

2024 FLNOW PAC Endorsement Application for State Legislative and Local Official Candidates

This application form is for use of all candidates seeking state legislative or local office. There are three other specialized application forms or processes for other candidates:

- * Judicial, State Attorney, and Public Defender candidates have a specialized form.
- * Candidates for Florida state-wide offices should send an inquiring letter or email to the PAC President (PAC@flnow.org).
- * Federal office candidates must apply for endorsement to the National NOW PAC; please follow the directions set out at NOWPAC.org/process.

As state legislative and local official candidates answer the questions on this form, you may move back and forth between questions. If you do not complete your answers in a single session, look at the little cloud image to your right of the form title on the first page of the form -- if it says your draft has been saved, your draft will be autosaved for the next 30 days or until you submit the form. You will receive a copy of your submission that email will have a link which will permit you to edit response, if necessary.

This application for endorsement concentrates on NOW's core issues, plus climate change. NOW takes a holistic and intersectional approach to women's rights. Core issue information is set out before each part of this application and at <https://tinyurl.com/433vj5ma>.

Email to the PAC should be directed to FLNOWLeaders@gmail.com.

Name of Candidate

Sari Lindroos-Valimaki

Campaign Email

Sari4manatee@gmail.com

1. Election Identification and Campaign Information

Office Sought, note any District or Seat designation and if the race is partisan or non-partisan. Please include a community name if the position is municipal or local.

Manatee County Commission District 7At-large Democratic Candidate

Name the County or Counties Covered by the Office you seek, even if your race is for a municipal or local position or is a State race covering more than one county.

* ONLY for candidates running in Palm Beach County (covered by the WIN NOW PAC) or the Jacksonville area (covered by the JAX NOW PAC), ALSO note if you received or sought endorsement for the current campaign by the WIN NOW or JAX NOW PAC.

Manatee County

Are you an incumbent? If not, please list any prior elected positions you held and the years you were in such positions.

No, I have never held an elected office

Please list any declared opponents for the office (name and, if applicable, party).

George Kruse Republican(incumbent) also Kevin Van Ostenbridge Republican (incumbent for District 3, switched seats)

Set out the dates of your primary and your general elections.

General Election November 5, 2024

How can we best contact your campaign? Please provide on separate lines: Name of Campaign Director, Campaign Telephone Number, and Campaign Office Address.

Sari Lindroos-Valimaki, 941-212-1228, 5281 69th Street East, Palmetto FL 34221

Digital and social media: On separate lines, please provide links to your campaign and personal accounts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter ("X"), TikTok, etc.

<https://www.facebook.com/sarlindroos67>, https://www.instagram.com/sari_florida/
<https://x.com/slindroos>, <https://www.tiktok.com/@sari.lindroosvali>, <https://sisusari.substack.com/>

What endorsements have you sought (current and past campaigns)? As to the current campaign, please list endorsements received, open endorsement applications open, and any endorsements denied. Provide the same list as to past campaigns. Be sure to identify any FLNOW PAC applications by position sought and year.

Manatee Business Association (pending) Ruth's list (denied due to their lack of funding) Florida Forward (pending) I have the endorsement of the Manatee County Democratic Party

Please state the percentage of women and the percentage of people of color on your staff.

I don't have a staff, at the moment it's only me and my husband. I have tried to recruit volunteers and staff, but due to limited funds I have not been able to hire anyone.

2. Candidate Background and Goals

Describe your relevant educational and professional background, including years of described items.

I bring 30 years of experience in IT and cybersecurity, having led diverse teams of engineers to solve some of the most challenging issues in the digital realm. I hold an MBA with a concentration in Security from Nichols College and a BA in Political Science from Florida Atlantic University. Throughout my career, I have managed large budgets and successfully handled project management, risk assessment, and regulatory compliance. My role as a liaison between C-suite executives, engineers, clients, and legal teams has equipped me with the communication and leadership skills essential for effective governance.

How has your background prepared you for the office you seek?

1. **Technical Expertise and Leadership:** My extensive experience in IT and cybersecurity has honed my problem-solving skills and ability to manage complex projects. Leading diverse teams has taught me the importance of collaboration and innovation, which are crucial for addressing community issues.
2. **Interpersonal and Liaison Skills:** Acting as a bridge between different stakeholders has developed my ability to communicate effectively and build consensus. These skills are vital for fostering community involvement and ensuring transparent governance.
3. **Commitment to Evidence-Based Policy:** I firmly believe that policies should be made based on scientific evidence, not influenced by money, greed, or nepotism. My background in technical fields has reinforced the importance of data-driven decision-making to achieve effective and fair outcomes.
4. **Compassion and Advocacy:** Volunteering with Guardian ad Litem validates my empathy and commitment to serving vulnerable populations. This experience underscores my dedication to advocating for all community members, particularly those who are marginalized. [I am not currently volunteering, can elaborate if necessary]
5. **Personal Experience as an Immigrant:** As an immigrant from Finland, I have firsthand experience of the challenges faced by those acclimating to a new culture. Learning a new language and integrating into a different society has given me a unique perspective on the struggles of marginalized groups. I am committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes and feel represented in our community.

By combining my technical skills, leadership experience, commitment to evidence-based policy, and personal insights, I am well-prepared to serve our community with integrity, compassion, and dedication. My goal is to create an inclusive and transparent governance that reflects the diverse voices of our residents.

What are the most pressing issues for the office you seek?

1. Environmental Protection

Issue: Protecting and restoring the environment is crucial to ensuring the health and well-being of our residents and preserving our natural resources for future generations.

Solution:

- Restore Wetland Protections: Reinstate and strengthen wetland protections to safeguard these critical ecosystems, which play a vital role in water filtration, flood control, and providing wildlife habitats.
- Tackle Contaminations: Implement comprehensive programs to identify, clean up, and prevent environmental contaminations.
- Clean Water for Everyone: Invest in modernizing water treatment facilities and infrastructure. We need to ensure that our industrial control systems (ICS) are hardened against potential tampering.

2. Sustainable Growth

Issue: Managing growth in a way that supports economic development while preserving the character and sustainability of our community.

Solution:

- Smart Traffic Management Technology: Invest in advanced traffic management systems to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow. This includes synchronized traffic signals, real-time monitoring, and adaptive signal control.
- Infrastructure Investment: Enhance both physical and digital infrastructure to support growth. This includes improving road networks, public transportation, and utilities, while expanding broadband access to all areas of the county.
- Balanced Development: Encourage mixed-use, walkable communities and implement zoning policies that support higher density in appropriate areas while preserving open spaces and green belts.

3. Transparent Governance

Issue: Emphasis needs to be on the importance of community trust and ethical behavior.

Solution:

- Demand Accountability: Establish clear standards and procedures for accountability within the county government. Regular audits and performance reviews can help ensure that public funds are used effectively and ethically.
- Model Integrity: Set a high standard for ethical behavior and decision-making within the commission. Lead by example to foster a culture of integrity and trustworthiness.
- Build Community Trust: Enhance public engagement by providing accessible and transparent information about government operations. Hold regular town hall meetings, solicit feedback, and ensure that community input is reflected in policy decisions. Make meetings available virtually so everyone has the opportunity to participate.

By focusing on these top priorities—environmental protection, sustainable growth, and transparent governance—the County Commission can address the most pressing issues facing Manatee County. This approach will ensure that we protect our natural resources, manage growth responsibly, and build a government that residents can trust and rely on.

What are your goals for the office you seek if elected?

My primary goals for the office I seek are centered around three core principles: to listen, learn, and lead with integrity.

1. Community Involvement: I aim to foster a culture of active community involvement. By inviting every member of our community to participate in the decision-making process, I will ensure that we are a true representation of everyone. Your voices and concerns will be at the heart of our initiatives.
2. Sustainable Development: I am committed to respecting our natural boundaries and promoting sustainable development. This means advocating for policies that protect our environment while supporting responsible growth. We must balance progress with preservation to ensure a healthy and vibrant community for future generations.
3. Digital and Physical Infrastructure: To meet the demands of the modern world, I will prioritize the improvement of both our digital and physical infrastructure. From better roads and public facilities to enhanced internet connectivity and digital services, I will work tirelessly to ensure our community is well-equipped for the future.
4. Transparency and Accountability: Leading with integrity means being transparent and accountable. I will uphold the highest standards of ethics and honesty, providing clear and open communication about our plans, decisions, and actions.

By focusing on these goals, I will strive to create a community where everyone feels heard, respected, and represented, and where we can achieve sustainable progress together.

3. GENERAL FACTORS which support a FLNOW PAC endorsement of your current campaign and candidacy.

Such factors could include campaign pledges, as well as noteworthy actions you took, newspaper or other public articles addressing your public actions, significant endorsements by groups with values aligned to NOW principles, appearances at NOW state or chapter events, etc.

Your general comments -- and the comments you make as specifically applicable to each section below -- should include examples of your record of actions taken as an individual and / or as a part of a group that highlight your commitment to NOW's pillar issues, such as:

- * Specific legislation / resolutions / public actions you supported and the outcome.
- * Coalitions you joined or lead, ballot initiative involvement, grassroots organizations and community projects in which you participated, with the outcome.
- * Any award or honor roll listing relevant to an identified substantive area.

If you wish to provide a general summary statement of factors supporting a FLNOW PAC Endorsement applicable to your candidacy, please do so here:

I embody the Finnish ethos of contentment and humility, but my deep-seated belief in integrity, equality, and transparency has driven me to run for office. As an immigrant from Finland, I have always valued the trust and respect we place in our institutions and politicians to act in the best interest of everyone.

Becoming an American citizen has been one of my proudest achievements. I cherish the freedoms and responsibilities that come with citizenship and have voted in every election, always researching and trusting my candidates. I have often been disheartened by the lack of Democratic candidates in the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners elections, which has motivated me to offer a choice rooted in core Democratic values.

My candidacy is about offering a chance to vote for integrity, equality, and transparency. This run is my advocacy for change, inspired by my desire to see a more inclusive and just society. Running for office is a privilege I take seriously, and I aim to bring attention to the issues that matter and offer a candidacy focused on doing what is right for our community.

Although I am a Democratic candidate in a predominantly Republican county, my values and concerns should have cross appeal. I believe I am the right candidate at the right time to induce positive change. My party affiliation should not matter as much as my commitment to serving all residents with integrity and dedication.

I am deeply concerned about the growing division in our country and the move towards authoritarianism exemplified by initiatives like Project 2025. We need to become the change for the better, not revert to regressive policies. If we don't actively work for a better future, we are headed towards negative times, impacting our climate, justice for marginalized communities, and reproductive rights.

I am alarmed that my daughter now has fewer rights than I did when I immigrated here. We cannot stand on the sidelines; we must be advocates for change to preserve our democracy. My 30-year career in IT and cybersecurity has taught me the power of diversity and inclusivity in fostering innovative solutions. As a female in a predominantly male field, I have firsthand experience with economic injustice and have been a staunch advocate for equal pay and opportunities.

I believe policies should be based on scientific evidence, not influenced by money, greed, or nepotism. My commitment to comprehensive healthcare, including reproductive rights, aligns with the principles I

have upheld throughout my life. I am ready to lead with integrity, listen to every voice, and ensure our government works transparently for all.

By combining my professional expertise, personal experiences, and unwavering commitment to democratic values, I am well-prepared to serve our community and make a meaningful impact. We must act now to ensure a just and democratic future for all.

Provide any history of working with Florida NOW and its chapters, National NOW or the PAC of any NOW organization.

While I have not had the opportunity to work with these organizations or individuals in the past, I deeply respect their values and principles, which align closely with my own. I would be honored to collaborate with them in the future if the opportunity arises.

4. Constitutional Equality

NOW is a proud supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment and prioritizes giving women explicit protections in the United States Constitution, ratification of the ERA by the Florida legislature, and an ERA audit for Florida and local laws.

Do you support the Equal Rights Amendment, including Florida ratification of the ERA, and prioritize giving women explicit protections in the United States Constitution and Florida law?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☒ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Comment On Constitutional Equality (see section 3 above for comment instructions):

I am a strong supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and believe it is crucial to provide explicit protections for women in the United States Constitution and Florida law. Coming from Finland, a country that was the first in the world to grant women both the right to vote and stand for election in 1906, I deeply value gender equality. Finland's continued leadership in gender equality, including having female leaders such as presidents and prime ministers, has ingrained these values in my core.

Ratifying the ERA by the Florida legislature is a vital step towards ensuring true gender equality and safeguarding women's rights. My commitment to comprehensive healthcare, including reproductive rights, and economic justice aligns with the principles I have upheld throughout my life. We must act now to ensure a just and democratic future for all, where policies are based on scientific evidence, not influenced by money, greed, or nepotism. I am dedicated to advocating for these protections and prioritizing policies that uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals.

5. Reproductive Rights and Justice

NOW fully supports safe and legal abortion, affordable and effective birth control and contraception, and scientifically accurate reproductive health education for all.

Have you and will you act to protect and expand the legal right to abortion, dismantle barriers to reproductive health services, and pursue policies that create the conditions to achieve reproductive justice where all people can choose to have a child, not have a child, and parent with dignity?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Will you and your campaign support passage of the amendment to the Florida Constitution to Limit Government Interference with Abortion?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Comment on Reproductive Rights and Justice (see section 3 above for comment instructions) :

I am a staunch advocate for reproductive rights, deeply concerned that my daughter now has fewer rights than I did when I immigrated here. This is a serious issue that requires immediate attention. It is baffling to me that so many are focused on controlling pregnancies while neglected children in the system do not receive the same level of advocacy. Our efforts should be directed towards helping and guiding these children, not interfering with the reproductive rights of individuals.

Coming from Finland, where reproductive choices are personal decisions and not political tokens, I firmly believe in the right to make decisions about one's own body. Comprehensive healthcare, including reproductive health services, is a fundamental right that should be protected and respected. We must prioritize policies that uphold the dignity and autonomy of all individuals, ensuring they have access to the healthcare they need without unnecessary interference.

6. Violence Against Women, including Gun Violence

NOW supports protections for women from violence: sexual assault, rape and hate crimes based on gender and gender identification, including gun violence. FLNOW asks localities to foster a safe and supportive environment for survivors to report abuse so that law enforcement may better identify perpetrators in their community, detect repeat offenders, and reduce the number of people victimized (see <https://startbybelieving.org>).

Have you and will you act to protect and expand protections for women from violence, sexual assault, rape and hate crimes based on gender or gender identification?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Have you and will you pursue common-sense gun safety policies?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Comment on Violence Against Women and Gun Violence (see section 3 above for comment instructions):

I grew up with guns in the house; my father collected them. I am not against guns and even encouraged my daughter to go through a concealed weapons permit course to ensure she knows how to use a gun safely, should she ever need to. However, I strongly believe in closing loopholes in obtaining guns, implementing mandatory waiting periods, and conducting thorough background checks. Just as we have a rigorous process to obtain a driver's license, we should have the same safeguards for gun ownership. While I don't have all the answers to stop the horrible gun violence, I believe that making it more difficult to obtain guns and ensuring responsible ownership are steps towards slowing it down. The issues should be deeply investigated to determine what can and should be done to eradicate gun violence.

My commitment to ending violence against women is deeply personal. Growing up in an environment with severe domestic violence has left a lasting impact on me. No woman should endure such suffering, and no child should witness it. This experience has driven my advocacy for robust protections against domestic violence and support for survivors.

These experiences have shaped my commitment to advocating for stricter gun control measures and comprehensive protections for women. We must ensure our laws protect the most vulnerable and provide justice and safety for all.

7. Economic Equity

NOW advocates for a wide range of economic justice issues, including women's freedom and ability to succeed as intertwined with racial justice, reproductive freedom, and other legal equality.

Have you and will you act to protect and expand social safety nets and women's economic freedom and success, focused on issues such as welfare reform, homelessness, livable wages, paid sick leave, job discrimination, pay equity, and financial literacy, and support the recognition that these issues impact women of color at particularly higher rates?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Comment on Economic Equity (see section 3 above for comment instructions) :

I am committed to protecting and expanding social safety nets and promoting women's economic freedom and success, particularly on issues such as welfare reform, homelessness, livable wages, paid sick leave, job discrimination, pay equity, and financial literacy. These issues disproportionately impact women of color, and addressing them is crucial for achieving true equality.

On a local level, I believe we need to take significant steps to address the affordable housing crisis. Too many individuals and families are living in motels that charge exorbitant fees, trapping them in a cycle of poverty or forcing them onto the streets. We need to tackle the discrepancy in housing costs to ensure that housing is truly affordable.

For instance, a developer claiming to build "affordable housing" with prices starting at over \$200,000 is not addressing the real needs of our community. We need housing solutions that are accessible to individuals and families who work and live in our area. Additionally, we must provide services to address the increasing homelessness caused by people being priced out of their homes.

8. Racial Justice

A leader in civil rights since 1966, NOW supports equal opportunities for people of color in all areas including employment, education and healthcare.

Have you and will you support action to protect all members of our diverse community, and ensure that all, particularly the most vulnerable, are treated with fairness, justice, and equality, and will you oppose discrimination based on race in all areas?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Comment on Racial Justice (see section 3 above for comment instructions) :

I sincerely support diversity and advocate for it as a positive force for innovation, creativity, and diverse thought. As a leader in civil rights since 1966, NOW has championed equal opportunities for people of color in employment, education, and healthcare. I fully align with these values and am committed to taking action to protect all members of our diverse community, ensuring that everyone, particularly the most vulnerable, is treated with fairness, justice, and equality.

I have participated in several Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and experienced firsthand the fear and tension brought by groups like the Proud Boys. The BLM movement has been unfairly tarnished with a reputation for violence, but it was the presence and attitudes of such counter-groups that escalated tensions during what should have been peaceful protests. I am proud to have participated and stand firmly against the politicization of the movement as being anti-police. BLM is about advocating for justice and equality, not against law enforcement.

I will continue to oppose discrimination based on race in all areas and advocate for policies that ensure equal opportunities for people of color. Our community's strength lies in its diversity, and I am dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can thrive.

9. LGBTQIA+ Rights

NOW is committed to fighting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in all areas.

Have you and will you support action to protect all members of our diverse community, and ensure that all, including the most vulnerable, are treated with fairness, justice, and equality, and will you oppose discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in all areas?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☒ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Comment on LGBTQIA+ Rights (see section 3 above for comment instructions) :

I sincerely support action to protect all members of our diverse community, ensuring that everyone, including the most vulnerable, is treated with fairness, justice, and equality. This includes opposing discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in all areas.

I have friends and family members who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. I have witnessed the pain caused by attempts to change their identities, such as trying to "pray the gayness out" of someone, which is both misguided and harmful. I firmly believe that love is love, and it is not our place to judge. Everyone who feels love and is loved is privileged, and we should respect and support each individual's choice to love whomever they choose.

We must ensure that our policies and actions reflect this respect and support. I am committed to advocating for equal rights and protections for the LGBTQ+ community and ensuring that discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity is opposed in all areas. Our community is stronger and richer when everyone is treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

10. Voting Rights and Civics

FL NOW supports full voting rights for all Florida citizens. We support Vote By Mail and Early Voting and oppose economic barriers to voting, such as a requirement to pay fines, as imposed on returning citizens. We believe it is appropriate that students learn a non-politicized accurate of history and how to become a fully participating citizen. We support non-partisan application of our Fair Districts provision in the Florida Constitution.

Have you and will you act to expand and protect the voting rights of Floridian citizens and returning citizens, and support the teaching of civics in a fair and impartial manner?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Will you act to ensure that electoral districts are drawn fairly so that everyone can have a voice in public policies that affect their lives, if appropriate to the position you seek?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Action on fair districts is not within the scope of the position I seek

Comment on Voting Rights and Civics (see section 3 above for comment instructions):

I am committed to expanding and protecting the voting rights of all Floridian citizens, including returning citizens, and supporting the teaching of civics in a fair and impartial manner. The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy, and it is imperative that we remove barriers that disenfranchise eligible voters.

I am deeply upset that although Florida voters passed Amendment 4 in 2018 to restore voting rights to felons who have completed their sentences, Governor DeSantis and the Republican-controlled Legislature undermined this by requiring the payment of fines, fees, and other court costs before these rights can be restored. This requirement effectively disenfranchises a significant group of voters who may be unable to afford these payments, thwarting the will of the voters and maintaining an unjust system.

Additionally, I support measures such as Vote By Mail and Early Voting to make voting more accessible and oppose economic barriers that disproportionately affect marginalized communities. It is also crucial that students learn a non-politicized, accurate history and how to be fully participating citizens.

I firmly believe in fair electoral districting to ensure that everyone has a voice in public policies that affect their lives. Gerrymandering undermines democracy by diluting the voting power of certain groups, and it is essential that districts are drawn fairly and impartially.

11. Climate Change and Environmental Protection

The issues of climate change, environmental protection and resiliency are critical to our future, and their negative impacts are heightened by the dynamic intersection of race, class, and gender.

Have you and will you promote recognition of climate change and protection of our environment and natural resources?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ See my limiting statement in the Comment immediately below

Comment on Climate Change and Environmental Protection (see section 3 above for comment instructions) :

I am deeply committed to environmental protection and addressing climate change. My resolve to run for office was sparked by a text message on March 25, 2021, warning me to evacuate due to a possible threat from a leaking phosphate stack in Piney Point.

I envisioned a tsunami of polluted water coming towards us, although this did not materialize, the resolution was to pump 215 million gallons of toxic water into Tampa Bay. This exacerbated the Red Tide growth that summer, leading to significant environmental and economic damage as tourists stayed away. Coming from Finland, a country with a deep-rooted respect for the environment, I firmly believe in climate change and the necessity of taking proactive measures to combat it. I am appalled that our current governor, Ron DeSantis, has signed legislation removing references to climate change from state law, a move that undermines efforts to address this critical issues. His actions are out of step with the overwhelming majority of Floridians who recognize the reality of climate change and support measures to address it.

As an advocate for environmental protection, I believe we must change the direction of current policies to prevent further destruction. It is up to us to stop this and ensure a sustainable future for our community and the planet.

12. Publication of Endorsement and FLNOW Organizational Affiliation

Will you publicize an endorsement by the FLNOW PAC if you are endorsed?

☒ Yes

☐ No

Are you a member of Florida NOW?

If you wish to join prior to submission of this application, you may join at www.FLNOW.org.

☒ Yes

☐ No

If you previously applied for endorsement by the Florida NOW PAC and stated you were willing to join Florida NOW, have you joined?

☐ Yes

☒ No

Conclusion: Please insert your headshot, and add your name and the date of your submission of this application for endorsement -- your name will serve as your digital signature.

Review your answers given above and assure they are accurate. The FLNOW PAC reserves the right to withdraw an endorsement if it finds material misrepresentations has been made.

Headshot (please upload a campaign headshot photograph) *

Screenshot_202...

 Add file

Your Name (serves as a digital signature)

Sari Lindroos-Valimaki

The Date on which this form is submitted

MM DD YYYY

07 / 04 / 2024

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