friday May 22, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us" chapter 6

We're still waiting for a ruling to come out of the Second Circuit Court on the recent attempt by Gov. DeSantis and our local legislators to violate the state constitution and abuse the redistricting process to cheat us out of our votes. As we await Judge Hawke's decision, it might prove edifying to take a moment

and reflect on this darker aspect of the human character.

When someone cheats to win, they are telling us who they really are. The decision to cheat makes it clear to everyone that the cheater has abandoned personal integrity and can no longer be considered trustworthy. Cheating embodies a contempt for the rules and by extension, for the entire existence of a society based on the rule of law. Last month, Florida's governing party revealed to the world just what kind of people make up its leadership.

Floridians are justifiably frustrated and angry after years

of watching their economic futures undermined by the perverse practices of predatory profiteers. They are terrified as they watch friends and relations unjustly targeted by the arbitrary enforcement of unconstitutional policies. They are increasingly desperate to protect their families from inaccessible healthcare and unnecessary harm from new outbreaks of previously-eradicated diseases. Their kids deserve teachers who aren't the lowest paid in the nation. Many simply seek the dignity of a home to dwell in, clean water to drink, and clean air to breathe.

Whichever way this court rules, our governor's decision to embrace cheating can still effectively block us from taking the necessary steps to remedy these policy failures. Our current legislature's destructive culture wars, fueled by irrational bigotry and religious intolerance, have done little to "promote the general welfare." Quite the opposite, "a more perfect union" has become less achievable as a consequence of their efforts.

It's increasingly incumbent upon those of us who truly value our right to vote to use it wisely while it's still possible to

overwhelm these anti-democracy cheaters with superior numbers of Florida's good people. If we actually get out and vote, we might begin to empower honest representatives, ones who can resist the temptation to work against our interests. This alone, will initiate a vast improvement over our current single-party status quo.

Friday March 29, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us" chapter 7

Last Tuesday, our right to vote in free and fair elections lost its

day in court. The cheat is now on. Despite our constitution's "Fair Districts Amendment," Leon County Circuit Judge Joshua Hawkes, a DeSantis appointee, ruled that the governor's politically gerrymandered electoral map can be used in our upcoming elections. In his opinion Hawkes stated, "it seems clear that the potential partisan intent in the 2026 map is the lesser of the two evils," referring to a choice between the problematic 2022 electoral map and the contested new gerrymandered map. It should be noted here that both of Judge

Hawkes' "evils" came directly out of Gov. DeSantis' office.

The governor's "sole drawer of the maps," Jason Poreda admitted he had relied on partisan data to create the new map. However, Judge Hawkes claimed that he required a more thorough cross-examination of Poreda's testimony before he would have been willing to rule on political intent. Despite the mapmaker's unambiguous statement, Hawkes determined that intent was "not as apparent as Plaintiffs argue," an assertion that surprised many court observers. Christina Ford, lead attorney for the plaintiffs, had described the

evidence of Poreda's admission as "staggering," adding that "the defendants barely attempted to rebut it." Plaintiffs also submitted over 3,300 pages of additional evidence and more than 100 exhibits supporting allegations of unconstitutional political intent, none of which seems to have influenced the judge's ruling.

The 2022 map had been written in compliance with the Voting Rights Act, but after the U. S. Supreme Court gutted core sections of the VRA, the previously challenged map was once again deemed unconstitutional, this time because

it protected the "equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process." It appears Judge Hawkes weighed the federal court's recent approval of racial gerrymandering much more heavily than the state's standing prohibition against political gerrymandering.

Hawkes concluded his decision by expressing his disingenuous concern that ruling against a second-offense governor's thirty-day-old recklessly-legislated mid-decade map, drafted with absolutely no public input in response to a one-day-old U. S. Supreme Court decision that

abandoned sixty years of judicial precedence, might somehow create additional confusion in our upcoming elections.

The pro-democracy plaintiffs in the suit have announced that they will be taking the voters' case directly to the Florida Court of Appeals.

Friday June 5, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Gerrymanderers Among Us" chapter 8

We've had time for reflection since the Florida Supreme Court, in a 6-1 decision, refused to enforce the emergency injunction that would have prevented our

anti-democracy governor from implementing his gerrymandered electoral map, the one designed to dilute our votes. The legal defenses that opposed this partisan assault against our constitution's "Fair Districts Amendment" are now dead in the water even though the case has never been adjudicated on its merits. The courts simply enabled the clock to run out.

All six of the governor's hand-picked appointees invoked judicial discretion to claim absence of jurisdiction, resulting in tacit support for their benefactor's most recent effort to cheat voters. Only

one current member of the court is not beholden to Gov. DeSantis for his judgeship. That one lone justice became the sole and last defender of our constitutional right to vote in a free and fair election this November.

Judge Labarga highlighted the absolute necessity of implementing the emergency injunction when he argued, "Surely, the upcoming 2026 congressional elections affecting the representation of millions of Floridians meets that threshold." DeSantis' appointees disagreed.

A close reading of Labarga's dissent seems to suggest that the appellate court dragged its feet in

delivering the case to the Florida Supreme Court, forcing greater urgency to arrive at the quickest possible accommodation. Expediency was an overriding concern, particularly given the opportunistic timing of the governor's initial decision to launch his attack against our state's election laws.

We've learned a great deal from this chastening experience. First, we've discovered that there is evidently no bottom to the depths that Gov. DeSantis will plumb in order to cheat at elections. Secondly, we now have to assume that anyone appointed by this opponent of democracy will

share his contempt for American citizens' voting rights. Thirdly, neither our own state representative, Chad Johnson, nor our state senator, Stan McClain, can ever again be trusted to defend those rights. Their decision to violate the supreme law of our state is the single most defining aspect of both of their legislative careers. Finally, we've all just witnessed inarguable proof that one of Florida's major political parties is lock-step united in its vigorous opposition to American constitutional democracy. The question remains. What are we going to do about it?

Friday August 14, 2026
Levy County Citizen

"Primary Aftermath"

With the primary season now behind us, it's time to congratulate District 3's nominees for the U. S. House of Representatives. Seth Harp earned his nomination the hard way, with support from a majority of the voters in a competitive field of four pro-democracy candidates. By comparison, and entirely consistent with the values of the party she serves, Kathryn "Kat" Cammack secured her nomination

without receiving a single public vote.

Mr. Harp is a fresh face on our local political scene. His work may be familiar to Lincoln Middle School families, ESPN viewers, and UF School of Journalism associates, but he has yet to establish a legislative record that potential voters can use to measure his skill at statecraft. Fortunately, his campaign's declared focus on constitutional stability, problem solving, and quality of character should provide us with helpful benchmarks to evaluate his words and deeds.

As the incumbent, Ms. Cammack leaves behind a public record that responsible voters will want to inspect very closely before judging her fitness to continue in office. For example, engaged citizens can either agree or disagree with her vote last year to cut Medicaid funding by twelve percent and to strip health care access from nearly eleven million more Americans while simultaneously ballooning budget deficits by almost three trillion additional dollars. Her failure to honor her term limit pledge will probably upset some, while others will complain that her support for

a hundred billion in ICE funding caused more harm than good. Diminishing our constitutional institutions has apparently become more rewarding than delivering just solutions with measurable outcomes for constituents.

From a pro-democracy perspective, Ms. Cammack's conspicuous leadership in the election denial movement can only be seen as a disqualifying transgression. It's impossible to forget the day after the 2021 attack against the United States when, despite an absolute absence of any evidence at all, she voted to overturn the results of the presidential election

and for years afterward used her office to spread corrosive disinformation in callous defiance of decisions by over sixty constitutionally authorized courts who ruled those claims as false.

Alliances are often forged through a confluence of simple values. Perhaps a public school civics classroom is where we might rediscover those values. I agree with Mr. Harp on one point in particular. Character matters.

Friday September 4, 2026

Levy County Citizen

"Cri de Coeur"

These are not normal times, so I hope you'll forgive me if I abandon my usual efforts toward objectivity, and simply share my experience of Florida's representative democracy from an entirely personal perspective.

A few weeks ago, I was forced to bear witness as my own governor, my own state senator, and my own state representative willfully violated the Florida State Constitution to deny my right to vote in a free and fair election. Then I watched helplessly as six of my state supreme court justices refused to uphold the rule of law

upon which my voting rights are founded.

My current state attorney general misappropriated ten million dollars in Medicaid funds to undermine my vote on a constitutional amendment, while my current junior delegate to the U.S. Senate was conspiratorially derelict in her duty to stop him. Not that long ago, my current representative to the U.S. Congress attempted to overturn my vote in a national election, then she lied about the outcome. The less said about my senior delegate, the better.

My current president has already been convicted on thirty-four felony counts related to electoral crimes, and now he's abusing his authority over the postal service to sabotage my right to vote by mail, in violation of multiple court rulings. I could continue on at far greater length, but time is short so let's move forward.

Something is clearly broken, and any attempt to repair this problem requires a thorough diagnosis. To that point, I've identified a unifying variable common to every single one of these attacks against my voting

rights. They were all committed by members of the Republican Party of Florida. This realization provokes another fundamental question. What complete perversion of ideology justifies their deviant opposition to America's most cherished value, the one that we call democracy?

Regarding potential solutions, I'm encouraged as I learn more about the pool of strong leaders sponsored by the Levy County Democratic Party. David Jolly, Angie Nixon, Seth Harp, Amy Trask, José Javier Rodriquez, and all the other candidates have expressed their principled

commitment to democracy and to American constitutional values. This should go without saying, but I've never had a democrat violate my right to vote. I will be offering them that vote this November.

Friday September 18, 2026

Levy County Citizen

"Amendment Three"

Amendment Three will blast an estimated $12,000,000,000.00 hole in our local budgets. If it passes, this ill-considered and highly partisan ballot initiative will require each and every Floridian to make a number of extremely painful decisions.

Specifically, which of our essential public services will we need to cut first?

For a start, closing down a few of our local fire stations might help balance the books. Perhaps we'll simply have to do without some of our community's law enforcement officers. Can we really afford all those emergency medical technicians? Maybe we should just shutter all of our local libraries. Surely our county's infrastructure can still support economic growth after we've abandoned road maintenance for the foreseeable future... or perhaps not. In a state without an income

tax, the list of essential public services that are funded by our local property taxes is a long one.

Then, we'll have to find alternative sources of revenue to support our unmet needs. I'm sure Florida's homeowners will be more than willing to deplete their new-found property tax savings to pay for all of the additional sales taxes, storm-water fees, solid-waste fees, fire service assessments, impact fees, and the many other increased service costs that will result from passage of this amendment.

Of course, all of our local small business owners, landlords,

and renters will have to pay these higher costs, too. Unfortunately, they'll have to do it without receiving any of the same tax benefits that owners of beachfront mansions will enjoy. Remember, fees and sales taxes are regressive in nature and will proportionally place a much heavier financial burden on the backs of our most economically distressed neighbors.

Current deficit estimates don't include the price of the unintended consequences that will inevitably result from such an irresponsibly short-sighted policy proposal. In light of this, Amendment Three should only be seen as a reac-

tionary social experiment whose risks haven't been fully assessed (although early forecasts are uniformly grim).

As the celebrated American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes once wrote, "Taxes are the price we pay for civilized society." In November, Florida's electorate will choose whether we want to live in a civilized society, or not. It's still not too late to register to vote, but time is running out.

Friday September 25, 2026

Levy County Citizen

"Medicaid Misappropriations"

In January, the grand jury's report was filed under seal. Last month, it leaked. Their report details the plot to transfer $10 million of public Medicaid funds, through a series of corrupt dark-money transactions, into the private coffers of the Republican Party of Florida and its allied political action committees. The jury's findings are clear: "We conclude that these funds were misappropriated as part of a sophisticated scheme to fund political activities." Their frustration is evident: "While we can't prove who was responsible, we can

plainly see that tax-payer money was used for political purposes."

Testimony confirms that, as Florida's Attorney General, Ashley Moody knew that the $10 million had been separated from a $67 million financial settlement against Centene Corporation for Medicaid over-billing. John Guard, Moody's chief deputy, testified under oath that he had informed her about the negotiations before she directed him to sign the modified agreement. Among numerous other irregularities, she had already refused an earlier request by another counsel to sign the settlement herself. Later, Gov.

DeSantis appointed Moody to occupy a vacant seat in the U.S. Senate.

Moody's office had evidently compromised its responsibility for Centene's criminal investigation when it handed over the negotiations to a hand-picked DeSantis appointee named Jason Weida. As Secretary of Florida's Agency for Health Care Administration, Weida carved out the $10 million for Hope Florida Foundation, a "public/private partnership" created by the governor's wife. Later, DeSantis promoted Weida to become his Chief of Staff.

The Hope Florida settlement funds were then "quickly funneled into two political action committees" and within days, most of the money had been laundered through a third PAC controlled by James Uthmeier, Gov. DeSantis' General Counsel (who also coordinated aspects of the scheme). The grand jury found that: "Mr. Uthmeier's Keep Florida Clean, a political action committee, was the prime recipient of the majority of the taxpayer funds." The report's "What Happened" section concludes with the following statement: "The PAC also used

these funds to send money to the Republican Party of Florida."

The misappropriated Medicaid dollars were then used to help defeat a citizen-initiated constitutional amendment on the November 2024 ballot. Soon afterward, DeSantis appointed Uthmeier to become his Attorney General.

Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the executive branch of the great state of Florida!

Friday October 9, 2026

Levy County Citizen

TO BE CONTINUED...

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

FL House District 22 represents Levy County, along with some of south Gilchrist County and western Alachua County.

FL Senate District 9 represents Levy County, along with parts of Alachua County south of Gainesville and Marion County west of Ocala.

U. S. House District 3 represents the region northward from the Withlacoochee River to the Georgia State Line.

Pastorialus Publius

is a curmudgeonly anti-conservative natterer. Educated beyond necessity, he often advocates for older, more time-tested methods of propositional thought. Dr. Publius served on the board of contributing editors for the acclaimed 2024 primary-source anthology ***"A Florida Woke Reader"*** and he is a direct descendant of founding patriot, Shadrach Plebeianus (1723-1801).

To access this electronic edition of Contra Republicana volume II, "The 'Citizen' Letters on Local Politics & Florida History 2023 to 2026," please visit the following web address:

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