



The Florida Democrat

Keeping Florida Democrats up to date on news in the state

Miami Herald: Democrats gather to raise money -- and ``seize opportunity''

``Folks in this room understand what's at stake -- one of the most important elections Florida has ever had," Political Consultant Steve Schale

About 1,300 Florida Democrats rallied Saturday night at the annual Jefferson Jackson Dinner in one of the most unpredictable election years in Florida history. With Florida in the throes of the wildest and most wide-open election in decades, Democrats girded against a Republican-friendly political climate and gathered Saturday for one of the state party's most successful annual fundraising dinners. About 1,300 officeholders and activists attended the dinner at the

Westin Diplomat Resort & Spa in Hollywood, which raised more than \$700,000. The 2010 election features a tight governor's race, a topsy-turvy U.S. Senate contest and three statewide campaigns for Florida's Cabinet.

[Continued on Page 2]

ICYMI: Times/Herald: Sink calls Legislators shut-down session 'complete failure'

Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink pulled no punches Tuesday as she blasted Florida legislators for being out of touch with Floridians and warned that their inaction on economic relief for Northwest Florida will cost taxpayers in the long run.

“Our economy needs speed and immediate measures to boost tourism in Northwest Florida or the taxpayers are going to be left with a decades-long bill from businesses that are going bankrupt and residents that may leave and never be able to afford to come back,” Sink said. “Instead of action, the tone deaf Florida Legislature has been twiddling their

thumbs. It was only after the governor called for a special session – a special session that I asked for months ago – that some of them started to pay attention,” she said. She noted Sen. Don Gaetz’s hearing in Pensacola last week was the first attempt by lawmakers to hear from local government officials, business groups and citizens on the impact the oil disaster was having on the local economy.

[Continued on Page 3]



Miami Herald: Democrats gather to raise money -- and ``seize opportunity''

[Continued from Page 1]

``Folks in this room understand what's at stake -- one of the most important elections Florida has ever had," said political consultant Steve Schale, who led President Obama's winning campaign that registered a slew of new Democrats in the nation's largest swing state. ``We don't have to bring out most of the (Obama) voters in 2010. Just some of them."

“We must take back this state. This is a serious race, and we cannot afford to let our guard down”
U.S. Rep. Ron Klein of Boca Raton

The Democratic party's best shot may be the governor's race, with Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink sitting back as Republicans Rick Scott and Bill McCollum wage war with television attack ads. Though she holds one of the most powerful public offices in the state, Sink is portraying herself as an outsider in Republican-controlled Tallahassee.

``Sometimes, I sit at those Cabinet meetings, thinking to myself: `Who are you people? And what in the world are you doing for Florida?' " she asked the crowd. ``I'm fed up with the lack of leadership and the absence of direction."

Democrats are also gloating over the waves of scandal shaking the Republican Party of Florida, including charges of fraud and money laundering brought against the former state party chairman. ``Floridians are forced to wonder: Which Republican leader or party boss are they going to take out in handcuffs next?" quipped the state party chairwoman, Karen Thurman. On Nov. 2. she added, ``Democrats, we have to seize this opportunity." <http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/07/17/v-fullstory/1735543/democrats-gather-to-raise-money.html>

Public Policy Polling: Sink Benefiting from Republican Primary is Ahead in Florida Governor Race

Democrat Alex Sink is ahead of both of her potential Republican challengers. Sink leads Rick Scott 36:30 and Attorney General Bill McCollum 37:23. In both horseraces Independent candidate Bud Chiles finishes third with less than a sixth of the vote. Despite leading the race Sink has relatively low name recognition, 54% of Florida voters say they have yet to form an opinion of the Democratic nominee. She is fairly unknown amongst Democrats as well. 49% of Floridians within her own party are unsure of their opinion of Sink and only 33% have a favorable opinion. Sink is certainly benefiting from the brutally competitive Republican Primary.

The Republican primary battle is taking its toll on both McCollum and Scott. Both candidates are undoubtedly better known than Sink, but it is not necessarily in their favor. 41% of Florida voters have an unfavorable opinion of Scott and 51% have an unfavorable opinion of McCollum. The negative campaigning has worked, but it is unclear if either candidate has really benefited from the attacks. 40% of Republicans have an unfavorable opinion of McCollum and 30% of Republicans have an unfavorable opinion of Scott. While Scott may have the upper hand now, the negative attention may continue to be a scar on his campaign even into the general election. "Voters hate negative campaigning and at this rate no matter which candidate the Republicans nominate they will enter the general with baggage too heavy to lose," said Dean Debnam, http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/PPP_Release_FL_721.pdf

ICYMI: Times/Herald: Sink calls Legislators shut-down session 'complete failure'

[Continued from Page 1] "But it seems that many of the legislators are paying attention for the wrong reasons," she said. "Today at noon, I expect to see the culmination of the complete failure of the Florida Legislature to be in tune with what's going on the real world of Florida. In the same chamber, where House Republicans shoved through a proposal in just a few days to open state waters to oil drilling, those same Republicans will stand at their desks to claim they don't have enough time.

Sink, a Democratic candidate for governor, said that for more than a month she has been calling for incentives "that only the Florida Legislature can enact" and when the House speaker and Senate president hadn't filed any legislation to help them, she wrote them a letter calling for changes to streamline and speed up the claims process and provide economic relief.

"No surprise it hasn't been answered," she said.

http://blogs.tampabay.com/buzz/2010/07/sink-calls-legislators-shutdown-session-complete-failure-.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+tampabaycom%2Fblogs%2Fbuzz+%28The+Buzz++tampabay.com%29

Herald/Times: Former office manager details Florida GOP's spending scandal

Long before criminal investigations shook the Republican Party of Florida, office manager Susan Wright noticed a problem: Higher-ups were spending party money to help themselves instead of the GOP. She saw thousands more in questionable expenses for trips and swank accommodations in Boston, Beverly Hills and Miami. And she was among the first Republican staffers to voice concerns about a \$200,000 party contract with a shell company called Victory Strategies, now at the center of fraud and theft charges against former chairman Jim Greer, who has pleaded not guilty. Wright, 57, didn't know all the details, but fretted to her supervisors and co-workers that the party was running out of money and couldn't afford it all.

"I need to keep my job. If you don't keep your mouth shut, you're not going to keep yours,"
said
Richard Swartz, CFO, to Wright

"I was told to keep my mouth shut," she said. Wright didn't. So she was fired.

Now a witness in the state criminal case against Greer, Wright is breaking months of public silence to detail for the *St. Petersburg Times/Miami Herald* the problems she saw at party headquarters under Greer and his right-hand man, Delmar Johnson, who is avoiding jail time in return for testifying against Greer. Wright had access to expense reports, contracts, pay information and vacation time for nearly every party worker. Weeks after she was fired in January, Wright was flown to West Palm Beach by the U.S. Attorney's Office to tell her story to a federal prosecutor, an FBI agent and an Internal Revenue Service official. Wright was interviewed by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement in

March. <http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/stateroundup/former-office-manager-details-florida-gops-spending-scandal/1108238>

SP Times Editorial: Rick Scott's deceitful, heartless ploy



Republican gubernatorial candidate Rick Scott's latest effort to burnish his credentials as a "pro-life leader" are deceitful and lack any sense of decency. The hospital executive is shamelessly exploiting the tragedy of a family of a severely disabled young woman, marking the second time he has placed his selfish interests over theirs. The heartless ploy speaks volumes to this candidate's character and raises more questions about his judgment.

<http://www.tampabay.com/opinion/editorials/article1108509.ece>

Orlando Sentinel's Mike Thomas: Will Greer's lawyer be political party pooper?

Cheney Mason is the patron saint of hapless defendants who seemingly have no defense. Given his history, it was no surprise this week when he took on the case of Jim Greer, the former chairman and chief scoundrel of the Republican Party of Florida, a man accused of stealing and laundering thousands of dollars from the party. Greer is a perfect Mason client.

He is high profile, widely reviled and judged guilty beyond a reasonable doubt by many before the trial even begins. Mason's defensive strategy is to opt for a strong offense, all of which could make him a major wild card in the upcoming election. He plans to put Florida Republican Party on trial, announcing this week that he basically will burn the party to the ground if that's what it takes save his client. If Greer is a scoundrel, says Mason, then he was a scoundrel among scoundrels.

We don't think there was a crime committed," says Cheney. "No public funds were taken. This is a private club. Historically, they do what they want to do. They pay what they want to pay. Where are the rules here?"
Cheney Mason

He did nothing that party leaders didn't know was being done. To prove it, he plans to drag them in for depositions. The list includes Attorney General Bill McCollum, future House Speaker Dean Cannon and party Chairman John Thrasher. Gov. Charlie Crist, who appointed Greer but has since abandoned the party, also may be called. All are running for offices. Mason says the questioning begins in about two weeks. Their testimony could be released before the August primaries.

"Some inconvenient truths are likely to come out in depositions," Mason says. "I know any elected public official who throws rocks better make sure he is not living in the proverbial glass house."

That could be a bluff. But his strategy reinforces the story line of Florida Democrats this campaign season. One-party rule has turned the Republicans into an arrogant, corrupt bunch. Greer was not some party outlier but was the epicenter of their polluted universe.

WKMG: Rick Scott Campaign Staffers Block Reporter

A veteran political reporter at Local 6's sister station in Miami says Rick Scott's campaign staff did a 180 because the reporter interviewed Scott's mother. Reporter Mike Putney of television station WPLG attended a campaign stop for the Republican gubernatorial candidate Wednesday in Sweetwater, a small town in Miami-Dade.

Putney says the stop went smoothly until he asked Esther Scott a few simple, straight-forward questions. Referring to her son, she replied, "He's doing the job he wants to do and will do a great job for the state of Florida."

After that incident, video shows Rick Scott staffers blocking him from Scott as they walked towards the campaign tour bus. Putney claims staffers insisted he not air the Esther Scott interview if he wanted access to Scott. Putney refused.

Video also shows Putney trying to board the campaign bus and being ignored. As staffers boarded the bus leaving Putney behind, he told them, "Hey whoa! Whoa! Are you saying I can't speak to the candidate?"

A Scott spokesman, Joe Kildea, e-mailed Local 6 a response to the incident insisting Putney was not blocked, but instead pushed the staffer. The e-mail read, "The only thing I saw was Michael Putney hip-check a pregnant woman. Hardly news reporting."

<http://www.clickorlando.com/news/24347142/detail.html>

UPCOMING EVENT

7/31/10

LCDEC Breakfast Forum

Sponsor: Lake County DEC

- Time: 9:00-11:00 AM
- Location: TBD
- Event Type: Fundraiser
- Cost: \$15 per person
- Contact Info: Chair Nancy Hurlbert at 352-483-4962 (H/O)
- Other Details: Casual dress