



www.manisteecountydemocrats.us

Monthly Meetings

January 20th, 7pm
(3rd Thursday of month)

January Guest Speaker:
TBA

Leadership Team

Chair

John Helge
johnmhelge@gmail.com

Vice Chair

Rebecca Amidon
rebeccalamidon@gmail.com

Treasurer

Judy Cunningham
jpc4466@gmail.com

Secretary

Mary Ortiz
mary.catherine.ortiz@gmail.com

Social Activities Chair

Peggy Raddatz
peg.raddatz@gmail.com

Blue Tigers Chair

Shirley Madden
gspmadden@gmail.com

Communications Chair

Lee Trucks
leetrucks@gmail.com

Volunteers Chair

Al Frye
alfrye55@gmail.com

Parade Chair

Laurel Mason
laurele52@charter.net

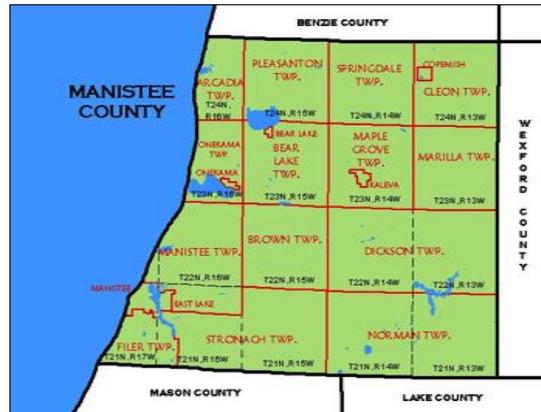
“VOTERS TAKE BACK POWER”

VOTERS NOT POLITICIANS

Last Thursday a bunch of ordinary citizens overturned decades of Republican gerrymandering by formally approving new maps for Michigan's Congressional, state House and state Senate districts. Now the party that gets the most votes will have a chance to get the most seats. The new voting districts create a fair opportunity in 2022 for the Democratic Party to take back control of the State Legislature.

The fairness, however, comes with the cost of splitting counties.

It will greatly increase the chance for Democrats to have a say in their State Legislature again.



State House District 104

We will no longer be running a candidate against Jack O'Malley for State Rep. Manistee County has been divided into 2 separate House districts (see above). We are also divided into two districts for the State Senate race too. Most of our county will be in District 32, with 4 Townships on the east side in District 36.

Michigan lost a Congressional seat and is now divided into 13 districts. Sadly, we are no longer in District 1 with a great candidate like Dr. Bob Lorinser to run against Jack Bergman. Manistee County is now in District 2 with counties to the south. Rep. John Moolenaar, a Trump Republican who also wanted to nullify the 2020 Michigan election results and support the insurrection, has declared he will run in our district.

Thanks to *Voters not Politicians* and citizens who worked hard to pass the citizen initiative (Prop 2) in 2018, Michigan is now one of 11 states that has an independent citizen panel that will redraw congressional and state district maps every 10 years after the census.

COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR



John Helge

2021 was certainly a challenge, but we must admit we are currently in a much better position than we were at this time last year. We had just witnessed the deadly and violent invasion of the US Capitol by a mob aiming to overthrow our democracy cheered on by the lame duck who lost the election by over 7 million votes and a cabal of Republican sycophants who have refused to even consider doing their job of legislating in both Washington DC and Lansing!

Yes, we are in a better place now, but 2022 will continue to test our resolve to maintain our rights and continue to forge a better life for all Americans. 2022 is shaping up to be another year when we will all need to mobilize for what is true, fair, and just. We cannot just sit back and let others do it for us! In 2022 we need YOU to get engaged and help as much as possible.

Your Manistee County Democratic Party has been working hard to change the narrative of what it means to be a Democrat in Manistee County. We have been and will continue to be active and visible trying to deliver a clear message that we believe in government at all levels that functions effectively for all people.

- I hope you are proud to see fellow Democrats helping at the monthly Feeding America Trucks and other sources of aid in the County for food insecure people.
- We have volunteers who proudly wear their blue caps while delivering Meals on Wheels, helping at vaccination clinics, manning information tables at the County Fair, weeding Blossom Boulevard, picking up trash from our roadways or upgrading the Riverwalk.
- Manistee County Democrats are busy writing letters to the editors of local newspapers holding our elected officials accountable and clarifying our positions on local, regional, and national policy issues.
- Your local Democratic Party is also aiding those who wish to complete their high school education or improve their job skills at West Shore Community College.
- The Manistee County Democratic Party collaborates with other county parties in NW Michigan as well as the Rural Caucus of the Michigan Democratic Party to align and refine our messages.

You have a very active Party that is dedicated to mobilizing to get out the vote for issues and candidates that align with your expectations. In 2022 we will need to be even more active to insure we can support candidates up and down the ballot. We will be recruiting and supporting viable candidates for local offices. We will be working hard to support our outstanding triumvirate of incumbent state-wide leaders in the races for Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State. Yes, money will be involved, but we know you will step up and contribute like you did last year when we saw a record amount of donations! Please visit bit.ly/donatemcdp to donate for 2022!



MANISTEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY 2021 IN REVIEW

In 2021 your Manistee County Democratic Party had these strategic focus areas:

- **Recruit, support, and elect democrats to local and county offices**
 - We have an active candidate recruitment committee chaired by Judy Cunningham
 - The recruitment committee is publishing a detailed manual in support of candidates providing key information on how to win a local election
- **Be active and visible to all residents of Manistee County**
 - January Capitol Riot rally
 - April Voter Suppression rally
 - October Women's' Rights rally
 - Earth Day Clean-up
 - Little Big Shots Talent Show at Forest Festival
 - Lumberjack Show at Manistee County Fair
 - Information Booth at Manistee County Fair
 - Sunset Cruise on Princess of Manistee
 - Monthly Feeding America Truck that distributed over 117,000 lbs. of food in 2021
- **Develop strategic partnerships with other organizations in Manistee County**
 - Active in Chamber of Commerce
 - Joined Farm Bureau
 - Working with Little River Band of Ottawa Indians to support their initiatives
 - Aligned and collaborating with Manistee Area Racial Justice, Diversity and Inclusion (MARJDI) group
 - Aligned and collaborating with local LGBTQ community organizations
- **Collaborate with other Northern Michigan Dem Party groups**
 - Active in the Michigan Democratic Party Rural Caucus
 - Collaborating with Mason, Benzie, Leelanau, and Grand Traverse County Democratic Parties
 - Mason and Manistee County Dems posted a billboard on US31 in July 2021
- **Hold monthly informational meetings for members**
 - Monthly meetings are focused on providing information to members
 - We heard from County Clerk Jill Novak on election security
 - We were updated on Covid-19 protocols by Merissa Salisbury
 - We met live via ZOOM with Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel
 - We supported the Manistee Area Public Schools bond issue that won by 81 votes! Proving that every vote counts!
 - We heard about union apprenticeship opportunities from Pipefitters Local 174 Business Manager Ryan Bennett
 - We heard from local Dem officials at our June Strawberry Social
 - We heard from Michigan State Rep Rachel Hood at our July Picnic
 - We heard from Dr. Bob Lorinser candidate for US Rep at our September meeting

While 2021 was a very active year, we are looking forward to even more activities, events, and opportunities for you to get engaged with us in 2022. Please join us in our efforts to obtain government at all levels that will function in the best interest of all the people regardless of their economic status, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

MANISTEE DEMS SUPPORT FESTIVAL OF TREES

The Lakeside Club of Manistee sponsored the Festival of Trees on Dec. 5 and 6, 2021. The event was quite a success and the Manistee Democrats was one of the many organizations that provided a tree that was auctioned.

The Manistee Dems was the only organization that provided a real tree, which was decorated with environmentally friendly ornaments such as homemade birch bark ornaments, popcorn and cranberry garlands, and a handcrafted stick and feather star tree topper. The tree was decorated by Mary Ortiz and Rebecca Amidon. The tree was titled, "Spirit of the Woods." There were several bids on the Manistee Dems Christmas Tree. The winning bid was for \$135.

The Lakeside Club chose two non-profit organizations to support this year: Manistee County Humane Society's Homeward Bound Animal Shelter and the Armory Youth Project. The Lakeside Club asked people to bring a nonperishable food item and place it by the entry they liked best. This year's People's Choice Award went to Burger King's tree.

In all, there were over 1,300 food items donated to the Matthew 25:35 Food Pantry in Manistee. Those who brought in a gift for a child or teenager were entered in a drawing for which several businesses donated prizes. There were 70 toys and \$80 in cash donated to FiveCAP's Toys for Tots/Gifts for Teens program.

The Festival of Trees for 2021 was a success and thanks to the Manistee Dems and other organizations for supporting this event.



The Manistee Dems tree titled, "Spirit of the Woods."



Vice Chair, Rebecca Amidon and Secretary, Mary Ortiz

JOHN HELGE'S JANUARY NEWS COLUMN

We have recently been inundated with troubling images commemorating the first anniversary of the violent riot at the US Capitol that attempted to overthrow the results of the 2020 Presidential election. There are many among us who would like to just forget that this sort of insurrection could have ever happened in the United States of America, but we all have a responsibility as citizens to take on the work necessary to maintain our democracy. As citizens of this great country, it is our sacred responsibility to vote in every election to ensure our voices are heard and those we elect are held accountable for their actions as our representatives in national, state, and local governmental bodies. Once the ballots are counted and the results are announced the peaceful transfer of power has been one of the true differentiators of American democracy.

Many of us expect that the lies and misinformation spread by those seeking to overturn the free and fair 2020 election will not influence this long-standing process in the future. We need to continue to hold these elected officials and others in popular leadership positions accountable not only for their actions on January 6, 2021, but also for the fact that they have continued to create doubt in the validity and security of our election processes even after all the lawsuits, examinations, and audits proved otherwise. It is one thing for your neighbor to say they dispute the election results by citing some off-the-wall conspiracy theory—that's their right of free speech. But it is a serious breach of trust when the Big Lie is repeated by those whom we have elected to represent us in crafting meaningful legislation at the state and national level.

Voting should be an easy task for every US Citizen. We are truly fortunate here in Manistee County to have experienced and dedicated clerks and volunteer poll workers at the Township, City, and County levels who do the heavy lifting that makes it simple and easy for us to cast our votes on election day. These are the people who follow the rules and procedures to make sure every election is fair and free from fraud of any kind. We should never advocate taking those responsibilities away from these local experts and putting them in the hands of potentially biased legislators or bureaucrats in Lansing or Washington DC.

Placing legislative restrictions or limitations on the election process does not improve election integrity it simply makes it more difficult for some to vote. Recent moves by the Michigan and other state legislatures in 2021 are great examples of why it is so important to have Federal voting rights actions in place to protect the right of all US Citizens to vote.

Not every US Citizen is able or capable of physically getting to their assigned polling place on election day. Work schedules and health issues often get in the way of casting their vote.

- It would be a great idea to make the major November election day a national holiday so more could find the time to vote.
- No US Citizen should have to stand in line for more than 2 hours to cast their vote. Densely populated areas should have more polling sites, not fewer.
- Absentee ballot voting has been proven to be a safe and secure alternative that has increased voter participation in the democratic election process. Everyone should be able to take advantage of this easy opportunity to participate.
- Early in-person voting is also a good way to increase the ability of more citizens to have their voices heard.
- Allowing the clerks to process and count these early and absentee voting ballots would also improve the time required to provide accurate results once the polls officially close.

In Michigan we should also raise the alarm about the ability of a very small minority of citizens to bypass the legislative process by getting 340,000 signatures on a petition. This number represents less than 3.5% of the

9,987,000 who cast ballots in 2020. There are deceptively labeled petitions currently circulating to overturn the Governor’s veto of bills that would limit voting rights (Secure MI Vote) and another to provide state tax dollar vouchers for non-public education options (Let MI Kids Learn). For over 230 years our constitutional democracy has operated by the concept of majority rule with checks and balances to protect the minority. These petitions fly in the face of that historically proven concept. When presented with the opportunity, we would recommend that you simply Decline to Sign these petitions.

The 2022 election cycle will be interesting in Michigan. The recent redistricting process has moved many incumbent federal and state legislators into new districts. We will also be voting for the top three executive branch leadership positions. We urge you to reject broad labels, misrepresentations seen on social media, TV ads, or gossip over the back fence. Please take the time and effort to get engaged and vote for the candidates who will best represent you and your family’s needs and expectations. Use your vote carefully to save our democracy in 2022!

MANISTEE DEMS ON PARADE

Last summer the Manistee County Democratic Party marched in four local parades in Arcadia, Bear Lake, Kaleva and on Labor Day. Party members who participated were: John Helge, Judy Cunningham, Tim and Wanda Joseph and cousin, Gary and Shirley Madden, Loral Mason, Marilyn Masten, Gerard and Jan Grabowski, Peggy Raddatz, Dave Berns, Chris Malone, Rebecca Amidon and family, Jan Shireman, Ellen Somsel, amongst others. Thank you to everyone for helping keep the party visible and active in the county. Perhaps more members will join in marching next year, after all it is a good way to get in an afternoon walk.

While walking in the parades, it was noted that our mascot (our red, white, and blue donkey) does not have a name. It was suggested that we have party members submit names for our mascot that has been in every parade for nearly three years. He rides on Rick Shrock's trailer. So, if any of you have a good name to suggest for our mascot, please send it to Gary Madden at genie42br@gmail.com. Our Executive Committee will make a selection from the names submitted and communicate their choice in a future newsletter.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS RALLY HELD AT MANISTEE CITY HALL

Article Excerpt from Manistee News Advocate, October 4, 2021

The Manistee County Democrats held a rally for women's reproductive rights outside of Manistee City Hall on Saturday, October 2, 2021 with 80 people in attendance. Such rallies were held throughout the nation as a recently passed law in Texas has put a spotlight on reproductive rights. The law essentially bans abortions in the state after about six weeks after conception — before most women know they are pregnant.

“What’s happening in Texas right now, there’s no exception for rape and incest, and that is unacceptable,” Manistee County Democrats Vice Chair Rebecca Amidon said. “... I can understand putting some type of limits to a certain degree, but when you say no exceptions, then we can’t be OK with that.” Amidon said the rally was a sister event to the national Women’s March held in Washington D.C.

“We just felt we needed to represent here in Michigan because there is a court case that will be heard by the supreme court in a couple of months which could cause Roe v. Wade to fall,” she said. “If it does, there is a pre-Roe law on the Michigan books, so then Michigan women would possibly lose any access to abortion care. We just felt it was important to have our voices heard in case that were to happen.”

Shirley Madden, chairperson of the Blue Tigers, the community outreach organization of the Manistee County Democrats, told attendees an abortion ban would not stop abortions, it would only stop safe abortions. Madden shared the story of her college friend who became pregnant during her freshman year — before Roe v. Wade — and the terrible repercussions suffered by a woman who did not have a safe way to terminate the pregnancy.

“We’re not really taught proper sex education in public schools or by our parents — especially if they’re religious they might push abstinence only. So many women are ill-equipped to control their own reproductive health and when that happens they get pregnant unintentionally,” Amidon said. “Then they can’t go to school, can’t get an education, can’t get a career and then they’re trapped in a cycle of poverty. We need women to be empowered so they can take control of their own lives and have children when they’re ready.”

Madden told those in attendance that abortion bans fly in the face of the principals that built America. “This country was founded on the freedom of choice,” she said. “That’s why it was founded, and we are going to make sure that we follow through with the freedom of choice for women.”



FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Membership issued _____ Membership Category _____

VAN # _____ MDP Expire _____

Manistee DEMS Membership Year

January 1- 2022 - December 31, 2022

Michigan Democratic Party (MDP) membership included for all membership levels

Visit Website: www.manisteecountydemocrats.us

Facebook: Manistee County Democrats

Please check off three (3) or more categories where you can volunteer your time and skills.

ASSIST CAMPAIGNS

- ___ Make phone calls
___ Knock on Doors
___ Write Letters
___ Train/manage Volunteers
___ Compile Mailings
___ Absentee Voter Program
___ Attend Events
___ Deliver Yard Signs
___ Pick up Yard Signs
___ Get Out The Vote (GOTV)
___ Call / text members re: meetings
___ Provide Food
___ Mobile Office
___ Newsletter Committee

ASSIST POLITICAL EVENTS

- ___ Voter Registration Drive
___ Annual County Picnic
___ Manistee County Fair
___ Candidates Meet 'n Greet
___ Fundraisers
___ March in Parades
___ Event Planning
___ Poll Watchers
___ Work Campaign Office
___ Run for Precinct Delegate
___ Run for Political Office

ASSIST SERVICE EVENTS

- ___ Feed America Food Truck
___ Annual Country Picnic
___ Environmental Film Festival
___ Blue Tigers
___ Holiday Party
___ Don Jennings

SERVE ON A COMMITTEE

- ___ Candidate Recruitment
___ By-Laws Committee
___ Finance Committee
___ Membership Committee
___ Communications Committee
___ Scholarship Commtee
___ Campaign Committee
___ Editorial Committee

I have campaign / political experience: _____

This yearly membership is for the MANISTEE COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY. A separate MDP registration is required to vote or run for office at any level of the Democratic Party. Your optional donation to MCDP is greatly appreciated to help defray expenses, operate a campaign office and to support candidates. Donations are NOT tax deductible.

- ___ Grass Roots - \$0
___ Young Democrats (ages 18 - 25) - \$5
___ Ontario Club \$25 per person
___ Erie Club \$50 per person
___ Huron Club \$100 per household
___ Superior Club \$250 per household
___ Michigan Club \$500 per household
___ Donation to Blue Tigers Scholarship Fund \$ _____

Optional: set up payment plan with your bank or with our internet: manisteecountydemocrats.us
Please return the entire sheet. Your receipt is forthcoming via email or the U.S. mail.

Last Name _____ First _____ M.I. _____

Other joining member in same household _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

PH#() _____ Cell#() _____ Email _____ @ _____

AMOUNT OF ENCLOSED CHECK \$ _____

_____/_____/2022
Signature Date

***** Make checks payable to Manistee County Democratic Party *****
Mail to : Manistee County Dems, P.O. Box 65, Manistee, MI 49660