



RIDERWOOD DEMOCRATIC CLUB NEWSLETTER

July, 2026

President's Corner

Welcome to our last summer Newsletter until the end of August. We will not have a membership meeting in August and the What You Can Do Report will not publish in August. Meanwhile, we have a program for the July 15 general meeting focused on the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Details of this program are in a separate article, below.

The Democratic Club participated in two successful political events in the past month. First was our well-attended Membership meeting on June 17, with our state legislators from both Montgomery County district 14 and Prince George's County district 21 delegations here to talk about the 2026 legislative session and answer a variety of questions from our members.

One significant piece of information passed on to us by our newly elected Speaker of the House of Delegates, Joseline Peña-Melnyk, is that she has asked all delegates to save a couple of potential dates for a special session of the legislature to reconsider a redistricting ballot measure for the 2026 General Election that would become effective in the 2028 election, if passed. Joseline also mentioned that she expected the Death with Dignity legislation that has been trying to get passed for years, to become law in the next legislative session.

Following the meeting we held a reception in the Art Gallery with refreshments for enjoying and toasting and with framed certificates of recognition honoring our new Speaker, Joseline Peña-Melnyk, retiring district 14 delegate, Dr.

Pamela Queen, and our own past president, Bea Rodgers. The honorees appreciated our recognition of their service and members appreciated the opportunity to speak one-on-one with our legislators.

The second June event was the Maryland Primary Election on June 23. Although we do not yet have official precinct-by-precinct results available (those of us in Montgomery County are in precinct 05004, and in Prince George's County in precinct 01007), the Board of Elections unofficial turnout numbers indicate primary turnout by county of 21% for Montgomery County and 24% for Prince George's County, in spite of the rain. This compares favorably with historic Maryland primary turnout even though the media reported shortly after the election that the statewide unofficial turnout was only 17%.

Those of us who staffed the election information tables on primary day observed a steady but uncrowded stream of voters. Congratulations to all our Democratic Primary winners whom we can reasonably predict will be winners in the General Election in November.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, wherever you will be spending it!

– **Lee Finney, President**

Celebrating 250 Years of Our Declaration of Independence

A Reading and Conversation on July 15

Join the Democratic Club at Riderwood in the Encore Theater at 2:00 on July 15 to celebrate 250 years since the signing of our Declaration of Independence. During the session, members of

the Club will read our founding document that outlines the principles of our new nation and our right to oppose those who try strip away our “unalienable rights,” including “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Readers include Lee Finney, Stephen Coleman, Trudy Downs, Patric O’Brien, Anne Riley, and Jill Shindelman. Their reading will be followed by a thought-provoking discussion with the audience of the meaning of the Declaration in today’s America.

As we mark our nation’s semiquincentennial, we look to the Declaration of Independence as a standard against which to measure the current health of our exercise in democracy. A writer in a recent article in The Contrarian observed that our founding was premised on a “declaration of a free and just country, a refusal to accept a sovereign’s abuse of power and a determination to place the rule of law above the will of a single leader.”

So today we ask: What was the Declaration of Independence, together with the Constitution that followed it, trying to create? How well have we protected and defended the American experiment in democracy? And what is required of us if we are to keep “the Republic” our Founders bequeathed to us?

Those are among the questions Riderwood resident Andy Schmookler will pose and discuss in the commentary following the reading of the Declaration. His remarks are intended to spark a dialogue with the audience. Come prepared to discuss where we could be headed and where we should be headed as a people and as a Nation as we begin our next 250 years.

– *Thea Fine, Program Chair*

Summary of June 17 Democratic Club Meeting

Elected officials who represent Riderwood in Maryland’s General Assembly joined us at the June 17 Democratic Club meeting to review the work of the 2026 legislative session.

Craig Zucker, state Senator from District 14 (Montgomery County) opened the discussion by summarizing the goals of the 2026 session:

- Protect Maryland from the negative actions of the Trump administration
- Focus on affordability
- Balance the state budget while avoiding the chaos coming from the Federal Government

He then introduced the members of the House of Delegates from District 14, noting that Bernice

Mireku-North had been in a “fender-bender” and although she was doing fine, it was decided that the better course of action was to have someone from her staff deliver her remarks.

Delegate Pam Queen, who is retiring from her job this year, spoke about the number of dementia cases in Maryland, a large percentage of which are women. She has sponsored a bill to require the Department of Aging to support dementia-friendly communities through the Maryland Access Point offices. She then introduced Matt Post, who is running for the District 14 delegate job and whom she has endorsed.

Delegate Anne Kaiser noted regretfully that she no longer lives on Gracefield Road, but she continues to represent us in District 14. She said “we put values into action,” and added that many of the best ideas for new bills to introduce come from constituents. In 2026, she worked on bills to strengthen the Voting Rights Act and to help state agencies “connect the dots” when multiple organizations deal with the same issue. She added that “Annapolis 101 means that there are no easy answers.”

Zach Levin spoke for Bernice Mireku-North, saying that child care is the heart of Bernice’s concerns, adding that it is a “workforce issue” and she is working to lower the cost of child care. She is also advocating to add mental health professionals to school staff, including the ability for out-of-state practitioners to serve part-time in Montgomery County schools.

Jim Rosapepe, the state Senator from District 21 (Prince George’s County) said that the answer to the question “What is the most important thing that happened during this session” is “Joseline Peña-Melnyk was elected to be Speaker of the House of Delegates.”

Delegate Mary Lehman is the chair of the House Government Issues and Elections committee. She is advocating for the use of special elections rather than interim appointments to fill seats in the Assembly that are vacated in mid-term. She also discussed the possibility that the Federal Government will move the agricultural research center currently in her district to a “more relevant rural location.” Should that happen, she does not want the property currently occupied by that center to be re-zoned for some other purpose.

Joseline Peña-Melnyk, highlighting her role as the second woman and first African-American to serve as Speaker of the House of Delegates, emphasized her focus on respect for all people,

adding that “we want a country where the rules apply to everyone equally.” She noted that Montgomery County elected officials voted to ensure that county agencies will not be required to enforce Federal immigration procedures.

Ben Barnes, the third delegate from District 21, was unable to attend the meeting.

Turning to questions from the audience, two residents asked about the status of the Medical Aid In Dying bill, which had failed to pass in two previous sessions of the legislature. Delegate Peña-Melnyk, who had been a primary sponsor of that bill, said that they had decided to “give that bill a rest this year,” and indeed, it never got out of committee. She is more hopeful for the 2027 session, when the composition of the General Assembly may change because of the 2026 election results. (The unspoken fact was that Senator Rosapepe had abstained from voting on the bill in a previous session, thereby not breaking a tie vote. At this point in the meeting, Senator Zucker turned to Senator Rosapepe and said that “some people” have refused to go on the record for this issue.)

These were other comments from the floor:

- A suggestion that empty office space be turned into residential housing and the laws should be changed to allow that. Delegate Queen said that “we are looking into the housing crisis.”
- A question about how to prevent future actions like the one where money was taken from an environmental fund to fill budget gaps in other areas. Senator Zucker replied that surplus money from one environmental fund was transferred to other related causes.
- A request to increase the minimum standard deduction in the state income tax. Senator Rosapepe said “we don’t review tax issues every year, but maybe next year.”



**Delegate Pam Queen
with Democratic Club
President Lee Finney**



**Bea Rodgers with
Delegate Joseline Peña-
Melnyk**

Photos by Paula Einaudi

After the formal meeting ended, a reception was held in the art gallery space behind the Encore Theatre, where Delegates Peña-Melnyk and Queen were given certificates, each respectively acknowledging her new role and past service, and Bea Rodgers was recognized for her lifetime of leadership and service in government and private organizations and for her years as president of the Riderwood Democratic Club.

New Procedures for Democratic Club Emails

Those of you who receive the newsletter by email will soon be asked to subscribe to a new email group list as we phase out our old service provider. Sometime later in the month of July you will receive an email message asking you to request a subscription to our new group. There are several actions you **must** take if you wish to continue to receive our emails.

First, we request you subscribe to our newsletters and announcements by signing up for the new service. (Explicit instructions will be provided when you receive your email from us.) Once you have done this, you will receive an email asking you to confirm your request to join the group. You must respond or your application may not be completed. You will receive a welcome email once your subscription is activated.

Second, you should add the email address **RWVDEMS@RWV.groups.io** to your address book or contacts list so our emails do not wind up in your trash or spam folder. You cannot send emails to this address, but it is the one you should add to your contacts/address lists. To email the Democratic Club, use the address **RWVDemocraticClub@riderwoodlife.com**

A separate email will be sent to everyone on our list in the next several weeks with explicit instructions on how to carry out your request. We wanted to give you advance notice so you watch for this request and follow the instructions when you do receive it, so you don’t miss any of our upcoming newsletters or meeting notices.

– **Trudy Downs**

The Democratic Club Participates in the Election-That-Must-Be-Won

Most of us here at Riderwood have campaigned for, and voted in, many midterm elections, so we understand how important they can be when the control of Congress is at stake. This November,

however, is different in that it is not just the control of Congress that is at stake, it is our democracy itself that hangs in the balance of power. A Democratic victory in the 2026 midterms is our only chance to put some brakes on the cruel and corrupt actions of the Trump administration before 2028. Therefore, this is the election we will describe from now on as the “Election-That-Must-Be-Won.” If you have never participated in election campaign work before, this summer is the time to become more than Patrick Henry’s famously insufficient “summer soldier or sunshine patriot.”

The Democratic Club has organized to write at least 10,000 postcards before Election Day (the same number as we did in 2024), working with two super PAC partners who have done deep research and selected a list of swing district campaigns that could determine the election outcome and need our help. For those of you who may want to do more than write postcards, we will provide information to make it easy to sign up to make phone calls with an automatic dialer. For most of us, writing postcards to voters that either inform young voters and drop-off Democrats about the urgency of voting this year, or serve as a final Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) reminder in October, is both doable and an effective tool for pushing voter turnout.

The Club has partnered with Swing Left’s Postcards to Voters Project to complete and mail 10,000 GOTV postcards in October as we have done in the past. We are adding another partner, Activate America, to send postcards that are due in August to drop-off Democrats and young voters in specific highly-contested-but-winnable Senate and House seats. We will start with Activate America as a pilot project with 1000 postcards. We have all the postcards already in hand from our partners as well as some leftover stamps. We will need to buy stamps before July 12, 2026, when the postcard rate goes up from \$.61 to \$.65. Based on the results of our survey regarding both projects, we have determined that there is enough interest to start writing postcards to both in July.

We have a Postcard Coordinator for each of our four neighborhoods. They are:

- Elaine Mondschen, mondschen.elaine@gmail.com for all of Village Square
- Thea Fine, editted@gmail.com for all of Montgomery Station

- Carol Elliott, carolelliott@usa.net for all of Lakeside Commons
- Jean Umiker-Sebeok, jean.sebeok@gmail.com for all of Town Center.

You may contact your neighborhood coordinator directly to sign up and indicate how many postcards you will write, or, if you have already signed up or are on our lists from the last election, your coordinator will be in touch with you to distribute all the materials you will need such as postcards, a script and instructions. If in doubt whether we already have you on our master volunteer list, please reach out to your coordinator. They will set a date to collect completed postcards from you.

Each neighborhood may have some Postcard Parties in small groups in someone’s apartment to get together to write postcards, which should make the task go more pleasantly. The coordinators will help interested members in organizing these parties. We have accepted the states that were targeted by our partners and divided them up by state or individual campaign for: North Carolina, Ohio, Iowa and Wisconsin for GOTV postcards and for James Talarico in Texas and Sherrod Brown in Ohio for summer postcards through Activate America. Activate is also a resource for phone banking campaigns to targeted districts.

We also need your help to pay for several thousand dollars’ worth of postcard stamps, an expense larger than our dues will cover. Some of you have already donated stamps or money. For anyone who can donate money for stamps, please send or deliver a check to the cubby of our Treasurer, Trudy Downs, Meadowbrook Square 621, Lakeside Commons. If you have questions or want to know more about our election activities, please contact Lee Finney, leefinney43@gmail.com.

Let’s help make this an **Election-That-Will-Be-Won!!**

– **Lee Finney, President**

Opinion: Recent Developments in Gun Laws

Sadly, the Trump Administration is moving ahead with its vision of every American carrying a gun everywhere. Here are four recent examples:

- The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) announced 32 rules

designed to gut federal gun safety regulations that help keep guns out of the hands of people who aren't allowed to have them and help police investigate gun crime and trafficking. Amazingly, ATF acknowledged that the new rules "could delay or hinder federal, state, and local law enforcement efforts to track and stop violent offenders." Before finalizing the rules, ATF reached out to the gun industry's top trade group for input.

- The U.S. Postal Service is ending its century-old ban on mailing guns, making it much easier for criminals and traffickers to obtain guns illegally, and harder for licensed gun dealers to detect purchasers' suspicious behavior.
- The Department of Justice filed a lawsuit to overturn California's recently-enacted ban on homemade machine guns.
- The President has renewed his pressure on Congress to enact a "concealed carry reciprocity law" to invalidate all state laws (including Maryland's) that prohibit or regulate concealed carry of guns.

The Supreme Court is actively helping the Trump Administration achieve its goal. Last month the Court struck down Hawaii's law that prohibited people from carrying firearms onto private property open to the public without the owners' explicit permission. And the high court has agreed to hear arguments in a case that seeks to overturn state laws banning or restricting assault weapons, the type of gun used in many of our nation's deadliest mass shootings.

– **Bob Tiller**

Opinion: Comments on the Environment

The Maryland Primary is over. Shockingly, only 17% of the registered population in Maryland voted! Happily, Michelle Garcia, an environmentalist, won the democratic primary for District 1 County seat. She was publicly financed, the first of its kind in Prince George's County history. She was funded by ordinary people, not special interests.

Unfortunately, the two P. G. County Council at Large winners, Jolene Ivey and Sydney Harrison, neither of whom I voted for, won again. They are said to have in the past been in favor of Data Centers.

P. G. County Executive Aisha Braveboy extended the moratorium on data centers to 9/30, considered a stalling tactic, but a

moratorium only on their "operation," not on their construction. Many want a permanent ban. Beware of the new ads claiming that they use little or no water.

The Maryland League of Conservation Voters offers an annual scorecard for each Md. legislator. The environmental scores for Riderwood's legislators are always excellent. Prince George's District 21 Senator, Jim Rosapepe, did not do as well as usual as he got 86%, but his lifetime score is 98%. Delegates Josline Peña-Melnyk, Ben Barnes and Mary Lehman each got scores of 100%.

Montgomery County District 14 (MoCo) Senator Graig Zucker and Delegates Anne Kaiser and Bernice Mireku-North each received conservation scores of 100%. Delegate Pam Queen's score was not available as she did not seek re-election. A typical Maryland Republican legislator gets a score of 13%!!! So sad.

We are urging our independent living residents to bring their own containers to dining for left overs due to the huge cost of these containers to dining, which is passed on to us. I often bring the clear plastic ones that I wash and reuse repeatedly but worry about the micro plastic bits that I'm exposed to. Therefore, I looked at the much lighter aluminum that Amazon had to offer. Glass is way too heavy for me and the silicon covers were significantly heavier than their aluminum containers, but at least no plastic!

All is not lost. Solar continues to grow despite government policies that aim to curtail renewable energy resources. The Solar Energy Industries Association says a new residential solar project was installed every 59 seconds in 2025. That brings the total solar systems in the U.S. to nearly 6 million. It projects that by 2030 11% of U.S. homes will have rooftop solar. What will happen at Riderwood may have to be a combination of mixed renewables.

– **E. Anne Riley, Co-Chair, Democratic Environmental Committee**

Your Club Needs You!

We're looking for volunteers to assist with the running of the Democratic Club of Riderwood. We need your help in three areas: **hospitality**, **communications**, and **accounting**.

Don't let the word *communications* intimidate you. It could be as simple as stuffing a few flyers

into cubbies in your own neighborhood. Others interested in communications might enjoy helping to write or edit our newsletter.

We are also going to need a new treasurer. Our very long-term and much appreciated Treasurer, Trudy Downs, is giving up her job as of December 2026. We need one or two people; Trudy always does the work of more than one person, to volunteer for this position.

More socials for members and receptions for our guests are planned, so we will need more helping hands for hospitality.

If any of these sound like a good fit and if you haven't already signed up, please contact me, Patric, at patricobrien46@gmail.com or 614-981-6372 and I will be happy to chat with you about volunteer opportunities. Suggestions for

how the Club can better serve the community are also always welcome.

– **Patric O'Brien, Democratic Club Vice-President**

New Schedule for General Meetings Starting in September

The Democratic Club of Riderwood will not hold a general membership meeting in August, and starting in September, ***the regular monthly meetings will change from the third Wednesday of each month to the second Wednesday of the month.*** They will still be held in the Encore Theatre and will start at 2:00 P.M. We are doing this to avoid conflicts with events sponsored by other Riderwood organizations. Be sure to put September 9 on your calendar for the first meeting on this new schedule!

Important Dates

Date	Subject	Location	Time
Wednesday, July 15	General Meeting of the Riderwood Democratic Club, with a reading of the Declaration of Independence, followed by a discussion led by resident Andy Schmookler	Encore Theater, LSC	2:00 PM
Friday, July 17	Environmental Book Group discusses <i>The Next Great Migration: The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move</i> by prize-winning journalist Sonia Shah	LSC Card Room	1:00 PM
Friday, August 7	Democratic Book Group discusses <i>Abundance</i> by Ezra Klein and Derek Thompson.	LSC Card Room	1:00 PM
Friday, August 14	Environmental Book Group discusses <i>Wilding: The Return of Nature to a British Farm</i> by Isabella Tree	LSC Card Room	1:00 PM
Friday, September 4	Democratic Book Group discusses <i>The Shadow Docket: How the Supreme Court Uses Stealth Rulings to Amass Power and Undermine the Republic</i> by Stephen Vladeck	LSC Card Room	1:00 PM
Wednesday, September 9	Save the date! General Meeting of the Riderwood Democratic Club on the new schedule (<i>second Wednesday</i>)	Encore Theater, LSC	2:00 PM