

THE INFORMED DEMOCRAT OF SWFL



Civic Engagement: Why Sitting Out Is No Longer Neutral

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General elections are about the choice between parties. Primaries are about defining who we are.

For many voters, especially during primary elections, it's tempting to believe that sitting out is a harmless personal choice. Life is busy, politics can feel frustrating, and the idea that "my one vote won't matter" is an easy conclusion to reach. But in today's political climate—particularly here in Florida—that choice is no longer neutral.

Primary elections are where important decisions are often made.

In Lee County and across the state, many races are effectively decided long before the general election. When turnout is low in primaries, a small group of voters ends up choosing the candidates who will shape policies affecting our schools, healthcare, environment, economy, and local governance for years to come. When Democrats sit out, our values are underrepresented—and sometimes completely absent—from the final ballot.

Democracy Doesn't Pause When We Do

Disengagement doesn't create a vacuum; it creates an advantage for those who are highly motivated to vote. Special interests, extreme voices, and well-funded political machines thrive on low turnout. Sitting out doesn't send a message of dissatisfaction—it simply hands decision-making power to others.

Civic engagement isn't about national politics or high-profile races. It's about school boards, judicial seats, county commissions, and local officials who make daily decisions that affect our quality of life. These offices shape how tax dollars are spent, what books are allowed in classrooms, how growth is managed, and whether the government remains transparent and accountable.

Primaries Are Where Values Are Defined

General elections are about the choice between parties. Primaries are about defining who we are.

When Democrats vote in primaries, we influence the direction of the party—supporting candidates who reflect our commitment to fairness, opportunity, inclusion, and responsible governance. When we don't participate, we lose the chance to elevate leaders who will fight for working families, protect fundamental freedoms, and stand up for democratic norms.

In close local races, a handful of votes can—and often does—decide the outcome.

Engagement is a Community Act

Voting is one of the simplest yet most powerful ways we show up for our neighbors. It's an act of solidarity with seniors relying on Social Security, parents concerned about public education, workers seeking fair wages, and young people who deserve a future shaped by opportunity rather than division.

Civic engagement also means talking with friends, helping others register, sharing accurate election information, and reminding one another that participation matters—especially when it feels hardest.

The Choice Is Clear

Sitting out may feel like opting out of politics, but in reality, it's opting out of influence. In this moment, neutrality isn't passive—it's consequential.

As primary elections approach, Lee County Democrats have an opportunity to be heard, to shape the future of our community, and to reaffirm that democracy works best when we all participate.

Our voices matter. Our votes matter. And the future of Lee County depends on both.

KEY 2026 LEE COUNTY PRIMARY DATES & VOTING INFORMATION

Primary Election Day:
Tuesday, August 18, 2026

Early Voting:
August 8–15, 2026
Daily from 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM at multiple Lee County locations

Voter Registration & Party Change Deadline:
July 20, 2026

Florida is a closed-primary state. Voters must be registered as Democrats by this date to vote in the Democratic Primary.

Vote-By-Mail Ballot Request Deadline:
August 6, 2026

Voters are encouraged to return vote-by-mail ballots as early as possible or use secure drop-off locations to ensure ballots are counted.