



2020 Elections Report

Florida Conservation Voters



A LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ALIKI MONCRIEF

Dear Conservation Voter,

2020 will be remembered as one of the most consequential years in American history. In March, just as the 2020 Florida legislative session was ending, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to adjust how we live and work. As the election heated up, I am proud of how the FCV team remained focused on engaging people in our democracy and aligned our coalition work to support communities most harmed by this terrible and ongoing crisis.

Like the climate crisis, the pandemic has exposed already-strained systems and amplified existing challenges for tens of thousands of Floridians. Despite the difficulties, Conservation Voters like you have a lot to be pleased with this year. I invite you to read the inspiring stories in this report. I am immensely proud of our work in Miami-Dade, where we saw the election of Daniella Levine Cava as the first woman Mayor in the county's history. Daniella is the ultimate conservation champion, a renowned "water warrior," and a strong advocate for transitioning Florida to a just and equitable clean energy future. She is now the second most powerful elected executive in the state, and her leadership will be invaluable as we race to save Florida's environment and communities.

And while other elections around the state didn't end up exactly how we wanted, I am confident that with lawmakers like Daniella, State Senator Lorraine Ausley, and other young, newly-elected officials like Rep. Andrew Learned, Rep. Daisy Morales, Rep. Angie Nixon, and Commissioner Nancy Metayer, our future is bright.

The leadership of President-Elect Joe Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris, who together have put forth the boldest climate action plan in American history, also gives me hope. Having advocates on our side at the highest level of American government will be crucial as we continue to fight for strong environmental policies at the state legislature, where an extreme imbalance of power and shortage of pro-environment leadership remains.

Thank you for your amazing effort this year. I'm looking forward to a bright 2021.

Sincerely,



Aliki Moncrief
Executive Director
Florida Conservation Voters



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Interested in learning how
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Email Brittany at
brittany@fcvoters.org

Florida Conservation Voters
1700 N. Monroe St. #11-286
Tallahassee, FL 32303
www.FCVOTERS.org





FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

Variables during Presidential election years are always difficult to predict. More infrequent voters turn out than in other years, and it's hard to break through the national media noise

to talk to voters about local issues, especially in busy media markets like South and Central Florida.

Unfortunately, many strong conservation candidates were unsuccessful in their elections this cycle. Similar to races in 2018, anti-environmental political operatives spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to prop up third party and no party affiliation candidates in efforts to siphon away votes from pro-environment candidates. And they were mostly successful, with numerous candidates, without formal campaigns and funding, winning enough votes to tip the balance.

Elections are about standing up for what's right and making our voices heard. More than ever, voters spoke up for Florida's environment to their friends and neighbors, in the media, online, and directly to candidates. Across the state, candidates knew they had to incorporate environmental and climate issues into their campaign or face losing the election.

In North Florida, two FCV-endorsed candidates won their elections. Former Rep. **Loranne Ausley** (Tallahassee) was successful in her campaign to replace the term-limited Bill Montford for State Senate District 3, and **Allison Tant**

(Tallahassee) was successful in her bid for House District 9. Ausley is a longtime friend of the environment and has been a crucial ally to FCV over the years on land conservation and climate change issues. Tant, while new to the Capitol, is not new to politics and is sure to become an immediate leader in her caucus on environmental and democracy issues.

In Central Florida, voters reelected four FCV-endorsed candidates: Rep. **Anna Eskamani** (Orlando), Rep. **Joy Goff-Marcil** (Maitland), Rep. **Geraldine Thompson** (Orlando), and State Senator **Linda Stewart** (Orlando). All four women ran on robust environmental platforms, and we look forward to their leadership in both chambers next year.

In Pinellas County, Rep. **Ben Diamond** (St. Petersburg) has been an FCV-endorsed candidate since our first election cycle back in 2016. We were delighted to see his resounding reelection this year in House District 68. And on the Atlantic Coast, another FCV-endorsed conservation candidate, Rep. **Thad Altman** (Indian Harbour Beach), also handily won his reelection.

Navigating the Capitol is much easier with elected allies helping along the way. Their leadership is inspiring, and we look forward to working with them as the legislative session heats up next year. We need them now, more than ever, to stand up for Florida's environment and address the disproportionate burden of environmental degradation and climate change impacts endured by Black, Latinx, and low-income communities.



Loranne Ausley
FL Senate 3



Linda Stewart
FL Senate 13



Allison Tant
FL House 9



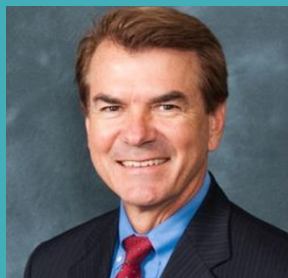
Joy Goff-Marcil
FL House 30



Geraldine Thompson
FL House 44



Anna Eskamani
FL House 47



Thad Altman
FL House 52



Ben Diamond
FL House 68



LOCAL CANDIDATES

This election cycle marks FCV's first foray into endorsing and supporting candidates at the local level. With environmental leadership lacking at the state and federal levels, leaders at

the municipal and county level have stepped in and stepped up to prioritize these issues and work for positive reforms to protect our water, air, and public lands. Climate change is a growing threat that requires a coordinated response from every level of government.

It's no secret that Miami-Dade County is among the most climate-threatened places in the world. From more frequent sunny-day flooding to extreme heat and climate gentrification, the people of Miami-Dade County must make some bold changes in the coming years to ensure a sustainable future. Bold changes, of course, require bold leadership. That's why we couldn't be more delighted that our endorsed candidate **Daniella Levine Cava** won her race for Mayor of Miami-Dade County.

Daniella is a true conservation champion and made environmental and climate issues a cornerstone of her campaign. As a founder of Catalyst Miami, one of our key partners, Daniella understands that environmental advocacy must address issues adversely affecting low-wealth communities to succeed. At every chance, she made sure to highlight the urgent need for Everglades restoration, protecting our water, and acting on climate through strategic and equitable infrastructure investments, and a steady transition to clean energy.

FCV helped elect Daniella by running a highly-targeted digital advertising campaign focused on climate change and water

quality. Our sophisticated political modeling allowed us to target voters for whom environmental messaging inspires action, maximizing our campaign's reach. Mayor Cava broke through this year thanks to her strong environmental values, and we can't wait to work with her in the coming months and years.

In many ways, the world is looking to Miami-Dade County for leadership in the climate crisis. And fortunately, there is a growing number of local candidates across South Florida who are putting climate at the forefront of their campaigns. In the City of Coral Springs in Broward County, FCV-endorsed candidate **Nancy Metayer** won her bid for City Commission. Nancy is a climate justice advocate and colleague, having worked in the organizing world with our friends at the New Florida Majority. This race is Nancy's first political campaign victory, and we are so impressed with her leadership skills and passion for our environment.

Local communities lead the way on climate and environmental issues in Florida and FCV is ready to get to work building the Conservation Voter Movement's future from the ground up.



Daniella Levine Cava
Miami-Dade Mayor



Nancy Metayer
Coral Springs Seat 3

STATEWIDE AMENDMENTS

Every election, Florida voters are asked to decide on a host of ballot questions that, if passed, would amend our state constitution. In 2020, FCV opposed two of those constitutional amendments, and we were successful in their defeat.

Amendment Number 3, also known as the "jungle primary" amendment, would change Florida's primary elections for state legislators, the governor and lieutenant governor, and elected cabinet members (Attorney General, Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and Chief Financial Officer) from a closed election to a top-two open primary. All candidates for statewide offices and the legislature, no matter their party, would challenge each other in one primary in August. Out of that one primary, the top two vote-getters (regardless of party) would

face each other in the General Election. The Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the 2010 Fair Districts Amendment to Florida's Constitution requires that racial minorities elect candidates of their choice. With jungle primaries, it would eliminate that choice. Number 3 would diminish Black voting power, especially when general elections challenge a Black candidate vs. a white candidate.

FCV opposed this amendment because it would weaken Black and Latinx representation in the state, potentially shutting out candidates representing Black and Latinx communities from the ballot on Election Day. We were pleased to see this amendment fail.

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STATEWIDE AMENDMENTS CONT...

Thank you to FCV Board Member Sean Shaw, director of People Over Profits, for his remarkable leadership in opposition to Amendment Number 3.

FCV got our start as the Water and Land Conservation Amendment campaign, so protecting citizens' access to the ballot is a core issue for our supporters. Unfortunately, a shadowy organization funded entirely by untraceable dark money sponsored Amendment Number 4 that would require all constitutional amendments to pass in two successive general

elections. Not only would this give opponents to an amendment campaign an unfair "do-over," but it would further concentrate power in the hands of entrenched Tallahassee legislators, lobbyists, and well-funded political groups.

FCV was honored to join a diverse coalition of organizations to oppose this bad amendment. Thank you to the League of Women Voters Florida, Florida For All, the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, the ACLU, Common Cause, Southern Poverty Law Center, Ballot Initiative Strategy Center, and many more for their united efforts. **Together, we were successful in defeating Amendment Number 4.**

LOCAL BALLOT MEASURES

Besides working on statewide ballot initiatives, FCV also endorses local, county-wide ballot measures and charter amendments. This year, we endorsed six amendments in Volusia, Manatee, Orange, and Collier counties. **We are proud to announce that voters approved all six local ballot initiatives, proving, once again, that Floridians support increased protections and funding for our environment.**

In Collier County, voters supported an amendment to continue a popular and successful program for buying natural lands to protect our water quality and water resources, provide flood protection, and preserve valuable wildlife habitat. This measure sets aside an estimated \$255 million over ten years to support the **Conservation Collier** program and safeguard our most environmentally important places forever.

In Volusia County, voters supported extending the **Volusia Forever** program, the oldest local land conservation program in Florida. Funding for Volusia Forever comes from property taxes at a rate of just \$0.20 for every \$1,000 of taxable property value. Over the last twenty years, the program allowed the county to purchase and improve more than 38,000 acres, including the Volusia Conservation Corridor, Lake George Forest and Wildlife Management Area, Deep Creek Preserve, and more.

Volusia County voters also supported a second, separate opportunity to fund community investment. The **Volusia ECHO** (Environmental, Cultural, Historic, and Outdoor Recreation) program is funded through property taxes at just \$0.20 for every \$1,000 of taxable property value. Since 2001, ECHO has provided grants for more than 240 projects in every region of Volusia County.

In Orange County, voters approved the **"Wekiva and Econlockhatchee Rivers Bill of Rights."** This citizen-driven amendment to the county charter legally recognizes the right

of the rivers "to exist and to be protected against pollution" and that all county residents "have a right to clean water." Both the Wekiva and Econlockhatchee rivers are officially designated as "impaired," and state law has failed to fix their pollution problems.

Orange County voters also approved the perpetual protection of **Split Oak Forest**. This charter amendment restricts the Orange County Board of County Commissioners' ability to amend, modify, or revoke the current conservation-focused restrictions and covenants running with the land. In other words, this charter amendment permanently limits the use of Split Oak Forest to conservation and the protection of its wildlife, vegetation, and the environment as outlined in current agreements and restrictive covenants.

Manatee County voters approved a ballot measure entitled **"Water Quality Protection, Fish And Wildlife Habitat Preservation, And Park Ad Valorem Tax And Bonds."** This measure authorizes up to \$50 million in bonds to protect Manatee County's last remaining natural areas and wildlife habitat before they are lost forever to development. Funds will be used to acquire, improve, and manage lands to protect water quality, prevent stormwater runoff, create parks, and preserve fish and wildlife habitat.

VOTE BY MAIL EFFORT

We set out to reach 100,000 Florida voters and encourage at least 7,000 of those voters to vote by mail. To help with this effort, FCV created an online FL Voter Info tool through the help of our partners at Progress Florida. **With your help, we have far exceeded our goals!**

As of midnight on Election Day, we reached a total of 149,759 voters across Florida, and out of all the voters we contacted, 52,590 of them requested a vote-by-mail ballot.

WHAT'S AHEAD IN 2021

Our mission is simple: We elect lawmakers who protect our environment and healthy communities for everyone. But our work doesn't stop after the election. Our job is to engage people in our democracy and advocacy to help build and support the next generation of conservation leaders.

The next decade of Florida politics will be significantly affected by the following two legislative sessions. Starting next year, the Legislature will draw and approve congressional and state legislative district lines. Although unlikely, the Governor can veto the lines drawn for Congress. On the other hand, the Legislature can pass new state senate and representative districts via joint resolution, which are not open to the Governor's veto.

Protecting our environment starts with protecting our democracy. You can be sure that FCV will be part of the redistricting process and will fight for fair districts that properly apportion Florida's population.

Additionally, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to hurt Florida families and businesses, state budget estimators expect the 2021 state budget to suffer significant shortfalls. FCV is already working with a broad coalition of housing and economic justice partners, along with our legislative allies, to ensure adequate funding goes to protecting our water and public lands, investing in solutions to the climate crisis, and alleviating the disproportionately high cost of energy that thousands of Black, Latinx, and low-income families face daily.

Now that the 2020 election is behind us, FCV will transition to advocating for policies to improve the lives of Florida's families and measuring how our elected officials vote on critical environmental, public health, and racial justice issues. Educating new lawmakers is one of the most essential tasks FCV does after each election. Along with Florida Conservation Voters Education Fund, we will hand-deliver conservation issue guidebooks to every legislator and call on them to learn more about the environmental issues Floridians care about.

The Conservation Voter Movement is only as strong as we are engaged with the lawmaking process, so look forward to more information on how you can get involved in the coming weeks and months.



FCV's digital ad for Daniella Levine Cava.

YOUR IMPACT BY THE NUMBERS



30,000

EMAILS TO FLORIDIANS



50,000

CALLS AND TEXTS TO VOTERS
IN KEY DISTRICTS



500,000

UNIQUE FLORIDA VOTERS
REACHED BY OUR DIGITAL ADS



3 MILLION

DIGITAL IMPRESSIONS ON
SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE



1,750

POSTCARDS WRITTEN AND SENT