

# GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATIC PARTY

# THE NEXT CHAPTER



MARCH/APRIL 2024 EDITION

A Democratic Party Newsletter Made for and by Gratiot County Members  
Chief Editors, Nancy O'Brien & Lisa Gregory



## Chair Chat

By Christie Freestone

**“Separation of church and state is too important a concept to be misused – especially not as a tool for silencing opposing views.”**

**Dr. Russell Moore, President of the Southern Baptist Convention Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.**

Donald Trump’s new role this month as Bible salesman, in addition to running for President of the United States, got me thinking about separation of church state, and what it really means in terms of constitutional law and identifying personally as a Christian.

For just \$60 a copy you can buy a King James Version of the Bible from the “King of The Art of the Deal ” that also includes copies of the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, the Pledge of Allegiance and a “handwritten chorus” to the country song “God Bless the USA” by Lee Greenwood. This Trump Bible seems to promote the Christian Nationalist belief that the United States should be only a Christian nation and that it is especially favored among all nations by God.

It is time to delineate Christians from Christian Nationalists. The latter distorts the message of Jesus and endangers one of the basic liberties provided to every American in the Bill of Rights.

The First Amendment to the US Constitution promotes the idea of separation of church and state in two distinct ways. First, it assures that there would be no preferred religion, denomination or church in the United States. Second, the government does not instruct any religious community what its practices

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must be, and people are free to declare no religious faith whatsoever if they so choose. Christian Nationalists also seem unaware of Article 6, clause 3 of the Constitution that states, "No religious test shall ever be required as qualification to any office or public trust under the United States." Christian Nationalists support a quite different perspective. They insist their religious beliefs must inform public policy for the entire country on everything from immigration to abortion rights, human sexuality and foreign policy.

Christian Nationalism clearly promotes false Christian theology. True Christian beliefs are centered in the love and grace of God and concern for one's neighbors and for the neediest among us. In fact, one of the unifying similarities in all world religions lies in their ethical teachings. Whether it is the Christian principle of "Love your neighbor as yourself," the Islamic concept of "Treat others as you would like to be treated," or the Buddhist teaching of "Do not do to others what angers you," the common thread of "The Golden Rule" shines through.

My personal belief is that God gave us all a free will. We get one life and the right to choose what we believe and how we will live. Our job is not to judge others, but rather to love and support each other.

We cannot allow an extremely conservative group of people to impose their political agenda on the nation in the name of the church. What might seem like a marginal movement in American politics today can become a danger to religious freedom tomorrow when the power of the government is used to advance the work of any group that presumes to speak on the behalf of the whole Christian church and other diverse and prominent world religions.



**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**  
**Adopt-a-Highway**

**April 13-21**

**Call or text:  
Helen Soderberg  
989-875-5093**

# Candidate's Corner

Michael Lynch

U.S. Congressional Candidate - MI District 2

 [ElectMichaelLynch.com](http://ElectMichaelLynch.com)

 [ElectMichaelLynch@gmail.com](mailto:ElectMichaelLynch@gmail.com)



Contribute with **ActBlue**



## Don't Spoil It for the Rest of Us

Growing up, I frequently heard the expression, "America. Love it or Leave it". I did not like that expression. In the America where I grew up, people were allowed to climb on their metaphoric soap boxes and say what was on their mind. If enough people agreed with what was being said, they could band together and push for change. To me, that was the American way. That was my idea of democracy.

Unfortunately, we now are faced with members of Congress and candidates for high office who clearly do not believe that the United States should be a democracy. In 2019, Speaker of the House of Representatives Michael Johnson stated, "By the way, the United States is not a democracy. Do you know what a democracy is? Two wolves and a sheep deciding what's for dinner. You don't want to be in a democracy. Majority rule: not always a good thing." One of the front running candidates for the presidency has stated that, if elected, he would act as "dictator for a day".

Let me digress. As a child, one of my favorite days was when the *Wizard of Oz* was broadcast. The family would be together in front of the television, we would make popcorn and my mother would share the story of how the *Wizard of Oz* was the first movie she saw in a theater. Her brothers were too young to go to the movies, so my mother and her mother shared the mother/daughter moment together. Great memories.

As I got older, the thought of sitting around watching television with my family became less appealing. On the night that the *Wizard of Oz* was being broadcast so was *The Hustler*. I had become a huge Jackie Gleason fan (and I still am) and I wanted to watch *The Hustler*. Instead of disturbing my family's tradition, I quietly slipped into my parents' room and watched *The Hustler* on their small black and white.

What I am trying to say is that even though the majority ruled and I wanted something else, I did not try to take from them that which they enjoyed and cherished. I cherish democracy. I cherish majority rule. I cherish that idea that everyone gets a voice and even the smallest voice can change the country. If you do not favor democracy, fine. All I am asking is that you do not spoil it for the rest of us.

# GCDP Open House

Gratiot County Democrats hosted an Open House at our office on February 18. Thank you to everyone who stopped in, signed petitions, and purchased merchandise. If you were unable to attend, stop in to see us during office hours!

**Gratiot Democratic Party office**  
**1686 Wright Street**  
**Wednesdays - 4:00-6:00 p.m.**  
**Saturdays - 10:00 a.m. to noon.**



**Michigan Voter Information**  
Department of State

**Click here for helpful information about where to find your clerk, polling place, and sample ballots.**

**Get Your Democracy Yard Signs!**



Let's share our message everywhere in the county! "Democrats Deliver" signs are available for a suggested donation of \$15 or more.



## Signatures Needed!

If you have not signed a petition to place Michael Lynch on the ballot, please stop in to the office to do this. Petitions are also available for you to take with you to have friends/family sign. Those signing must be registered voters, but do not have to be Democrats. Thank you for your help! The deadline is fast approaching!

**Michael Lynch**  
**U.S. Congressional Candidate - MI District 2**



# **UKRAINE AND GAZA: A GLIMMER OF HOPE**

**Monday, April 22**

**7:00 PM**

**Alma Opera House**



**Sandy Hulme**  
Alma College Professor

**Reid-Knox Forums are open forums where members of the community can come together to learn about and discuss current topics. Please join us.**

# Candidate Information Night

One of the most important goals of our party is finding candidates to run for office to represent Democrats in Gratiot County. In order to help support potential candidates, GCDP hosted a Candidate Recruitment Night at our office to provide information and advice for anyone wondering what it takes to run for office. We appreciate our panel of former office-holders, candidates, and our Gratiot County Clerk for sharing their experiences and expertise.

If you are interested in running for office, or know of someone who you believe would be a good candidate, contact Bobbie Renshaw, our Candidate Liaison, for more information: [brenshaw810@gmail.com](mailto:brenshaw810@gmail.com)

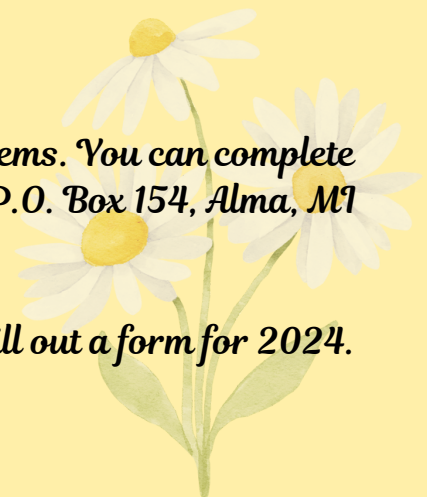


## Membership

*Remember to sign up for membership with the Gratiot Dems. You can complete the paper form that was mailed to you and return it to: P.O. Box 154, Alma, MI 48801 or you can register digitally at [GratiotDems.net](http://GratiotDems.net)*

*Even if you signed up last year, we are asking that you fill out a form for 2024. This is the only way we can keep our records current.*

*Your support is appreciated!*



Join us!

for a showing of:



# CIVIL WAR

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ALEX GARLAND

April 23, 2024

NCG Cinemas - Alma

Doors Open at 10:30 AM

Movie Begins at 11:00 AM



*\$30 includes admission, popcorn and pop with free refills*

Purchase tickets at:

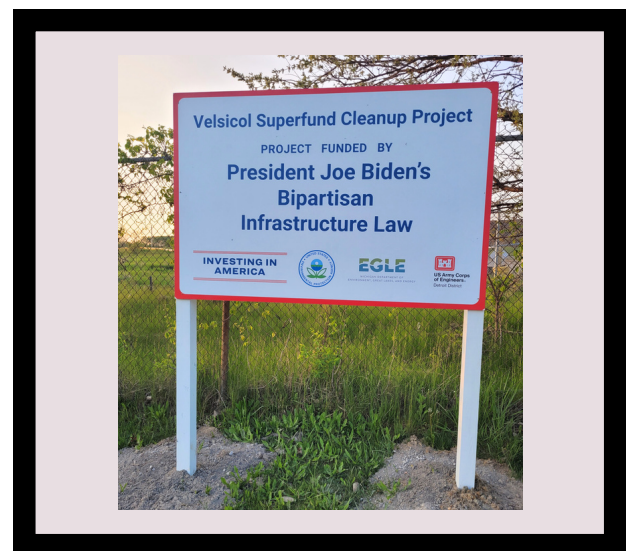
[gratiotdems.ticketleap.com/civil-war/](https://gratiotdems.ticketleap.com/civil-war/)

*A fundraiser for The Gratiot County Democratic Party*



# EPA announces cleanup will begin at the Velsicol Chemical Corporation in Michigan as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced a third and final wave of more than \$1 billion for cleanup projects at more than 100 Superfund sites across the country as part of President Biden's Investing in America agenda. This funding is made possible by the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and will launch new cleanup projects at 25 Superfund sites, including the Velsicol Chemical Corporation in St. Louis, Michigan. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding will be used to remediate an area located from the St. Louis dam to 1.5 miles downstream within the Pine River, referred to as Operable Unit 3. Cleanup includes excavation, off-site disposal, and restoration of streambanks and four floodplains with DDT contamination.



## Biden Builds in Gratiot County!

Throughout his presidency, President Joe Biden has worked hard to secure funding for programs that will strengthen and build up (literally) our communities. Michigan has received billions of dollars so far, money our state is using to rebuild and improve our infrastructure. Gratiot County has received \$22,870,022 to fund 16 projects.

This website breaks down the numbers, letting you know exactly where the money is going and see the impact on your community in real time.





# The Next Chapter: A Book Club

By Nancy O'Brien

## *Demon Copperhead*

By Barbara Kingsolver

On March 2, our book club met to discuss *Demon Copperhead*, a fictional account of the effects of the opioid crisis in Appalachia. A boy is born to a single mother living in a trailer in Kentucky with few resources but a drive to survive and bright red hair. His mother is a recovering addict and they struggle to live in a rural, poverty-stricken area facing many trials and traumatic incidents. The author has claimed she was inspired to write this novel by Charles Dickens' novel *David Copperfield*. In each case, the main character is an unwanted boy who experiences extreme poverty and tries to make his way to adulthood.

Many book club members found this to be a powerful story and the group rated it 4.8 out of 5 stars.

## *Freedom's Just Another Word*

By Len Joy

At our latest meeting on April 6, we discussed this fictional novel that explored a few current issues: unexpected pregnancies, gang violence, gun ownership, divorce, uncomfortable political rivalries, wealthy entitlement, and owning responsibility for mistakes. The main character used to have a syndicated political column but through a series of personal choices loses his life of privilege. He now writes a local column and drives for Uber as a side hustle. His biracial son (the result of an affair) is targeted for death by a gang member, his single daughter is pregnant and wants an abortion, his attorney ex-wife is opposed to abortion, and his publisher/boss wants him to give up his column and join his campaign for president. Jake has a lot of choices to make as he deals with all of these issues.

Our book club members had a lengthy, interesting discussion about this novel. Overall, we rated 4.5 out of 5 stars.

Our next meeting is May 4 at our office 1686 Wright Ave. in Alma. The May book choice is *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles. Please join us at 10:00 am. All of these books are available at Ballyhoo Books in Alma.

### JOIN US FOR OUR UPCOMING EVENTS

**MAY 4**

*The Lincoln Highway*

by Amor Towles

**JUNE 1**

*Prequel*

by Rachel Maddow

**JULY 13**

*The Midnight Library*

by Matt Haig

**AUGUST 3**

*The Boys in the Boat*

by Daniel James Brown

*You're Invited!*

# Have coffee with us!



## Coffee with the Dems



Join us the first Tuesday of each month

April 2 | May 7 | June 4

9AM

Ballyhoo Books | Alma



# Michigan GOP Senate Candidates Want to Gut Social Security

Donald Trump again proposes cutting Social Security and Medicare, Michigan Congressional Candidates Mike Rogers, Peter Meijer, Sandy Pensler, and Justin Amash have all echoed Trump's disastrous call to gut Social Security. Cuts to Social Security would raise health care costs and rip away Michiganders' benefits that they worked a lifetime to earn.

Here's where candidates in Michigan's GOP Senate primary stand on gutting Social Security:

Mike Rogers said we have to rethink "what retirement looks like" and "every option is gonna have to be on the table" when asked about Social Security.

Peter Meijer said it was time to look "at our entitlements" because even if discretionary spending was curbed, Congress was still "spending far more than we're taking in" because they were trying to "get to a point where Social Security" didn't "go bankrupt."

Sandy Pensler described the deficit as "crazy" and said it's almost "\$100 trillion when you throw in retiree, medical, Social Security."

Justin Amash voted for the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act which would have increased the federal debt, and Republicans planned to pay for it with cuts to Medicare and Social Security. Amash also voted for Republican Study Committee budgets that included raising the retirement age for Social Security.

For more information, visit:

<https://michigandems.com/reminder-all-of-the-michigan-gop-senate-candidates-want-to-gut-social-security/>

Source: The Michigan Democratic Party

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## Pick a Date to Donate to the Dems

To support the GCDP each month, choose an available date (i.e. the 1st or 2nd of the month) and give \$25 on that day each month. These funds will help us to keep our office open through 2024!

Call the GCDP office at 989-285-1212 or email [gratiotdems@gmail.com](mailto:gratiotdems@gmail.com) for more information.



Thank you for your support!



# POP CAN DRIVE

The GCDP has been collecting returnable cans and bottles to raise funds, and your donations are appreciated! Please drop your cans and bottles off in the office.

## Block House Trivia



Join us  
Wednesdays at  
Block House in  
Alma at 7:00  
for trivia!

*Are you looking for a place to host your event?*

*Our GCDP office is available*

*Contact us at: 989-285-1212 or [gratiotdems@gmail.com](mailto:gratiotdems@gmail.com)  
for more information!*

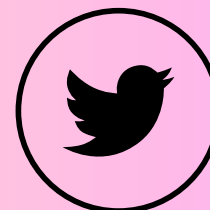
[Building Use Form](#)

## Michigan's Second Congressional District Democratic Party

Our focus is on putting Michigan issues first, fighting for families, seniors, students, and veterans, and working to elect Democrats across the state, while holding Republicans accountable across the board. From the grassroots to the Capitol steps, the only way we can move our state forward is if we work together to build a stronger, better Michigan Democratic Party.



[CLICK HERE TO  
LEARN MORE](#)





# GRATIOT COUNTY DEMOCRATS EVENTS AND INFORMATION

Gratiot County Democratic Office  
1686 Wright Ave.  
P.O. Box 154  
Alma, MI

**STOP IN!**

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Wednesdays | 4 p.m.-6 p.m.

Saturdays | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

**CONTACT: 989-285-1212**

[gratiotdems@gmail.com](mailto:gratiotdems@gmail.com)

[gratiotdems.net](http://gratiotdems.net)

## EVENTS

- **April 5** - GCDP Candidate Information Night  
7 p.m. - Gratiot Dems Office
- **April 6** - The Next Chapter Book Club  
10 a.m. - Gratiot Dems office  
*Freedom's Just Another Word* by Len Joy
- **April 13-21** - Adopt-a-Highway
- **April 15** - GCDP General Membership Meeting  
7 p.m. - Gratiot Dems office
- **April 22** - Ukraine and Gaza: A Glimmer of Hope  
7 p.m. - Alma Opera House
- **April 23** - Movie Fundraiser: Civil War  
11 a.m. - NCG Cinemas, Alma
- **May 4** - The Next Chapter Book Club  
10 a.m. - Gratiot Dems office  
*The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles
- **May 7** - Coffee with the Dems  
9 a.m. - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma
- **May 20** - GCDP General Membership Meeting  
7 p.m. - Gratiot Dems office
- **June 1** - The Next Chapter Book Club  
10 a.m. - Gratiot Dems office  
*Prequel* by Rachel Maddow
- **June 4** - Coffee with the Dems  
9 a.m. - Ballyhoo Books and Brew | Alma
- **June 17** - GCDP General Membership Meeting  
7 p.m. - Gratiot Dems office

We need volunteers to work at the Gratiot Dems office on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Click here to follow the link to sign up.



[CLICK HERE TO SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER](#)

## Gratiot County Democratic Party

Chairperson: Christie Freestone  
 Vice-Chairperson: Al Bartholomew  
 Secretary: Lisa Gregory  
 Treasurer: Brent DeVries  
 Parliamentarian: Nancy O'Brien  
 Candidates/Elections: Bobbie Renshaw  
 Event Logistics: Renee Faustmann  
 Fundraising: Liz Weaver  
 Membership: Caroline DeGraaf  
 Public Relations: Marc Raycraft  
 Community Outreach: Nancy Gott  
 Reid-Knox Forums: Ed Lorenz  
 Resolutions and Petitions: Betty Apple

[CLICK OR SCAN TO VISIT OUR CALENDAR!](#)



FOLLOW, SHARE, AND LIKE US ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORKS



[CLICK OR SCAN TO VISIT OUR WEBSITE!](#)

