



**Florida Fair Elections Coalition**  
**Deland, FL**  
[www.ffc.org](http://www.ffc.org)

## **FFEC Founder Susan Pynchon Receives Prestigious Civil Liberties Award**

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May 16, 2008, Deland, FL – Susan Pynchon, founder and executive director of the DeLand-based Florida Fair Elections Coalition (FFEC), is one of four recipients of the 29<sup>th</sup> annual 2008 Nelson Poynter Civil Liberties Award, presented by the ACLU Foundation of Florida. The award will be presented Saturday, May 17, at the Palladium Theater in St. Petersburg.

The Nelson Poynter award is presented each year to an individual or group of individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of civil liberties. The award is named for the former crusading editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*, who was never afraid to stand up for unpopular causes. He fought racial segregation, defended the right of a free press, exposed corruption in government, and supported the rights of the elderly and the poor. He also led the fight for the Sunshine Law, opening Florida's government to public scrutiny and accountability.

The first recipient of the Nelson Poynter Civil Liberties Award was the late Florida Governor LeRoy Collins in 1978, who was recognized for his courageous leadership in upholding racial justice and opposing the death penalty. Other recipients have included Florida Supreme Court Justice Gerald Kogan; Florida Bar Association President Chesterfield Smith; Immigrant Rights Attorney Cheryl Little; and, in 2007, author and columnist Carl Hiaasen. In addition to Pynchon, the 2008 award is also being presented to Kindra Muntz of the Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections, and Dan McCrea and Pamela Haengel of the Florida Voters Coalition.

"It is time to recognize and honor the work of citizen watchdogs to guarantee all citizens of Florida fair, accessible, re-countable, accurate and reliable elections," said Howard Simon, Executive Director of the ACLU of Florida.

Pynchon, of De Leon Springs, was a volunteer investigating voting irregularities in Volusia County's 2004 elections when she went through the Elections Office trash to uncover weaknesses in the security and equipment. Her volunteer work earned her national recognition as an investigator and reporter of the pitfalls of electronic voting systems. She has been featured in national print and broadcast media outlets, including the Emmy-nominated documentary film, "Hacking Democracy." She initiated and sponsored Florida's first statewide election reform conference in 2005, which has become an annual event and has helped to build an extensive network of voting reform groups and individuals around Florida, including the other groups being honored.

Pynchon and FFEC co-founder Kitty Garber conducted a year-long investigation of the 18,000 uncounted votes in the U.S. Congressional District 13 race in Sarasota County in 2006. That race, which was decided by a mere 369 votes, was the subject of two court cases, two state audits, and a U.S. Congressional investigation. Based on their forensic review of more than 10,000 documents from that election, Pynchon and Garber concluded that massive failures of the electronic paperless touchscreen voting machines contributed to the lost votes, contradicting the findings of two state audits and the federal Government Accountability Office. Their report, "Sarasota's Vanished Votes," has been referenced in professional and university studies about the controversial CD-13 race.

"The fight for fair elections is one of the great civil rights struggles of this decade," Pynchon said. "Elections, the very foundation of our democratic republic, are under attack on many fronts. Citizens' groups such as Florida Fair Elections Coalition are on the front lines, trying to advance what we believe is the fundamental right of all citizens to be able to vote and to have their votes counted accurately."

In addition to honoring the four recipients of the 2008 Nelson Poynter Civil Liberties award, the ACLU of Florida is also recognizing the volunteer efforts of election integrity organizations around Florida, including the Florida Fair Elections Coalition, the Miami-Dade Election Reform Coalition, the Broward Election Reform Coalition, the Palm Beach Coalition for Election Reform, the Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections, the Florida Voters Coalition, and the Voting Integrity Alliance of Tampa Bay.

"I am honored and humbled to be a recipient of the Nelson Poynter award," Pynchon said. "It rightfully belongs to my colleagues at Florida Fair Elections Coalition and to the hundreds of citizen volunteers and activists who give freely of their time, energy, and personal resources to preserve and advance the civil liberties of all Floridians."