

NEWS RELEASE



Ready, Willing and Able!

NW Florida Women Democrats Running for Office

Aug. 15, 2018, Shalimar, FL. — The Okaloosa County Democratic Party (ODP) is proud to be supporting two strong women candidates for State office. This is the first time in collective memory that all races feature a Democrat running to serve the people of NW Florida.

"Elections are determined by those who show up. In 2018 Democrats finally have not only Democratic choices, but also women candidate choices who are running for U.S. and Florida Congressional offices in our districts," said Deborah Baker-Rian, President of the Okaloosa Democratic Women's Club. "Time to show up and support Democrats!" Foremost among those running locally are the two hotly contested races for the Florida State house.

FLORIDA SENATE DISTRICT 2

NW Florida Democrat Mary Jeanne "Gigi" Gibson is seeking the State Senate District 2 seat challenging Republican Sen. Gainer of Panama City and has put her campaign into high gear. Florida District 2 covers all of Bay, Holmes, Jackson, Walton and Washington counties as well as part of Okaloosa County. A mostly Republican district Gainer was unopposed in the 2016 race. 'Gigi' has been holding 'Meet & Greets' around the area and attracting both Democrats and Independents to her 'Build a Better Florida' campaign.

A 5th generation southerner Gibson is an Attorney and has argued before State Supreme Courts. She has been involved in politics since an early age and has served with various charity organizations, She holds an BA Degree in Political Science, a Graduate Degree in Business from Tulane

University and a Juris Doctorate with Gibson practicing law and fighting for the people for more than 16 years. She is, a grandmother, a mother, a sister, a daughter, a wife and understands the hardships that are put on families in the Florida Panhandle. With four generations living here, she is acutely aware of the issues we all face. She chose to run for Florida State Senate District 2 to insure that our government in Florida responds to our needs here.

At 64 years old, Gibson has experienced many unexpected twists and turns in life that are a reality for many of us. Working full time as a single mother; caring for her father, a 100% Service Connected Disabled American Veteran she has stuck to her Christian religious beliefs and has dedicated her life to helping others. As an involved Christian, she undertook a three-year study, Education for Ministry, becoming a licensed lay-reader in the Episcopal Church, served as an Episcopal Youth Leader and volunteered at the Children's Cancer Clinic while working full-time as a Trust Officer in Trust Employee Benefits helping individuals put in place plans to set money aside for their retirement. Believing that it is through personal involvement in government that we safeguard our Democracy, Gibson believes its time for everyone to get more involved.

"I just couldn't see what was happening and do nothing anymore. Our Florida beaches are being privatized. I want to preserve our ability to enjoy the beaches as we have for years under ordinary and customary use." Gibson said. "We must repeal this legislation that threatens our way of life and ecotourism industry. Join me in this fight and let's work together to build a better Florida!"

FLORIDA HOUSE DISTRICT 4

Seeking the State House District 4 seat, Rebecca 'Becky' Koelzer is challenging former Destin Mayor Mel Ponder. Last time around Ponder reportedly spent more than \$150,000 to get elected and has largely been absent from the District ever since. Koelzer's campaign theme is '*Okaloosa First!*' with District 4 covering most of Okaloosa County including Crestview. A mostly Republican district Ponder was elected unopposed in the 2016 race.

"The days of no other options for candidates is over! The citizens of NW Florida are tired of the same old same old good 'Ol Boys network in charge and nothing gets better. It's time we had a Representative who actually

lives in the district full-time and will put our communities first,” Koelzer said. “I also believe in governmental transparency. It’s our money and we want to see how it is being spent!”

A third generation Democrat and originally from Puerto Rico she has been involved in politics since an early age and has served with various local organizations. Currently working in Cyber Security she holds a BA in BioMedical Engineering and received an additional degree from the University of Puerto Rico. A resident since 1994 she has been married to Thomas a retired US Navy Pilot and Commander for 13 years and has 3 children. She is also fluent in Spanish and has been involved in serving Hispanic communities in Northwest Florida.

“We must end the constant leaning towards the rich in politics for the sake of the people. We live in a beautiful area of the sunshine state and I will work hard to protect it,” said Koelzer. “Enough with division and rancor let’s work together to get the people’s business done. And if I’m lucky enough to win the people’s support I’ll reach across the aisle and work day and night to improve our communities and finally get our fair share of support from Tallahassee!”

The Okaloosa County Democratic Party and its affiliated organizations, stand for encouraging meaningful participation in our democracy by all citizens from voter registration without discrimination, to support for local Democratic candidates and the Democratic Party of Florida. For more information please visit <http://www.okaloosademocrats.com> or visit us on Facebook.

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