

# THE INFORMED DEMOCRAT OF SWFL



## Let the Youth Lead! The View from Gen Z

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**February 2026**

Decisions shaping my future are being made without my voice, by leaders who won't have to live with the consequences. That isn't ageism, it's the truth. As a 23-year-old long-time resident of Southwest Florida, I feel those choices heavily.

I'm a recent graduate of Florida Gulf Coast University and president of the [Lee County Young Democrats](#). I see how policies created without us impact our lives. Housing costs are skyrocketing, pushing the dream of independence, staying local, and moving out of my parents' home further from reach. Building stability feels impossible as young professionals are priced out of their hometowns.

Climate change isn't theoretical. It's stronger hurricanes, soaring insurance rates, and fear of what the next storm season will take from us. During Hurricane Ian, while serving as a Red Cross Disaster Event-Based Volunteer, it was young, able-bodied people on the ground, digging through debris, searching for signs of life, and carrying the physical and emotional toll long after the headlines faded. Meanwhile, healthcare debates continue to sideline mental health, as my generation faces unprecedented levels of stress and burnout.

For over a decade, I've heard the phrase "let the youth lead." I'm still waiting for that to mean something. What's missing from leadership isn't youth, it's reality. Gen Z knows what it's like to come of age during economic instability, to inherit broken systems, and be told to wait our turn while our future becomes more fragile and less forgiving.

This isn't about flipping the table. It's about adding chairs. If decisions are being made about our future, we deserve a seat. Policies made without us don't just ignore our needs; they leave us to clean up the damage alone. If the torch is never passed, then get ready to feel the fire.