

EDITORIAL BOARD

- MEI-MEI CHAN, President & Publisher
- TERRY EBERLE, VP/Content and Executive Editor
- DAVID PLAZAS, Community Conversation Editor
- MARK STEPHENS, Assistant Editor
- MARTHA C. HILL, Conversation Link
- DOUG MACGREGOR, Editorial Cartoonist
- LaSHAUN COLLIER, Citizen member
- ROY HYMAN, Citizen member
- JAMES WALL, Citizen member
- CHRISTINE WRIGHT-ISAK, Citizen member

"I don't think this is a cause for concern. It's one of those things you consider when you live in Southwest Florida."

— Judith Hartner, Lee County health director, saying a reported case of mosquito-borne West Nile virus is no reason to curtail trick-or-treating

# Opinion

B12 | SUNDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2010

news-press.com

EDITORIAL



THE NEWS-PRESS FILE PHOTO

The tea party movement has made itself a force to be reckoned with during the 2010 midterm election.

## No excuses Get out and vote

Anybody who sits out this election is a hopeless case, politically speaking.

These races for office and the constitutional issues on this general election ballot offer clear choices, and could profoundly affect the direction of state, local and federal government for years to come. Tea party activists have famously galvanized the right in the past couple of years, and more credit to them for doing so. They responded to an outcome they didn't like in 2008 and appear on the verge of forcing a big turnaround come Tuesday, election day.

But the "enthusiasm gap" between eager conservatives and demoralized liberals reported in some polls is no reason for staying at home, at least in Lee County. Neither is the long ballot nor lackluster candidates.

The tea party has shown that if you care, you can count. Others could take a cue from it.

We hope the surge of early voting and mail-in balloting indicates a healthy across-the-board interest. Elections Supervisor Sharon Harrington said almost 56,000 mail-in ballots have been requested, and 35,436 had been returned Thursday.

That's already well ahead of the 29,680 mail ballots returned in the last gubernatorial race, in 2006. Early-voting totals as of Thursday were 25,218, again ahead of the 21,974 in 2006, when turnout was 47.7 percent.

At least somebody realizes this ballot matters.

In our contests for U.S. senator and governor, for example, Florida has two of the most closely watched races in the country.

All three state Cabinet offices are on the ballot. These are the people who, with the governor, make many of the crucial executive decisions in state government.

Locally, a majority of seats on the county commission are up for grabs, along with a potential swing school



news-press.com/elections

Compare candidates and read more detailed coverage on races and endorsements

board seat and other positions.

This ballot has some huge constitutional issues. If you can't take the time to bone up and vote on whether citizens should vote on local growth plan changes, whether we should alter the class-size amendment, or reform the way the Legislature draws up legislative and congressional district boundaries, then the problem is not with the ballot, it's with the slacker citizen.

As for complaints about the long and confusing amendments, spare us.

There has been information available for weeks on the proposed state constitutional amendments and the major candidates, for anyone willing to look, in The News-Press and on news-press.com/election, in mailboxes, and at candidate forums. Websites of the Lee County Election Supervisor and the Florida Division of Elections have additional information.

Having referendums on constitutional amendments imposes an extra burden. It would be better for our elected legislators to handle many of these issues.

But we have a large measure of direct democracy in Florida. We suspect few would vote to do away with the right to put issues on the ballot. So be mature and study the issues.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans have sacrificed that we might have the freedom to puzzle our way through a ballot.

Is it too much to ask of a citizen to take a couple of hours here and there in an election season to figure out what's what on a ballot?

To those who think so, we say, by all means, do not vote. Such people don't deserve to.

And thanks to all those people, left and right and in between, right, wrong and outrageous: thanks for speaking, acting, organizing, spending money and voting.

You deserve this country, and you honor it with your commitment.

Here are the recommendations of The News-Press editorial board:

- U.S. SENATE**  
Marco Rubio, Republican
- GOVERNOR**  
Alex Sink, Democrat
- ATTORNEY GENERAL**  
Dan Gelber, Democrat
- COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE**  
Adam Putnam, Republican
- U.S. CONGRESS**  
Incumbent U.S. Rep. Connie Mack, Republican.
- STATE SENATE, DISTRICT 27**  
Kevin Rader, Democrat.
- STATE REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 71**  
Incumbent Ken Roberson, Republican.
- STATE REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 73**  
Cole Peacock, Democrat.
- STATE REPRESENTATIVE, DISTRICT 75**  
Incumbent Trudi Williams, Republican.
- LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, DISTRICT 1**  
Incumbent John Manning, Republican.
- LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, DISTRICT 2**  
Incumbent Brian Bigelow, Republican.
- LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, DISTRICT 4**  
Incumbent Tammy Hall, Republican.
- LEE MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM, DISTRICT 2**  
Incumbent Richard Akin
- LEE MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM, DISTRICT 4**  
Chris Hansen
- LEE MEMORIAL HEALTH SYSTEM, DISTRICT 5**  
Bill Silverman
- LEE COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION BOARD**  
Terry Miller
- SUPREME COURT AND APPEAL COURT JUDGES MERIT RETENTION**  
No News-Press recommendations. Voters may vote to retain them in office or remove them. For fuller information, visit FloridaBar.org.
- LEE COUNTY JUDGE, GROUP 3**  
Miguel Fernandez
- LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD, DISTRICT 1**  
Arnold Gibbs
- LEE COUNTY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT, AREA 2**  
Sarah Larsen
- CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS**  
**Amendment 1.** Repeal of public campaign financing requirement. Recommendation: Vote YES.  
**Amendment 2.** Homestead ad valorem tax credit for deployed military personnel. Recommendation: Vote YES.  
**Amendment 4.** Referendums required for adoption and amendment of local government comprehensive land-use plans. Recommendation: Vote NO.  
**Amendment 5.** Setting standards for the Legislature to follow in legislative redistricting. Recommendation: Vote YES.  
**Amendment 6.** Setting standards for Legislature to follow in congressional redistricting. Recommendation: Vote YES.  
**Amendment 8.** Revision of the class-size requirements for public schools. Recommendation: Vote YES.

ELECTION MAILBAG

Shuck nonperforming employees

Lee County has one of the highest foreclosure rates in the nation. Most of our homes are underwater in value and residents are unemployed or under-employed.

Yet, your newspaper has endorsed only incumbents for the Lee County Commission and Congress.

As taxpayers and voters, we really are the employers of our elected officials, even though many of us are wondering how to pay our bills.

As the employers, shouldn't we replace our non-performing employees?

I firmly believe we need to elect people who can identify with our needs rather than those who are endorsed by a handful of people on an editorial board.

I am voting for Debbie Jordan for Lee County Commission seat District 2 and Jim Roach for Congress, because unlike their well-to-do politically entrenched incumbent opponents, they can offer Lee County residents hard work and sensible plans to move our economy forward, improve the county's image and restore our property values.

NINA DUNCAN  
Fort Myers

Be fair with Supreme Court justices

"Don't shoot the piano player" was an expression used to protect the saloon piano players because both sides recognized that good piano players were hard to find and merited a place out of the line of fire.

Our Florida Supreme Court justices deserve similar consideration.

Florida has a merit retention system for judges that is designed to ensure not only that each judge's decision is based solely on the law and the facts of the case, but also not as a result of allegiance to any political party or organization.

Some of the tea party movement supporters, unaware of the reasoning behind the merit retention system, have suggested that current Supreme Court Justices Jorge Labarga and James E.C. Perry should be voted out of office for one single vote, a vote relating to whether the wording of a constitutional amendment regarding the new federal health care law met Florida's law requirements for being on the ballot.

These same people have admitted publicly that the Supreme Court justices were correct in their decision based on the law and facts — they simply disagreed with the result.

Making judicial decisions based on whatever is currently popular or unpopular would lead to a violation of our constitutional rights.

Vote to retain Justices Labarga and Perry and only vote to remove judges when they have proven not to be worthy of office.

JEFF GARVIN  
Fort Myers

We'd be sunk with Sink as governor

If Sink wins, we are all going to be sunk. She will follow the so-called "progressive socialist" line; more taxes, more dippy social programs, more "civil servants" to administer them. I have yet to hear anything positive from her, just more left wing piffle; "change," "move Florida forward," etc.

We heard about "change" from President Barack Obama. It's a cover word to conceal his hidden agenda of class warfare, more taxes and implementation of a welfare society.

JIM RIPLEY  
Estero

Scott panders to unintelligent

Re: "Ads nonsensical," Michaeleen Mahan, Oct. 26. Ms. Mahan believes that Rick Scott's political advertising lacks logic and veracity. I agree with her analysis until her closing sentence. She concludes that "(Scott) is insulting the intelligence of the voting populace."

No, Ms. Mahan, he understands the vast majority of Florida voters and he is spending millions of his own money pandering to their lack of intelligence.

Every Florida newspaper, about 16 papers, which endorsed a candidate for governor, have endorsed Alex Sink. One of them hadn't endorsed a Democrat in about 20 years. Yet polls show that the race for governor is too close to call. Sad but true.

Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, no self-respecting redneck would vote for a Republican, the party of Lincoln.

Southern politics consisted of solidly conservative Democrats. After 1964, they won't vote for a Democrat, the party that made them integrate their schools and required blacks and whites to use the same public restrooms and water fountains.

The irony is that the relatively few Democrats that didn't switch parties continue to be conservative — just like Alex Sink.

MARTIN HARRIS  
Cape Coral

Comedians will make hay with Scott

It looks like there is a good chance that Rick Scott may be our next governor, and once again Florida will provide some good material for the late night comedians. Where else but in Florida, the home of the hanging chad, could a guy be the head of a corporation that rips off Medicare for billions of taxpayers dollars then turn around and run for governor of the state?

And then what's even more ironic, he runs on a platform of fiscal responsibility and elimination of government waste and fraud!

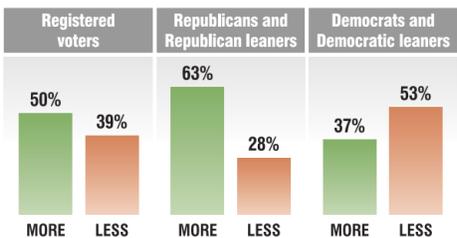
But I suppose one could say he is well-qualified in that area.

VIC BOBERG  
North Fort Myers

Democrats' enthusiasm gap

Are you more or less enthusiastic about voting than usual?

Poll of 918 registered voters Oct. 21-24. Margin of error: ±4 percentage points



SOURCE: USA TODAY/GALLUP POLL

THE NEWS-PRESS

Election mailbag continued on page B13

CONTACT US: David Plazas, Community Conversation Editor | 335-0224 | dplazas@news-press.com | 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Monday-Friday

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK. Include name, address and daytime phone numbers. Letters must be 200 words or less. Any submission will be verified and may be edited for length, accuracy and clarity. • Mail P.O. Box 10, Fort Myers, FL 33902 • e-mail mailbag@news-press.com • Phone 335-0362 • Fax 334-0708