

SUMMER 2024

# MONTAGE

PEACE SULLIVAN/JAMES ANSIN HIGH SCHOOL WORKSHOP IN JOURNALISM AND NEW MEDIA



# Election 2024

Ideas, Issues, Impact

Photo by Dakota Montalvo, South Dade Senior High School

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**In Memoriam**  
Miami Montage is published in perpetual memory of Mupalia Wakhisi

**READY CAMERA SIX:**  
Sophia Pinto and Amanda Morgan get hands-on practice in the control room at the University of Miami School of Communication. Photo by Carlos Soto-Angulo, Christopher Columbus High School

# Capturing Democracy

Montage delves into the candidates and campaign issues of 2024

By **Sophia Pinto** and  
**Carlos Soto-Angulo**

Doral Academy Preparatory School and  
Christopher Columbus High School/  
Montage

**V**aleria Hernandez, 17, a senior at Coral Reef Senior High School, walked into the University of Miami as an editor for her high school newspaper but will complete the Miami Montage program three weeks later as a budding multimedia journalist.

“I feel that this workshop has really helped me to get out of my comfort zone, which is something you have to do when you’re an actual journalist,” Hernandez said. “I’m not the type of person to make phone calls or reach out to people, and that’s just one thing that this program has had me do.”

Miami Montage, established in 1984, is formally known as the Peace Sullivan/James Ansin High School Workshop in Journalism and New Media. This year, the program invited 20 student journalists from 16 South Florida schools to the Coral Gables campus, where they honed their skills in writing, reporting, photography and video production.

Montage gives students a taste of college life. They get to sleep in the Pearson Residential Colleges, eat in the dining hall and get classroom experience with University School of Communication professors.

“This exposes high school students to a college experience as well as a professional environment,” said Trevor Green, one of the program’s co-directors, who is also the graduate program director of journalism and a senior lecturer of journalism. “So, it gives them a taste of what the future could be if they wanted to pursue this for a professional college degree or as a professional career.”

Elayna Christine, an adjunct professor of journalism at UM, works with the students throughout the program, developing their writing skills.

“These students have a very strong writing background,” Christine said. “I support them by taking



**IN THE SPOTLIGHT:** Daniella Vega is interviewed by fellow Montage students as they learn how to use video production equipment. Photo by Allison Diaz, Montage staff



## PLUGGED

**IN:** Carlos Soto-Angulo monitors the audio levels during an interview.

Photo by Alexa Torrens, South Dade Senior High School

what they know about writing and teaching them how to format it into a more journalistic writing style. I love helping them grow their passion for journalism; it’s fulfilling to see how much they develop throughout the three weeks.”

Students appreciate the efforts their professors put in, creating well-rounded stories and videos.

“The professors are so kind and open to tell my story in any way they can,” said Dakota Montalvo, 17, a senior at South Dade Senior High School. “It shows they really care about us and the growth we make as young journalists.”


John Stoltenborg, lead dorm counselor, participated in the program in 2010.

“The experience changed my life,” Stoltenborg said. “It put me on the path of doing what I love. I want every student to have that same experience and have so much fun doing it. I wake up every day during the program trying my best to instill that family atmosphere of learning and fun in the entire workshop.”

Students, who were strangers from different schools and backgrounds, ended the program with strong friendships.

“Miami Montage helped me meet so many new people,” said Dylan Poliakoff, 16, a junior at Nova Southeastern University School. “It was such a great experience to learn new things and try new things.”

Workshop co-director Ben Ezzy said it is rewarding to see students build their skills during the workshop.

“I hope that they will produce content and reporting that they are proud of and develop skills that they will take back to their high schools,” said Ezzy, who also is manager of broadcast operations and an adjunct professor in broadcast production at UM. 

# Election Stress Disorder

Voters say campaigns produce rollercoaster of emotions



**By Carlos Soto-Angulo**  
Christopher Columbus High School/  
Montage

Suppose political debates echo in your mind long after they have ended, or the rise and fall of poll numbers swings your mood like a pendulum. In that case, you may be experiencing what many American voters are feeling during presidential campaigns – election stress disorder.

The term, coined by therapist Steven Stosny following the aftermath of the 2016 presidential race between Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton, describes the heightened levels of stress, anger and anxiety voters feel during election cycles.

“Stressors, like elections, impact our functioning,” said Andrea de Aguayo, a Miami clinical psychologist and licensed mental health counselor. Politicians tend to exaggerate how bad everything is, exacerbating people’s stress and fears of what could be, she said.

“It affects emotions, which affects our body, so we’re more likely to get fatigued and our body can shut down,” De Aguayo said.

According to the American Psychological Association, more than two-thirds (68%) of American voters struggled to get through the relentless

tide of political news during the 2020 elections. Others, including Stosny, say the 2024 election and its constant media coverage will see even more people affected by the disorder.

University of Miami senior and first-time voter Carolina Gonzalez said her stress level has skyrocketed because of the election.

“I have not heard of “election stress disorder,” but I would say that I relate to it,” said Gonzalez, 22. “The economic issues are important to me during this election, and I think there’s a lot of people on different sides trying to force others to have their same political views.”

Social media adds to the strain, turning platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and TikTok into arenas of fervent political exchange. Hashtags such as #ElectionAnxiety and #Vote2024 capture the rollercoaster of emotions tied to elections.

“I definitely believe that campaigning on social media creates stress for a lot of people,” said Karla Gonzalez-Rodriguez, 32, a Miami veterinarian. She said social media coverage of the election has heightened her anxiety. “There’s so much fake news, so for you to stay informed, you have to do a lot of

**STRESSED OUT:**  
University of Miami senior Carolina Gonzalez, 22, is photographed in her bedroom/home. Photo by Carlos Soto-Angulo, Christopher Columbus High School

digging to be shown the information that’s out there.”

Nicky Tino, a senior at Ida S. Baker High School in Cape Coral, is also feeling anxious about the upcoming election even though he’s not eligible to vote.

“We’re having a brand-new group of people voting and that’s being shown on social media,” said Tino, 17. “There’s a lot of influence from both sides trying to get the vote, so that can make a person nervous.”

Romy Croquet, a senior at Grace Church High School in Manhattan, said reading the TikTok posts on the candidates is stressful.

“I’m a lot less educated on politics than I should be, and I’m not sure what to think about what I see on social media,” said Croquet, 17.

Gonzalez said she is trying to make sure that her beliefs are not altered by what others believe.

Some therapists suggest taking a break from social media, limiting news consumption or even watching a funny movie.

De Aguayo tells voters to calm down.

“Do your research on election topics,” she said. “The second thing is to monitor your breathing to stay relaxed.” 🗳️



**ANGLER LIFESTYLE:**  
 Florida fishermen are required to use specific gear to protect the ecosystem, like this non-stainless steel rod and natural bait. However, they may also receive protection with the passage of Amendment 2.  
 Photo by Emily Romero, Miami Senior High

# Amendments 1-4 ON THE BALLOT

Florida voters in November will decide six constitutional amendments that are triggering heated debates across party lines. Amendments must have at least 60% approval to be enacted. Montage looks at four that have captured the interest and attention of young voters.

**Overview By Sophia Pinto and Antonella Aguero**  
 Doral Academy High School and Gulliver Prep/Montage

**Amendment 1:** Partisan District School Board Elections: Changes school board elections from nonpartisan to partisan beginning in the November 2026 general election

**Amendment 2:** Right to Fish and Hunt: Establishes a state constitutional right to hunt and fish

**Amendment 3:** Adult Personal Use of Marijuana: Legalizes marijuana for adults 21 years and older

**Amendment 4:** Amendment to Limit Government Interference with Abortion: Provides a state constitutional right to abortion before fetal viability

## Amendment 2

# Will the right to hunt and fish be constitutionally protected?

By **Daniella Vega**

New World School of the Arts/Montage

Each summer, Aidan Galan and Evan Castro spend four to five days a week casting their fishing lines over Bear Cut Bridge, which links Key Biscayne and Miami. They catch tarpon, snook and even the massive permit fish.

The two friends, both seniors at Christopher Columbus High School, say fishing is more than just a sport. “It’s just you and the fish,” says Galan, who has known the angler lifestyle since he was 3.

“You get to be one with yourself,” he said. “You don’t have to deal with any commotion.”

Castro, who started fishing when he was 10, agrees.

“I’d rather be in nature than be at home sitting on a couch and watching TV,” Castro said.

The two teens don’t let their passion for fishing interfere with their strict adherence to fishing regulations. Like many other anglers in the area, they follow state saltwater fishing regulations on fish size, season and number of fish caught (known as bag limit).

For example, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission says that a fisherman can catch no more than seven Black Sea Bass a day that are up to 13 inches long in the Atlantic. Fishing gear is also regulated; hooks that prevent organ damage to several fish species are required when fishing in and around reefs.

Hunting is also highly regulated by the FWC: To take certain animals, sportsmen must pay attention to the hunting zone, based on county, along with the season, which will directly affect the weapon that can be used.

Phil Hillary, assistant director at Zoo Miami, said the FWC uses regulation formed on scientific research for both fishing and hunting laws by examining population numbers.

“As populations grow, they might increase quota,” Hillary said. “They



will also decrease quota as we see populations change. So that science-based conservation is probably key to making sure that these animals are around for generations to come.”

These factors can make it difficult to hunt and fish in the state. Despite this, there is a possibility that both may become constitutionally protected in November.

Amendment 2 will ask voters to decide if hunting and fishing should become a constitutional right and “preferred means of responsibly managing and controlling fish and wildlife.” Although the FWC will still retain its executive powers, fishing and hunting will receive greater protection in the state.

Travis Thompson, executive director for All Florida, a conservationist community that urges the protection of Florida’s ecosystem, said protection will provide “a proactive move” to ensure that we have this heritage protected for a long time.

For the amendment to pass, at

least 60% of voters must approve the measure.

Fishing and hunting are considered key components of the Florida economy and culture.

Besides the economic benefits, fishing and hunting are cherished American traditions, said Thompson, a fifth-generation Floridian who hopes to preserve the “opportunity to interact with wild Florida in ways that most people don’t get to.”

Chuck O’Neal, director of NoTo2, a political committee opposing the amendment, is concerned about the threat it poses to Florida’s wildlife, especially the black bear population.

O’Neal says that making hunting a constitutional right could get out of hand and wipe out 3,000 to 4,000 bears. He said the recently signed House Bill 87 that permits shooting bears for self-defense complements the amendment.

“When you empower 22 million people all of a sudden to shoot a black bear, then it’s easy to see how the entire species could be wiped out within a year,” O’Neal said.

The amendment also could impact private property rights and prohibit landowners from denying hunters from hunting on their land.

“People say they own 10 acres or 5 acres or even an acre [of land] ... and there’s hunters chasing deer or chasing bears through their yards,” O’Neal said.

Concerned with the conservation of Florida’s backyard, many say the passage of Amendment 2 will greatly affect younger generations as it will determine the future of the relationship between Florida’s residents and its ecosystem.

Hillary says that as a child, he explored the wilderness and finds it crucial that his children and grandchildren can do the same.

“It takes stewardship of the land and the animals to make sure they’re here for generations,” Hillary said. “If we don’t find value in it, they won’t be here for long.”

**CLEAR WATER:**  
Aidan Galan fishes on the shores of the Bear Cut Nature Trail in Key Biscayne.  
Photo by Emily Romero, Miami Senior High

## Amendment 4

# The case for abortion rights

### Voters weigh in on ballot measure that would change Florida law

By **Dakota Montalvo**  
South Dade Senior High School/Montage

It's been two years since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, upending 50 years of federally protected abortion rights.

In Florida, abortion is banned after six weeks, the halfway point of the first trimester. The six-week abortion ban went into effect in May. Exceptions are made in cases of fatal fetal diagnosis to save the life of the mother or for victims of rape, incest or human trafficking.

Now Florida voters will choose whether to make abortion legal up until 24 weeks of pregnancy (or fetal viability) through Amendment 4 on the November ballot.

Floridians Protecting Freedom, a statewide campaign funding the effort to pass the amendment, was created after the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* with the sole purpose to limit government interference with

abortion rights.

"We want to end the extreme abortion bans in Florida," said Nora Viñas, the group's communications director. "Currently a woman only has six weeks to make a decision to have an abortion, when in fact, most women don't even know they're pregnant."

A 2024 poll conducted by Ipsos, a multinational market research and consulting firm, shows that 57% of Floridians are in favor of making abortion legal up until fetal viability—the ability of a human fetus to survive outside the uterus.

Pro-choice supporters assert that every woman should have the right to govern their own bodies, be able to make a decision based on their healthcare needs and shouldn't have to travel across state lines to access reproductive healthcare.

"These women are being turned away because they're not able to receive the care that they deserve in their own home state but instead have to travel hundreds, if not thousands of miles to other states to receive this care," said Michelle Quesada, vice president of communications for Planned Parenthood of

**"It is important to defend the defenseless."**

**AMANDA JOHNSON**  
SENIOR,  
CORAL REEF  
HIGH SCHOOL

South, East and North Florida.

Amendment opponents say life starts at conception; the child has a right to life and having an abortion can be detrimental to a woman's long-term reproductive health.

Tewannah Aman, executive director of Broward Right to Life, said she became pregnant at age 18 and had an abortion. The choice influenced her to become involved in the pro-life, she said.

"I was too young, too immature, and I actually was very scared. Abortion left me feeling empty, detached, and full of regret," Aman said. "I didn't understand, and I really initially didn't even want the abortion."

Teens, like the rest of the population, differ in their opinions on abortion and the amendment.

Amanda Johnson, 17, stands on the side of pro-life.


"I think life is the most fundamental human right and it is destroying a unique gift," Johnson said about abortions. "It is important to defend the defenseless," said Johnson, a senior at Coral Reef High School in Miami.

Naomi Gee, 17, a senior at Coral Gables High School, said teenagers need options.

"If I got pregnant right now, it would impact college, my young adulthood, and the potential of not being financially ready to provide a nice childhood for a kid," Gee said. "So, if the government got in the way of my opinion, it would impact not only my life negatively but the child's life."

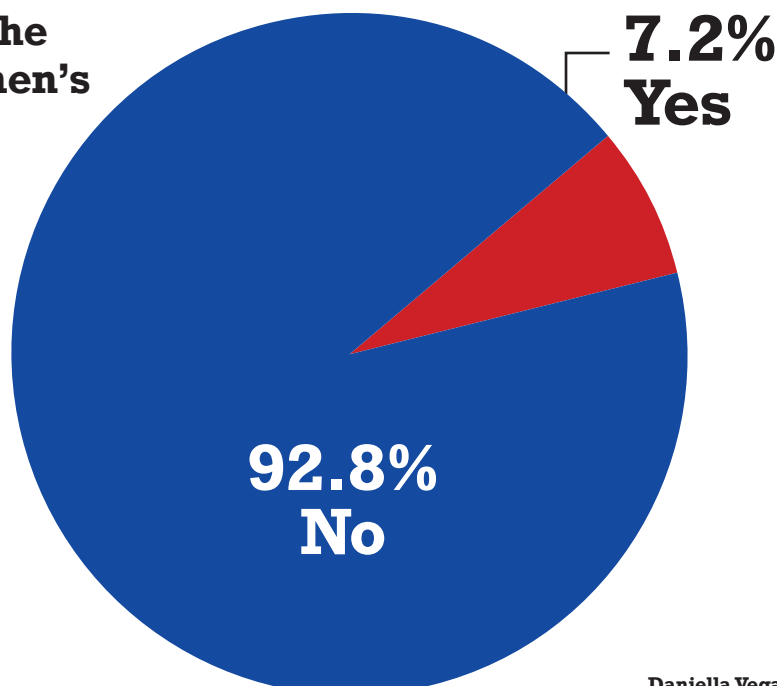
The fate of Amendment 4 will be decided on Nov. 5, when Floridians cast their ballots. For the amendment to pass, 60% of voters needs to choose 'yes.' But regardless of the outcome, both sides say they won't stop fighting.

"We are now doing everything in our power to fight against the extreme abortion ban in the state of Florida," Viñas said.

Countered Aman: "We're not going away. We'll never go away. We believe in life." 

### Do you think the matter of women's reproductive health should be decided by politicians?

Pro-choice supporters say women should have the right to govern their own bodies.



**Daniella Vega**  
New World School of the Arts

Source: Montage staff polling

## Amendment 3

# Will Florida legalize pot ... or not?

By **Elan Greenbaum**

Donna Klein Jewish Academy/Montage

Florida voters will soon decide whether recreational marijuana will be legal in the Sunshine State.

Known as the “Marijuana Legalization Initiative,” Florida Amendment 3 is one of six constitutional amendments voters will decide along with their preference for president, congress and other state and local races on the November ballot. If passed, the amendment will allow those 21 and older to have up to three ounces of marijuana and up to five grams of cannabis concentrate.

Proponents of the amendment seem hopeful.

A 2022 Pew Research Center survey reveals that 88% of U.S. adults say the drug should be legal either for recreational or medical use. Since Colorado and Washington became the first states to legalize recreational marijuana 12 years ago, 22 other states have followed suit. Florida would bring that number to 25. Medical marijuana has been legal in the state since voters approved that measure in 2016 with more than 71% of the vote.

Bria-Necole Diggs, who is working on a Ph.D. in epidemiology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, and other advocates say that legalization will help regulate the drug and boost the economy.

“When you have a large city like Miami, I feel if the initiative gets approved it will attract tourism which can help grow the industry,” Diggs said.

Alex Valdez, 33, manager of the U Smoke Shop in Coral Gables, said legalization makes good business sense and that a lack of public knowledge is what makes marijuana controversial.

“I think Florida’s economy as a whole will be affected in a super positive sense,” Valdez said. “There can only be a ton of tax cash that’s generated at a recreational level.”

In other states such as Massachusetts, Maryland, Colorado and California where recreational marijuana is legal, safer and higher-quality



marijuana is being grown in their respective markets, Valdez said.

Cannabis can be a great way to heal people, said Alonzo Harding “Trey” Mourning III, CEO of Righteous High, a Miami-based company whose goal is to inform the public on how to use marijuana in a healthy, favorable manner.

“People just need to be educated on how to use it in a way that is beneficial,” said Mourning, a former Division I and former pro basketball player. Mourning and others argue that legalizing recreational marijuana would end costly and sometimes racist enforcement of marijuana laws.

“Racism, systematic racism is evident in the cannabis industry, and it needs to change in the state of Florida,” Mourning said.

### Why Vote No

At least 60% of Florida voters need to approve Amendment 3 for marijuana to become legal. While current polls indicate that the amendment will likely pass, legalization has not been without controversy.

For example, in New York, where recreational marijuana is legal, some complain about the pungent odor of marijuana overtaking public spaces and residential areas. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who opposes the measure, also has raised concerns

**PRO AMENDMENT 3:** Alex Valdez, manager of the U Smoke Shop in Coral Gables, enjoys a mint-flavored nicotine vape while working.  
Photo by Sarah Mayorca, Doral Academy High School

**“It’s far less dangerous than alcohol, nicotine and tobacco.”**

**BENJAMIN PAGLIERY SENIOR, CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS HIGH SCHOOL**

about prolific pot smells that could result here.

According to the National Institutes of Health, medical marijuana is beneficial for people with chronic pain, muscle tightness and side effects of chemotherapy. But the U.S. Department of

Health and Human Services warns that the use of marijuana can lead to IQ loss, thoughts of suicide, loss of coordination, dangerous effects on driving and lower career achievement.

Marijuana is a popular drug that can be either smoked or eaten in the form of an edible. What makes the drug so popular is the widely used strain, THC, which keeps consumers wanting more, according to American Addiction Centers, a provider for addiction treatment nationwide. Researchers say high THC consumption can trigger psychiatric illnesses such as depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

Psychosis is also a side effect of common marijuana use because of the high levels of THC in the drug.

Diggs, who has been conducting research in a cannabis laboratory in Florida for two years, said concern is raised regarding the possible misuse of the drug “by those that are in young and impressionable ages that are in college and trying to have a ‘good time.’”



## Amendment 1

# Returning political parties to the ballot

Want to know if your school board candidate is a Democrat or Republican?

By **Kylie Sowers**  
MAST Academy/Montage

Amendment 1 on the Florida ballot would bring back partisan school board races across Florida following a 20-year hiatus. If adopted, the amendment would list school board candidates on the ballot with their respective party labels, allowing voters to factor the candidates' political affiliations into their decisions.

Historically, Florida held partisan school board elections up until Amendment 11 was adopted in 1998 to make the elections nonpartisan. Having nonpartisan elections means there are no party labels on the ballot identifying the candidate's affiliation. Aside from elections, the governor has the power to appoint school board members to fill vacancies.

"It's not about advancing the prospects of Republicans or Democrats," said Rep. Spencer Roach, R-North Fort Myers, who sponsored the amendment. "If this becomes law, in some red counties it's going to mean that more Republicans get elected and in some blue counties it's certainly going to mean more Democrats get elected."

School board members in Florida are currently elected by residents who live in the candidate's district through a nonpartisan election. The board must be composed of at least five members, and each member serves a 4-year term. The school board is responsible for operating and supervising all public schools in the district, including adopting district policies, managing the budget and bargaining district employees' salaries.

Gregory Koger, a political science professor at the University of Miami who specializes in legislative politics and political parties, said party labels could become a focus, not a point of



reference for voters.

"I think the hope was that if the offices were nonpartisan, then people's voting of school board offices would be based on a real evaluation of the candidates and not just party labels," Koger said.

Some Miami-Dade public schools students say they are opposed to the proposed amendment – and their argument is that there is no "Democratic" or "Republican" way to learn.

"I'm not too fond of Amendment 1 because it allows for political theatrics to take over the school board, so now it's not serving students but political parties, and it may cause further polarization, which would be detrimental to our school district," said Artemis Cruz, a member of the Youth Action Fund, a collective of Gen-Z activists opposed to the conservative culture agenda.

Some amendment opponents point to recent conservative decisions made by the school board, including a 5-3 vote against a proclamation naming October as LGBTQ history month. According to Political Cortadito, a South Florida blog site, two of the school board members who voted against the proposal – Roberto J. Alonso and Monica Colucci – were hand-picked for their respective

### ADVOCATING:

Artemis Cruz, the advisee for the Youth Action Fund, a collective of Gen Z activists fighting for change in Florida, speaks with Miami Montage.  
Photo by Dylan Poliakoff, NSU University School

elections by Gov. DeSantis, and two others – Mary Blanco and Danny Espino – were appointed by him.

"Our voices and our concerns should definitely be heard and should definitely be represented when it comes to their decisions," said Roberto Carmona, a senior at Hialeah Miami Lakes Senior High and president of the District Student Government Association.

Defending the amendment, Rep. Roach said parents want to know the candidates' values and party affiliations to help them determine where they stand on such issues as school funding and curriculum.

Students in favor of the amendment agree with Roach that it will bring transparency to the race.

"Passing Amendment 1 doesn't mean our schools will do what one party does over the other," said Dayan Jimenez, a senior at Barbara Goleman Senior High. "It is unrealistic to say that having partisan elections would have more harm than not, when in actuality we elect a majority of our elected seats in such a way."

Sixty percent of voters are needed to pass the amendment. If adopted, it will take effect for the next school board races in 2026.

# For Biden, Trump, is age just a number?

By **Andrea Lahrssen Comenges**  
Gulliver Preparatory School/Montage

Uneasiness pervades the 2024 electorate as the campaign advances, highlighting the candidates' advancing ages.

The presidential contenders, including all except one of the third-party candidates, are all 70 and older. The youngest, Chase Oliver, the Libertarian nominee, turns 39 in August.

Questions arise about Joe Biden's and Donald Trump's candidates' ability to do one of the hardest jobs in the world, and whether they should retire and stick to comparing their golf swings. Biden, at 81, is already the oldest president in U.S. history. If Trump, 78, wins a second term, he would be the second oldest president.

One of the main concerns of having older candidates is the natural decline of cognitive ability as the human mind ages, and whether this can hinder decision making, memory, and the overall sharpness one needs to run the United States of America.

"From a psychological point of view, elders can be perfectly mentally able, and ageism could be an issue if an age limit is placed," said Thomas Timko, a psychology instructor at Gulliver Preparatory in Pinecrest. He recommends that cognitive tests could be used to filter eligibility.

In a July 5 interview with ABC News' George Stephanopoulos, Biden ruled out taking a cognitive test or submitting to an independent medical examination to determine if he has any neurological conditions. Biden continues to come under scrutiny following his poor June 27 debate performance.

Trump also has faced questions about his age, health and cognitive skills, including his assertion that he performed well on the Montreal Cognitive Assessment, a test he said he took when he was president.

The Washington Post politics reporter Sabrina Rodriguez said she is aware of young voters' concerns about this year's candidates.

"Younger voters definitely bring

**"Younger voters definitely bring up the issue of the candidates' ages a lot and tend to say that they feel disconnected from politics."**

**SABRINA RODRIGUEZ**  
POLITICS REPORTER,  
THE WASHINGTON POST

up the issue of the candidates' ages a lot and tend to say that they feel disconnected from politics," Rodriguez said in a telephone interview with Montage.

Camila Vallecillo, a senior at Cypress Bay High School in Weston, said the prime age for a president should be between 30 and 60, a time when a person has more physical energy.

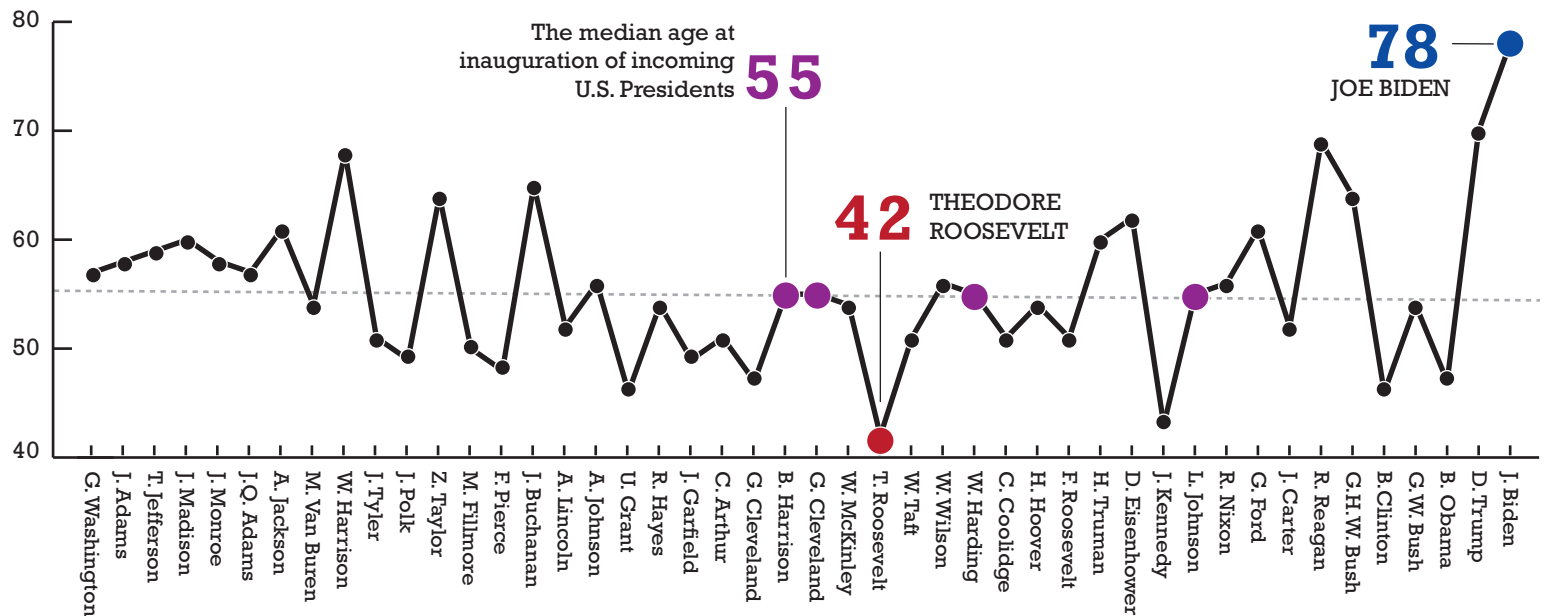
"Trump and Biden right now are in like retirement age," Vallecillo said. "In any other workforce they would probably already be retired."

Ariella Zecchini, an intern in U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio's office, said while a candidate's age and performance can impact voter opinion, she advises candidates, old or young, to address topics young people care about.

"Although I am passionate about politics and pursuing this industry professionally, it's rare to see the topics that I am most concerned about be thoroughly addressed in higher offices," Zecchini said. 🗳️

## Presidents' ages when they were elected

Track the ages of U.S. presidents from Washington to the present day in our interactive graphic. Each dot represents a president's age on Inauguration Day. Explore how age has varied among leaders and uncover trends in presidential longevity throughout American history. Each of these numbers has influenced America's leadership, for better ... or worse.



Source data: POTUS.com

Elan Greenbaum Donna Klein Jewish Academy

## Age of current candidates on inauguration day January 2025

<b>82</b> <b>Joe Biden</b> DEMOCRAT	<b>78</b> <b>Donald Trump</b> REPUBLICAN	<b>74</b> <b>Jill Stein</b> GREEN PARTY	<b>72</b> <b>Cornel West</b> JUSTICE FOR ALL	<b>71</b> <b>Robert F. Kennedy Jr.</b> THE PEOPLES PARTY	<b>39</b> <b>Chase Oliver</b> LIBERTARIAN
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# Voting literacy

Libraries offer training, classes on election issues



**By Alexa Torrens**  
South Dade Senior High School/Montage

For voters who need help understanding campaign issues, candidate platforms and the hieroglyphics of ballot amendments, public libraries and voter education centers play a major – if not often overlooked – role.

“So much language in the election world is niche language that you wouldn’t encounter very often,” said Sean Johnson, who leads the Center for Civic Design’s Plain Language initiative. The center, based in New York City, works to make instructions in voting materials easier to find, understand and use for the general population.

“Even if you’re a very active and engaged voter, that’s a challenge,” Johnson said. “There’s a lot of different steps just to get to vote.”

When Florida voters go to the polls in November, they will decide which candidates they want to hold office – from the presidency to the city council members or commis-

sioners. They also will decide six ballot amendments, the wording of which can be tricky, confusing and off-putting.

Election results have shown that when voters don’t understand the issues, the wording or even the candidates running for some politically obscure positions such as judicial races, they will skip the question or vote without proper understanding.

“That is a problem,” said Patrick Waldinger, co-director of debate at the University of Miami. “Education is important to any country, [as is] understanding the basics [of literacy] and being an engaged civic citizen who participates in politics.”

In an age of countless news articles with shaky degrees of truth, a grasp on reading and writing is essential for voters.

A 2019 U.S. Department of Education study determined that one in five eligible voters has insufficient literacy skills, which may lead to decreased voter confidence.

To bridge the gap, libraries,

**VOTING 101:**  
Instructor Tenecha Osorio introduces the Adult Learning Academy’s course lesson plan at the Shenandoah Branch Library in Miami.

Photo by Dakota Montalvo, South Dade Senior High School

including the Shenandoah Branch Library, offer help. The library’s Adult Learning Academy offers free literacy classes. Over a 10-week course, attendees are taught to strengthen their skills in vocabulary, grammar and fluency.

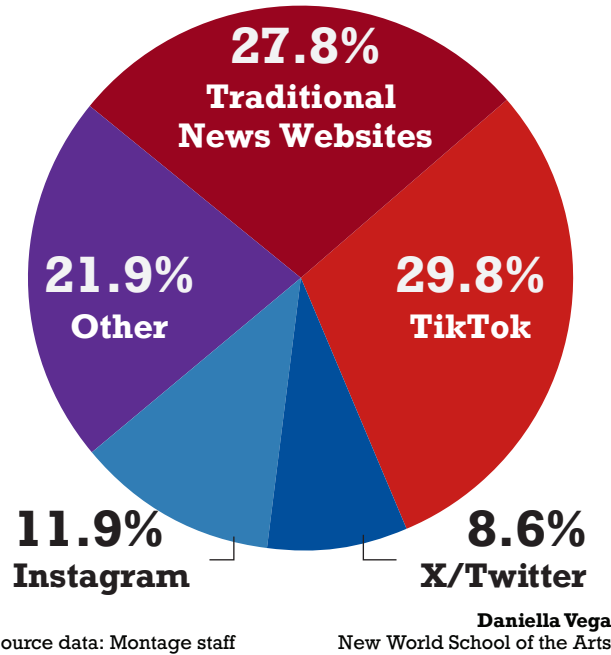
“The goal of this course is to help people who already speak English to advance with their grammar, their pronunciation, and their everyday conversation,” said instructor Tenecha Osorio. “And if you’re more fluent in English, you can speak to other people about politics and become well informed and may be more likely to vote.”

Beyond the benefits derived from basic literacy classes, Marisol Rodriguez, 16, a junior at John A. Ferguson Senior High School in Miami, said she would be interested in voting and registration materials in her school’s library to help her prepare for upcoming elections.

“It will be our first time voting, so it’s important to inform and teach us since we’ve never done it before,” Rodriguez said. 🗳️

## Where do you get your news?

Over 50% of young voters get their news from social media, including TikTok, Instagram, and X, formerly known as Twitter, according to our poll.



## Age argument ascends

In a poll conducted by CBS News, 743 adults between 18-29 years old were asked to voice their opinions on presidential candidates' ages. The survey was administered between June 17-21.

### BIDEN



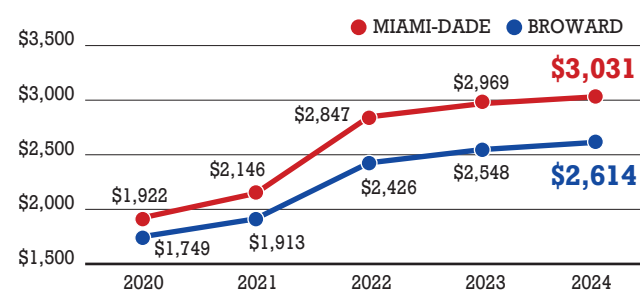
### TRUMP



Source data: CBS News Poll  
Kaitlyn Torres, John A. Ferguson Senior High School

## Cost climbs

In a market research analysis carried out by Zillow, the average price of rent in Miami-Dade and Broward was monitored. These observations were made annually on May 31 from 2020 to 2024. It noted that when Biden took office in 2021, there was an increase in cost per month of approximately \$500.



Source: Zillow Observed Rent Index  
Kaitlyn Torres, John A. Ferguson Senior High School

## Young voters to presidential candidates:

# 'Speak to our issues'

By Daniela Drukteinis and Jason Vilberg  
NSU University School and Belen Jesuit Preparatory School/Montage

The November presidential election offers a disappointing choice between two elderly candidates who are disconnected from the lives and the issues of young Americans.

That is what voters between the ages of 18 and 29 are saying about the election, according to a string of recent national polls where they weighed in on topics ranging from the economy, foreign affairs and immigration to the ages of the candidates.

"A lot of people are tired of both of the candidates and want to move on to new people, a younger, fresh stance," said Jake Sperling, a University of Miami sophomore.

A CBS News/YouGov survey conducted before the June 27 presidential debate shows that the candidates' ages are a significant factor for registered voters under 30. President Joe Biden, who became the oldest president to ever hold office at the age of 78 in 2021, is 81, and former President Donald Trump, who was 70 when he took office in 2017, is 78.

If Trump were to be re-elected, he would be the second oldest president after Biden. According to the survey, Biden's age is worrying for 68% of the respondents and Trump's age is a concern for 54%.

"I want somebody in office who is not ancient," said Madison LaCoss, 21, a UM senior who will be a first-time voter in November. "I don't know who's going to win, but honestly, I don't want either of them to."

The youth vote could sway the results of the presidential election. A 2023 Tufts University study indicates that almost 41 million people ages 18 to 27, a full one-fifth of the American electorate, are eligible to vote. Young voters helped Biden win the White House four years ago. He beat Trump in that demographic by 24 percentage points (59% to 35%).

This time around, the race is much closer. Biden's lead among registered voters ages 18 through 29

had plunged to 6 percentage points, according to a June New York Times poll.

Also, more young voters believe that the United States is on the wrong track than older generations. According to the same poll, only 15% of young voters believe that America is on the right track, while 22% of all those surveyed believe that.

"Neither major party appeals to voters," said Casey Klofstad, who chairs UM's political science department. "Younger people feel that the current system does not speak to their issues."

They seem to care about the same issues as their older counterparts, but their opinions about those issues can vary. Among these, the economy, abortion and foreign affairs are at the top of the list, according to the New York Times poll.

### Economy

Young voters view the economy as the issue that's most important to them in deciding whom to vote for this November. According to the poll, 24% cited economic issues, including jobs, the stock market, taxes, inflation and the cost of living. Since Biden took office, inflation has risen by almost 20%, according to Yahoo Finance.

"The price of living is almost impossible right now; it's impossible to even find an apartment for just one person," said Kimberley Montessi, a 23-year-old recent graduate of Saint Leo University near Tampa.

This is especially true for people living in South Florida, which has become one of the country's most expensive real estate markets. According to Zillow, in the past five years, Miami-Dade County rental prices have gone up 58% and Broward County prices have increased 55%.

### Foreign Affairs

Foreign affairs is the second-most

important issue for young people. Sixteen percent cited foreign policy, the Russia-Ukraine War, and the Israel-Hamas War as what matters most to them. Their opinions about these issues can sharply differ from those of older Americans.

For example, according to a Pew Research survey published in April, adults under 30 are much less likely to think that Israel's reasons for fighting Hamas are valid. Only 38% believe Israel's response is justified, while 58% of all adults do.

**1 ECONOMY**

**2 FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**3 IMMIGRATION**

### Immigration

Immigration comes in third, but younger Americans care about it much less than older Americans. While 8% of all young voters believe that immigration is the biggest issue in the country, 16% of all registered voters view it as most crucial to their vote.

### Abortion

Six percent of young voters mentioned abortion as their most important issue, but it's one that some voters feel very passionate about, especially the Supreme Court's reversal of Roe v. Wade.

"The fact that they got rid of it is possibly the worst thing this country could have ever done," Montessi said.

### Other Issues

In smaller numbers, young voters also cited social equality/inequality, climate change, health care, education, the state of democracy/corruption and racism/racial issues.

To win this election, young people say the presidential candidates must address the issues that young Americans care about.

Of course, young people will need to show up at the ballot boxes for their voices to be heard.

"I feel like voting is very important," said Nijel Pack, 23, a guard on UM's basketball team. "You want to have a say in what happens in our country and in our world."



Photos by Daniela Drukteinis, NSU University School

"I feel like voting is very important ... a lot of people fought for the right to vote ... everybody should use that opportunity," said 23-year-old Nijel Pack, a star player for the University of Miami basketball team. "You want to have a say in what happens in our country and in our world."

**NIJEL PACK**  
23, A GUARD ON UM'S BASKETBALL TEAM

"The price of living is almost impossible right now, it's impossible to even find an apartment for just one person."

**KIMBERLEY MONTESSI**  
23-YEAR-OLD RECENT GRADUATE OF SAINT LEO UNIVERSITY



Photos by Andrea Lahrssen Comenges, Gulliver Prep



"I want somebody in office who is not ancient. I don't know who's going to win, but honestly, I don't want either of them to."

**MADISON LACOSS**  
A UM SENIOR WHO WILL BE A FIRST-TIME VOTER IN NOVEMBER

Photo by Alyssa Rodriguez, Homestead Senior High School

# Our poll findings

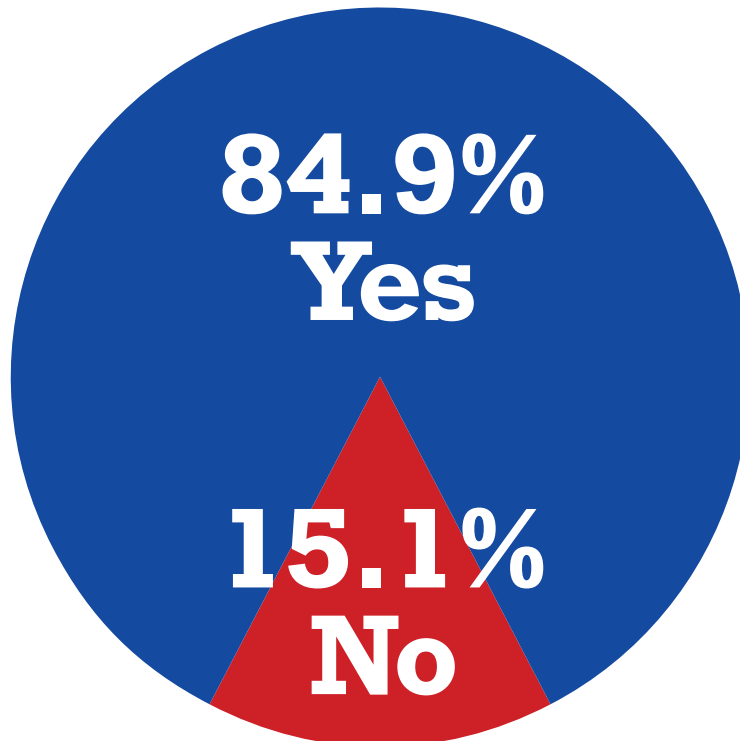
By Antonella Arguero, Emily Romero, and Daniella Vega

Gulliver Preparatory School, Miami Senior High School, New World School of the Arts/Montage

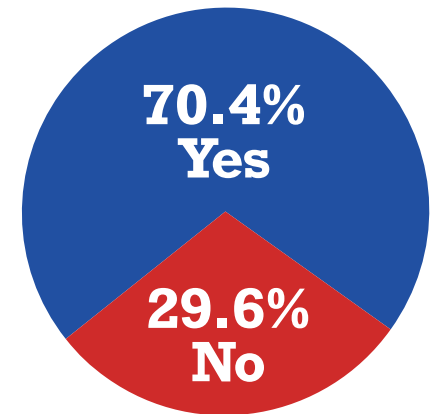
Montage participants conducted a poll of 152 South Florida high school students and residents under the age of 21 to find out which issues matter to them and what changes they want to see.

## Do you think politics are polarized?

Most of the participants in the poll (84.9%) agreed that politics is polarized.

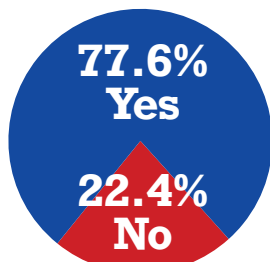


Pie chart key:  
● Yes ● No



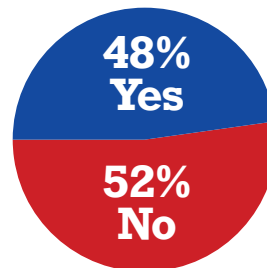
## Do you approve of Amendment 3: legalizing marijuana?

A majority of the respondents (77.6%) said they support Florida Amendment 3, which asks voters if the use of recreational marijuana for people over the age of 21 should be legalized in the Sunshine State.



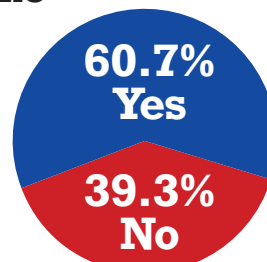
## Has anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation impacted you or someone you know?

More than half of the young people who participated in the poll (52%) said that the anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation in Florida, known as 'Don't Say Gay,' has impacted them or someone they



## Will a candidate's position on the Israel-Palestine conflict affect your vote?

Most of the respondents (60.7%) said that a candidate's position of the conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas will affect their vote.

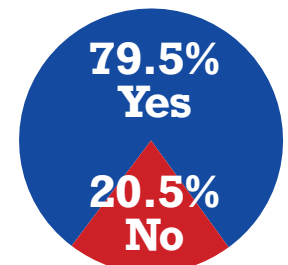


## Are you stressed about the upcoming election?

More than two-thirds (70.4%) of the responders said that their mental health had been affected to some extent by news about the elections and that it had caused them some stress.

## Are you aware that third-party presidential candidates exist?

One in five people who participated in the poll (20.5%) said they were not aware that candidates from third parties were running for president.



Source data: Polling by Montage staff



**TAKING STAGE:** President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump participate in their first debate of the 2024 election season on Thursday, June 27th, hosted by CNN. Photo by Carlos Soto-Angulo, Christopher Columbus High School

# Will Gen Z tune in or tune out?

**By Dylan Poliakoff**  
Nova Southeastern University School/  
Montage

Although presidential debates usually attract millions of viewers, the youngest generation of voters do not seem to find presidential debates – including the recent 90-minute debate between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump – appealing.

Of the 51.3 million viewers who tuned in June 27 on live TV, only 3.9 million were between the ages of 18 and 34, according to a recent Axios report.

“With Gen Z’s shortened attention spans, it’s hard to get them to watch the full debate,” said Patrick Waldinger, co-director of debate at the University of Miami.

“I usually do not watch,” said Emma Navarro, a senior at Gulliver Prep in Pinecrest who was traveling during the debate and chose not to tune in. “I’d be more interested in politics if it felt more connected to my everyday life and if politicians spoke directly to young people about issues we care about.”

Following the June debate, Montage staffers conducted an online survey of 152 South Florida first-time and upcoming voters, ages 16-28. Although 65% say they had an interest

in watching the debate, nearly 92% admit that they tuned out because of the debate format and the topics covered.

Waldinger suggests that the debate format include a social media element to attract young and first-time voters. A recent study by S&P Global, which provides market data to governments, businesses and individuals, finds that 77% of Gen Zers get their news from social media. Waldinger said presidential candidates should learn from this statistic and use social media in debates, even allowing Gen Zers to ask debate questions.

“I think social media could be a good way to advertise for debates and gain the attention and interest in younger generations,” said Julie Hartigan, a senior at Palmer Trinity High School in Palmetto Bay. “It would allow the debate to be more personalized, which could be more appealing.”

Presidential debates have a long history in U.S. politics beginning with “The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858,” when Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglas used debates to sway public opinion. The first televised debate occurred in 1960, when a charismatic John F. Kennedy faced Richard Nixon. Although Nixon was the incumbent vice president, many

**“With Gen Z’s shortened attention spans, it’s hard to get them to watch the full debate.”**


**PATRICK WALDINGER**  
CO-DIRECTOR  
OF DEBATE  
AT THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF MIAMI

said that seeing these candidates debate impacted the election outcome, which was decided by only 112,827 votes.

The recent debate not only had a low turnout of young voters but of all voters, suggesting that young voters are not the only ones tuning out. The first presidential debate between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump in 2016 drew 84 million viewers on live TV. The first debate between Trump and Biden in the 2020 general election drew 73 million viewers.

According to the PEW Research Center, voters ages 18-29 make up about 21% of the electorate. And a Harvard Youth Poll conducted in April says that 53% of these young voters will vote in the November election.

As technology has evolved, most people watching debates say that they have already chosen their preferred candidate. A June CNN post-debate study found that only 5% of voters felt that the debate influenced their decision.

Larixza Leiva, a senior at Somerset Academy in Pembroke Pines, outlines how the debates could draw her attention: “If they would talk about more things that matter, rather than saying things they know would make them look good,” she said. 

# More youth say 'No' to parenthood

**By Daneelia Dalrymple**  
Miami Lakes Educational Center/Montage

Generations Y and Z, colloquially known as Millennials and Gen Z or Zoomers respectively, may make the populations of the next Alpha and Beta generations some of the smallest, continuing a downward trend of Americans not having as many -- if any -- kids.

The U.S. birth rate has been steadily decreasing since the Great Recession, according to statistics from the National Center for Health Statistics. In a 2021 Pew Research Center survey, 44% of non-parents between 18 and 49 said it was unlikely that they will have children, up from 37% in 2018.

Many cite economic reasons for saying "No" to parenthood.

In a 2018 New York Times survey, 64% of adults between 20-45 claimed that they had or will have fewer kids than they want because of the high costs of childcare.

According to the National Database of Childcare Prices In a 2018 report, the U.S. Department of Labor stated that the median annual childcare costs for one child ranged from \$4,810 to \$15,417. With the Consumer Price Index inflation calculator provided by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, this equates to a range of 5,985 to 19,183 dollars as of January 2024 for one child alone

People are worried about being able to have a stable housing situation for their child, said Ohio State University sociology professor Sarah Hayford, who researches family formation and reproductive health.

"I think people are making those tradeoffs in their individual lives," Hayford said, "and it is hard to know how that will balance out in the long term. Are people just going to keep waiting?"

For D'Avora Williams, who has spent a chunk of her childhood taking care of the babies of some family members, motherhood is no longer appealing. The task of caring for her young cousins was physically draining, she said.

"I really do not want to have children," said Williams, a senior at Miami Lakes Educational Center.

Parenthood proponents, including political and religious conservatives, cite Bible verse, including Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply" to encourage population growth.

Millennials and Gen Zers are being selfish, said Lilly Gaddis, a controversial social media influencer who supports the conservative tradwife movement. She encourages white women to embrace traditional gender roles and take a homemaking role within their marriage.

"The birth rate is declining, and what are you doing?" Gaddis posted

**\$19,183**

**This could be the median annual childcare cost for one child, based on Department of Labor statistics that have been adjusted for 2024 inflation.**

in June on TikTok. "Us girls getting knocked up, we are the only ones helping with the declining birth rate. You're welcome, America."

Declining birthrates will have a negative impact on other aspects, including the military and Social Security, government analysts say.

In a 2022 report, "The Consequences of Declining Fertility for Social Capital," the United States Congress Joint Economic Committee said the consequences of declining fertility "means fewer people to serve in the military or support government programs that rely on taxpayer funding." Similarly, non-partisan think tank Capita.org argues that a low-birth future will affect the safety net, social programs, economy, education system, infrastructure and politics, including damage to the pay-ahead concept behind social safety net programs such as Social Security, Medicaid and Medicare.

Kathleen Castro, a Miami-Dade County high school senior, said her decision to have a child will be based on the status of human rights in America.

"If I am absolutely sure that my child will be raised in a country that protects them instead of hurting them on the basis of gender, sexuality, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, it will certainly further convince me to have one," Castro said. 🇺🇸

## Parental Probability

In a survey conducted by PEW Research Center, 3,866 U.S. adults between the ages of 18-49 were asked to indicate their likeliness of having children and/or more children in the future. Of the total respondents, 2,249 were already parents and 1,617 were not. One percent of respondents are not accounted for as they did not respond. Survey was conducted between October 18-24, 2021.

### NON-PARENTS' WILLINGNESS TO HAVE CHILDREN



### PARENTS' WILLINGNESS TO HAVE CHILDREN



Source data: "Growing share of childless adults in U.S. don't expect to ever have children" Pew Research

Alexa Torrens South Dade Senior High School  
Kaitlyn Torres John A. Ferguson Senior High School

# Creative Chaos: Veto threatens to eradicate South Florida arts

**Desantis cuts funding for nearly 600 organizations he deems 'inappropriate'**

**By Sarah Mayorca**  
Doral Academy Preparatory School/  
Montage

Beneath the sunny skies of South Florida lies a vibrant mosaic of cultural organizations that are now scrambling to stay afloat after Gov. Ron DeSantis cut \$32 million in arts funding from the state budget.

The cuts, announced at a June 27 news conference, affect nearly 600 arts organizations that help support scores of cultural activities across Florida, including dance companies, cinemas, photography, music, painting and theaters and museums.

Arts organizations say the veto was unexpected because funding had been approved by the legislature months earlier.

"When the veto came, it was shock, and it was devastating," said Jennifer Jones, president and CEO of Florida Cultural Alliance, a state-wide arts advocacy organization. Jones said arts funding is important for community identity and community cohesion. "That people have opportunities to come together and celebrate the things they have in common, the things they love together, or things of excellence," she said.

DeSantis said he vetoed the arts grants in part because he did not want taxpayers' money to finance events that he deemed inappropriate.

"You have your tax dollars being given in grants to things like the Fringe Festival, which is like a sexual festival where they're doing all this stuff," DeSantis told reporters. How many of you think your tax dollars should go to fund that?"

The Fringe Festival takes place annually in Orlando and Tampa. In response to the governor's statement, TampaFringe.Org said De Santis'



**PITCH PERFECT:**  
Vocalists Mallory Newbrough and Nate Promkul rehearse for their upcoming performance in 'Hundred Days,' a musical memoir that runs July 17 – Aug. 4 at the Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theater in Coral Gables. Photo by Carol Granizo, Hialeah Gardens High School



**CELLO THERE:**  
Cellist Jenn Chandler plays mood-setting background music during rehearsal. Photo by Carlos Soto-Angulo, Christopher Columbus High School

remarks were "a gross mischaracterization" of the festivals.

"Shows at Fringe Festivals can include theatre, children's storytelling, acrobatics, magic, dance, music and more. Companies selected come from a broad swath of backgrounds and ideologies. That is the beauty of Fringe - there is something for everyone, and we don't try to gatekeep," festival organizers said.

In South Florida, the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, Zoo Miami, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, the Holocaust Memorial Committee, the Miami City Ballet, the Perez Art Museum in Miami, the Fort Lauderdale Children's Theatre and the Actors' Playhouse at the Miracle Theater in Coral Gables are among the organizations that lost

funding.

Dominique Scott, who provides the musical direction for "Hundred Days" at Actors' Playhouse, said the arts are important in Florida.

"There's a very vibrant community down here; they do a lot of great work," Scott said. "You know, you've got your bankers and your doctors and your lawyers, but you also have your artists to make people smile and laugh and to help educate and get people to think and also get people to forget about the world."

Many teen artists who want to pursue a career in the arts are wondering about the long-term impact on the region's identity and creative vitality.

"I was editor of the year of my literary arts magazine in high school, and I'm part of the choir and a thespian for musical theater," said Eva Castañeda, 15, a sophomore at Carrollton High School. "So, I think it's incredibly important."

Barbara Stein, executive producing director at Actors' Playhouse, said the cuts are disappointing but the veto won't keep the group from operating.

"We're going to find a way among our team to make it work because we've promised the community we're going to, and darn it, we're going to," Stein said. "We don't look at the negative about what can't happen. We look at the positive about how we can make it happen. That's our motto here." 📌



# Not leaning left or right?

## Third parties, independents give voters options

By Carol Granizo  
Hialeah Gardens High School/Montage

Many young voters have heard the term “third party,” but many say they don’t quite understand its role in the presidential election.

“I do know that there are third parties, but I don’t know what they are,” said Robert Alvarez, 17, a senior at G. Holmes Braddock Senior High in southwest Miami-Dade.

American politics have evolved since the days of the founding fathers who made no mention of political parties in the constitution. According to historical accounts, America’s first president was elected in 1790 without political affiliation.

The first two political parties – the Democratic Republicans and the Federalists -- were formed in 1800. The two-party system as we know it today -- the Democrats and Republicans – emerged in the 1850s.

The first third party, the Anti-Masonic Party, was established in 1828, and since then many more have formed. The Libertarian Party, the Green Party, the Constitution Party and the Natural Law Party are among the most popular; the Libertarian and Green parties are the largest.

Third parties often are off-shoots of the major parties, and some emphasize a main issue, such as the Green Party, which formed in the mid-1990s as a national party with a focus on the environment.

Although third parties have long existed, they have never been able to compete with the two-party system. During the 2016 and 2020 election cycles third parties such as the Libertarian Party and the Green Party received less than 4% of the national vote.

“The way that elections are structured favors two parties,” said University of Miami political science professor and author Casey Klofstad.

When a third party begins to catch on with the electorate, “it



typically gets gobbled up by one of the two existing, major parties,” Klofstad added.

The Libertarian Party, founded in 1971, is a faction of the Republican Party with a political ideology centered on a limited scope of government and individual liberties.

The biggest obstacle for third-party candidates “is people not being able to get into elected office,” said Hector Roos, chair of the Libertarian Party of Miami Dade County. As a gubernatorial candidate in 2022, Roos secured only 0.2% of votes.

While some third parties have members serving in local and state office, the best recognized third parties float a candidate for president.

Joe Biden and Donald Trump are the two leading candidates in the 2024 presidential election, but Green Party nominee Jill Stein and Libertarian Party nominee Chase Oliver also are vying for the presidency along with independent candidates Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Cornel West.

Some political scientists note that third parties historically appeal to young people, many of whom who do not lean Democrat or Republican.

Alexis Wilson, an atmospheric

**COME TO THE PARTY:** Hector Roos, Libertarian Party of Miami Dade County chairman, explains the ins and outs of third-party politics. Photo by Kylie Sowers, Maritime and Science Technology Academy

scientist in Miami, supports the Green Party even though she thinks there is little impact a vote for a third party can have.

“I don’t consider it, not voting at all, but I do feel like it is kind of throwing it away a little bit,” she said.

Despite election failures of third-party candidates, there is a growing sentiment among American voters that a third party is needed, according to a 2023 Gallup poll, which found that support for a third U.S. political party is up to 63%.

“I would say we do ourselves a bit of a disservice because we only have two major parties,” said Keauna Gregory, political organizer and founder of Changemakers Strategies, a political consulting firm based in Georgia.

Aida Mackic, chief program and strategy officer for Scale for Change, a political field consulting firm based in Washington D.C., agrees.

“I think there’s a loss of trust in the values that the parties seek to represent,” Mackic said.

Roos, the Libertarian, said change, not the success of a third party, may be the immediate goal.

“Any change that can latch on, grows,” he said. (M)

# Pride vs. Prejudice

## Anti-LGBTQIA+ laws impact teen mental health

By **Kaitlyn Torres**

John A. Ferguson Senior High School/  
Montage

Two years after Florida began launching a series of legislative measures and state guidelines prohibiting the instruction of gender and sexuality in schools, students who identify as LGBTQIA+ say they are experiencing increased discrimination, isolation and depression.

“People are more worried about my identity than they are about school subjects,” said Aiden Cordero, a recent graduate of Frank W. Springstead High School near Tampa. “I feel like people perceive me more as a trans woman than an actual student.”

Cordero, 18, said she has identified as a transgender woman since her teenage years. Throughout high school, she recalled being the victim of harassment from her peers, often avoided in the halls or called derogatory names in regard to her expression of gender.

“There’s been a heightened sense of this helplessness and hopelessness,” said Natasha Pouloupoulos, a licensed pediatrics psychologist specializing in LGBTQIA+ care in Miami. “Even if they aren’t LGBTQIA+, they fear about how someone in their life could be affected by these laws.”

The passing of Bill HB 1557 — otherwise known as Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” law — in 2022 prohibited any classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity in grades kindergarten through third grade and provided further that such instruction was permitted in subsequent grades only if age and developmentally appropriate. A second bill, HB 1069, which went into effect in 2023, added more provisions — banning books that feature couples of the same sex and dismissing one’s preferred pronouns.

The enactment of HB 1521, which also was passed 2023, requires that the use of facility restrooms is exclusive to one’s assigned gender at birth.



As a result of this law, Cordero said two classmates reported her for using the women’s restroom. Though her counselor originally sided with her, she said she was ultimately given a suspension for violating the terms of the legislation.

In the past decade, a wave of anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation has cascaded throughout the country. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, there are more than 500 anti-LGBTQIA+ bills under consideration in at least 40 states.

“There is distrust in a system that is supposed to protect kids,” Pouloupoulos said. “We know from data that affirming and inclusive care improves mental health, yet we’re seeing laws that are doing the exact opposite.”

Mental health experts say the laws are discriminatory and make the LGBTQIA+ community more vulnerable to mental health issues. An investigation administered by the Alberta Civil Liberties Research Center in Canada found that transgender students are more receptive to bullying and exclusion by law than any other minority. In a 2022 study, the Trevor Project, a non-

### PRIDE MEANS COMMUNITY:

Rajee Narinesingh, a transgender activist and member of TransSocial, attends the annual TransSocial barbecue.  
Photo by Sophia Pinto, Doral Academy High School

profit organization that specializes in LGBTQIA+ suicide prevention, found that roughly 45 percent of queer teenagers consider suicide.

This statistic is in part a result of the lack of acceptance LGBTQIA+ individuals receive. Members of the community are also more susceptible to disorders such as anxiety and depression, clinical experts say.

“I see a heightened level of depression,” Pouloupoulos said. “The fear of being outed and what the consequences will be are primarily negative, whether it’s coming from peers, family, or a bigger system.”

Pridelines, an LGBTQIA+ support group based in Miami, sheds light on LGBTQIA+ issues.

In June the group hosted 25 events in celebration of Pride Month and is developing a safe house for homeless LGBTQIA+ people under the age of 26.

“Pridelines mission is to support, educate and empower South Florida’s LGBTQIA+ youth and community,” said Daniel Molloy, director of Prideline’s grants and gifts program. “Being an ally isn’t just in June,” Molloy said. “There’s an opportunity to be an ally every day.”

# Pot-hole politics, partisan labels

## Ideologies can complicate the local voting process

**By Valeria Hernandez**

Coral Reef Senior High School/Montage

When Palmetto Bay Mayor Karyn Cunningham first ran for office in 2018, she said some residents pointed to her party affiliation as a reason not to vote for her.

“It shouldn’t matter,” said Cunningham, who was then a registered Republican.

Municipal elections in Miami-Dade County are nonpartisan, she said. Candidates are not listed on the ballot by party affiliation nor are they allowed to mention their party on campaign issues.

“You know, the issues that I would be talking about would be, in a large part, nonpartisan issues,” said Cunningham, who was re-elected to a second term in 2022.

Recent studies show that residents don’t separate their political affiliations on the national level from their local vote. National news, some political analysts say, creates a combative atmosphere where everyday residents lose sight of the day-to-day issues such as potholes, street signs, lighting and traffic.

Some local voters would rather look at political labels, Cunningham said.

“I think when you’re running for office, oftentimes there is some political polarization, which is one of the reasons why I changed my party affiliation,” said Cunningham, who switched from Republican to No Party Affiliation in 2022.

The Pew Research Center, which researches political polarization, finds that Congressional Democrats and Republicans in 2022 were farther apart ideologically than at any time in the past 50 years. Another 2022 Pew study shows that 72% of Republicans regard Democrats as more immoral, and 63% of Democrats say the same about Republicans.

The research center found similar patterns when it came to other negative viewpoints on the opposing party such as dishonesty, close-mindedness, unintelligence, and laziness.

“It wasn’t always the case that



being a Republican or a Democrat then was highly correlated with a particular ideology, or a particular set of policy viewpoint,” said Gregory Koger, a political science professor at the University of Miami. “People began to start thinking of their political parties like social affiliation or something that they inherited from their parents. Citizens have established a mindset of ‘I am’ instead of ‘I believe in’, falling into what now seems more like a rigid social standing rather than a political opinion.”

High school students Haylee Hanson and Brooke Barnett, both students at Miami Palmetto Senior High School in Pinecrest, are involved in the school’s Youth Com-

**FUN AND FIREWORKS:** Mayor Karyn Cunningham of Palmetto Bay welcomes a crowd of 12,000 to the ninth annual Fourth of July celebration at Palmetto Bay Park. The event featured musical performances, food, and a fireworks display. Photos by Boriana Treadwell, University of Miami

mittee Involvement Task Force and see the importance of understanding and participating on the local level.

“I have noticed that people around me react more when it comes to local issues since they directly impact our community and way of life here in Palmetto Bay,” said Hanson, 17, a senior and task force co-chair. “People become more passionate when they can physically see local issues and become more motivated to solving and getting involved in them.”

Adds Barnett, 16, a junior and task force vice secretary: “We have the opportunity to go to the council meetings with the mayor and everybody, which is good because the youth get representation.”



**CREATIVE BRAINSTORMING:** Students gain practical experience setting up a photo shoot, which includes creative direction, lighting and photo editing. Photo by Dakota Montalvo, South Dade Senior High School

# ‘This just in’

## Historic hits just keep on coming during workshop

### Montage staff

Beginning on June 23, Miami Montage staffers arrived on campus and jumped into journalism mode. As they pursued stories related to their election coverage, major news stories were breaking almost daily at home and abroad.

Here are five top news developments that occurred during the three-week workshop.

### **Biden in or out?**

Following his weak June 27 debate performance, President Joe Biden continued to defend his right to remain in the race despite frenzied speculation that he will or should step down.

### **Supreme Court**

Among other landmark rulings,

the Supreme Court ruled on July 1 that the U.S. president has broad immunity from prosecution when engaging in official acts of the office, a decision that capsizes Donald Trump’s federal Jan. 6 insurrection case.

### **Election coups in Europe**

Britain elected a new prime minister, Keir Starmer, on July 4, giving the Labour Party an historic win.

Polls closed July 7 in the final round of parliamentary elections in France, with neither the left-wing parties or the far right getting a majority. The country is looking at a political deadlock just weeks before the Paris Olympics.

### **Hurricane Beryl**


Hurricane Beryl became the first

**Here are five top news stories that occurred during the workshop.**

hurricane to form in the Atlantic Basin in the month of June and the earliest Category 5 storm on record. The storm, which hit three Caribbean island nations on June 30, then Jamaica, Mexico and Venezuela, was making its way to Texas at Montage deadline. At least 11 people have died.

### **Stanley Cup**

The Florida Panthers won their first Stanley Cup in Game 7 of the National Hockey League playoffs, beating the Edmonton Oilers 2-1 on June 24 at Amerant Bank Arena in Sunrise.

*Contributions Amanda Morgan and Alyssa Rodriguez contributed to this report.* 

# Practice makes perfect



**FRAMING THE SHOT:**  
Alexa Torrens hones her photography skills during a portrait photography lab activity. Photo by Andrea Lahrssen Comenges, Gulliver Prep

**ON THE FLOOR:**  
Daniela Drukteinis practices taking action photographs of the University of Miami Men's Basketball Team. Photo by Amanda Morgan, Miami Palmetto Senior High School



**CURTAIN CALL:**  
Sarah Mayorca interviews actor Dominique Scott at the Actors' Playhouse. Photo by Alexa Torrens, South Dade Senior High School



**WORK THE ANGLE:**  
Emily Romero works to get the best angle of Daniella Vega during a photography lab. Photo by Alexa Torrens, South Dade Senior High School



**BEHIND THE CAMERA:**  
Kaitlyn Torres and Daneelia Dalrymple work on a video production assignment. Photo by Dakota Montalvo, South Dade Senior High School

**IN THE CLASSROOM:**  
Students brainstorm story ideas with workshop co-director Ben Ezzy and senior lecturer Boriana Treadwell. Photo by Allison Diaz, Montage staff



**THROW UP THE U:**  
Valeria Hernandez poses for a photo in the iconic U statue. Photo by Alexa Torrens, South Dade Senior High School



The Staff's Story



**ANTONELLA AGUERO,** 16, is a junior at Gulliver Prep and social media manager for the newspaper.



**DANEELIA DALRYMPLE,** 17, is a senior at Miami Lakes Educational Center. She is in the TV Production strand and edits videos for students and teachers.



**DANIELA DRUKTEINIS,** 17, is a senior at NSU University School. She is the social media manager for the broadcasting program.



**CAROL GRANIZO,** 16, is a junior at Hialeah Gardens High School. She writes and edits the school newsletter.



**ELAN GREENBAUM,** 16, is a junior at Donna Klein Jewish Academy. He is a graphic designer and music producer.



**VALERIA HERNANDEZ,** 17, a senior at Coral Reef Senior High, is editor of the newspaper, Baitline, and the literary magazine, Elysium.



**ANDREA LAHRSEN COMENGENS,** 17, is a senior at Gulliver Prep and social media and website manager for the yearbook.



**SARAH MAYORCA,** 17, is a senior at Doral Academy High School. Sarah is vice president of Firebird TV, the broadcast program.



**DAKOTA MONTALVO,** 17, is a senior at South Dade Senior High School, where she is co-director of photography for the yearbook, The Southernaire.



**AMANDA MORGAN,** 17, is a senior at Miami Palmetto Senior High School and photo editor for the yearbook.



**SOPHIA PINTO,** 16, is a senior at Doral Academy High School. Sophia is treasurer of Firebird TV, the broadcast program.



**DYLAN POLIAKOFF,** 16, is a junior at NSU University School and executive producer of the broadcast team, Uschool Network.



**ALYSSA RODRIGUEZ,** 18, is a senior at Homestead Senior High School and the lead photo editor for the yearbook.



**EMILY ROMERO,** 16, is a junior at Miami Senior High. She is an anchor and reporter for the broadcasting program.



**CARLOS SOTO-ANGULO,** 17, is a senior at Christopher Columbus High School and vice president of "CCNN Live."



**KYLIE SOWERS,** 16, is a junior at Maritime and Science Technology Academy. She is junior editor of the Mako Fuka yearbook and is the founder/president of the MAST Photography Club.



**ALEXA TORRENS,** 17, is a senior at South Dade Senior High School where she is the lead designer for her yearbook, The Southernaire.



**KAITLYN TORRES,** 17, is a senior at John A. Ferguson Senior High. She is the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, The Talon.



**DANIELLA VEGA,** 17, is a senior at New World School of the Arts and vice president of NWTV. She is a lead editor for the yearbook, a staff writer and editor of The Pure Life Magazine.



**JASON VILBERG,** 16, is a junior at Belen Jesuit Preparatory School. He is the editor-in-chief of the ECHOES yearbook staff.

# The art of storytelling



**SOUND EDITING:**  
Amanda Morgan pays close attention to the audio as she edits her biography video.  
Photo by Alexa Torrens, South Dade Senior High School

**ON ASSIGNMENT:**  
Dakota Montalvo, Sophia Pinto, Daneelia Dalrymple, and Kaitlyn Torres attend TransSocial barbecue and speak with activists.  
Photo by Trevor Green, University of Miami



**ACTION:**  
Carlos Soto-Angulo practices news anchoring in the University of Miami broadcast studio during a television performance lab. Photo by Jason Vilberg, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School

**MAKING A SPLASH:**  
Emily Romero gets waist-deep in the waters off Key Biscayne while photographing local fishermen.  
Photo by Allison Diaz, Montage staff



**EDITING THE SEQUENCE:**  
Valeria Hernandez edits a biography video of Carol Granizo in a video production lab.  
Photo by Jason Vilberg, Belen Jesuit Preparatory School



**FILL THE FRAME:**  
Sarah Mayorca, Sophia Pinto and Antonella Aguero practice using the Sony Z-150 during a video production lab. Photo by John Stoltenborg, Montage staff