

WHY I SHOULD VOTE ?



A Practical Guide to Understanding the Electoral System

Courtesy of:

Tammy Jones

Levy County Supervisor of Elections

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www.votelevy.com

Dear Voter,

I hope you agree with me that **VOTING** is one of the most important privileges we have as Americans. The purpose of this booklet is to share with you basic information regarding the elections process in Florida and Levy County.

As you learn about the government and the voting process, it is my wish that each of you would feel an obligation to do your share to support freedom. The more you learn about how the government in our country functions, the more important I hope our right to vote will become to you. Your opinions count!

I wish each of you the best of luck with your future plans and I hope you all remember the power of your vote!

Sincerely,

Tammy Jones

Levy County Supervisor of Elections





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The Supervisor of Elections



In each county in Florida, there is a person charged with maintaining the voter registration files and conducting elections in a fair and honest way. In Levy County, that person is Tammy Jones.

The Supervisor of Elections is one of the five Constitutional Officers in Levy County. The others include the Clerk of the Court, Property Appraiser, Tax Collector and Sheriff. These offices are elected every four years.

The Supervisor of Elections is responsible for carrying out voter registration according to the law. Voter registration laws are governed by the Florida Legislature and guidelines are set by the Department of State, Division of Elections in Tallahassee.

Another responsibility of the Supervisor is establishing precinct lines. These are designated by congressional lines, Florida Senate and House of Representatives district lines, Board of County Commission and School Board member district lines.

The law requires that a polling place be established in each precinct whenever possible. Two precincts may share a polling place when there is no available location within both precincts.

Polling places are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. Poll workers are hired and trained by the Supervisor of Elections to work on Election Day. There is one Clerk in charge of the polling place. Each precinct also has several inspectors who assist the Clerk with various duties. Each precinct also has a deputy whose job it is to maintain order at the polling place. These are paid positions and 110 poll workers work at each election.

Voter Registration Is Simple!

There are no fees and you may pick up a Florida Voter Registration Application from a variety of places throughout Levy County. You may also register to vote while you are at the Driver's License office. You must be registered to vote at least 29 days prior to an election in order to vote in that election. When you complete a voter registration application, your information is verified by the State of Florida and the Supervisor of Elections will mail a Voter Information Card.

Pick up a **Florida** Voter Registration Application at one of the following

DRIVERS LICENSE OFFICES

Bronson

355 South Court Street, Bronson, Fl. 32621

Phone: (352)486-5174

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday: 8:30am - 4:30pm

Chiefland

266 North Main Street, Chiefland, Fl. 32626

Phone: (352)493-4646

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday: 8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

LEVY COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

600 Gilbert Street

Bronson, Fl. 32621

Phone: (352)486-2015

Main Library Hours

Monday - 10 am - 3 pm

Tuesday and Thursday- 1 pm - 8 pm

Wednesday- 12 pm - 5 pm

Friday- 11 am - 4 pm

Saturday- 10 am - 3 pm

Williston

55 South Main Street. Williston, Fl. 32696

Phone: (352)528-6091

WEDNESDAYS only

SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

421 South Court Street

Bronson, Fl. 32621

Phone: (352)486-5146

Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday: 8:30a.m. - 4:30p.m.

www.votelevy.com



Requirements To Vote

In order to register to vote in Levy County, you must:

- ★ **Be A United States Citizen**
- ★ **Be A Florida and Levy County Resident**
- ★ **Be 18 Years Old (You Can Pre-register at 16 Years Old)**
- ★ **Not Be A Convicted Felon or Adjudicated Mentally Incapacitated**
- ★ **Not Be Registered To Vote Anywhere Else**

Political Parties

There are two major political parties in the United States, Republican and Democratic. They have been in power for over 175 years. The parties have different political philosophies which strive to represent a broad range of ideological and geographical interests. Third parties, often called minor parties, sometimes focus on a specific issue or geographical region of the nation. For more information on each of these party's ideology, you may wish to contact the political party directly.



Florida Democratic Party

Phone: (850) 222-3411
www.fladems.com



Florida Republican Party

Phone: (850) 222-7920
www.rpof.org

Minor Political Parties

<http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/candidates-committees/political-parties/>

Election Types

General Election ★ An election to fill public offices.

Primary Election ★ An election before the General Election in which voters select the candidates who will run on each party's ticket. In the state of Florida, primaries are also used to choose convention delegates and party leaders, and may be Universal Primary Contests or Closed Primaries.

Open Primary ★ An election that permits voters to choose on election day the party for whom they wish to vote. A voter may vote for candidates of only one party. Open Primaries do not exist in the state of Florida.

Closed Primary ★ You may only vote for the party in which you are registered. Florida is a Closed Primary state.

Universal Primary Contest ★ If all candidates in the race are of the same party and the winner will face no opposition in the General Election, all registered voters of any party can vote for any candidate they choose.

Presidential Primary Preference ★ A non-binding election held every four years to give voters the chance to instruct party delegates of their nomination for the President of the United States.



The Electoral College & How Our President Is Elected

The United States is the oldest continuously functioning democracy in the world. The United States Constitution was ratified in 1788 and has been amended only 27 times since then. The first 10 of these amendments, called the Bill of Rights, were approved in 1790.



The procedure for electing a president is spelled out in Article II. Each state is entitled to a number of electors equal to that state's representation in Congress (Senate + House). Since each state has two Senators and at least one Representative, every state has at least three electors. Currently California has the most electors at 55. The electors meet in their respective state capitals in December of each election year to cast their votes for President and Vice President. These electors, who together form the electoral college, are the ones who actually elect the President. If no candidate gets a majority of the electoral vote, the House of Representatives elects the President, with each state having one vote. This happened in 1800 and again in 1824.

There are a total of 538 electoral votes (for the 100 senators, 435 representatives, and 3 extras for the District of Columbia). A ticket needs a majority of the electoral votes, or 270, to win. After Election Day, each state assigns people called electors who will vote for the ticket that won their state. The electors then get together at a big meeting in the middle of December, called the Electoral College, where they elect the President and Vice President. The new President and Vice President are then sworn in during January and begin their term.

Each state is free to choose its electors as it wishes. In the 18th Century, America was largely rural and most people were farmers who knew little about politics. In this climate, a direct election of the President would probably have been difficult in

The Electoral College, cont'd

any case. In the early days of the nation, electors were chosen due to their wisdom and knowledge of politics, not due to their preference for any particular candidate. Even in the modern world, direct election of a distant President is not always so easy. For example, the European Union does not have a direct election for its president. Instead, a complex system exists in which countries, not citizens, are the key players, exactly like the role of each state in the United States.

Each state determines how its electors are chosen by state law and the process varies from state to state. In states with Primary Elections, each Presidential candidate usually designates a slate of electors who then appear on the November ballot. The voters are then actually voting for a slate of electors pledged to one candidate or another. In caucus states, the electors may be chosen at the state caucus. Electors are actual human beings, with houses, children, jobs, and very occasionally, their own opinions. In most states, the slate of electors that gets the most votes wins and gets to travel to the state capital in December to vote for President and Vice President. In the bitterly contested election in Florida in 2000, George Bush carried the state by 537 votes out of over six million cast, and thus got all 25 of Florida's electoral votes. Since it is the electoral vote, not the popular vote, that actually elects the president, keeping track of it is crucial for people who want to know how the campaign is going.

If Florida's 25 electoral votes had been split 13 for George Bush and 12 for Al Gore, then Al Gore would have been president. There is nothing in the constitution mandating winner-take-all. The manner for choosing electors is regulated by state law. In fact, two states, Maine and Nebraska, do not use winner-take-all. In those states, the winner of each congressional district gets one elector and the winner of the state as a whole gets an additional two. Any state that wanted to adopt this system need only pass a state law to do so. No constitutional amendment is required.

UPDATE: According to the 2010 Census population data, the state of Florida now has 29 electoral votes.

How Do People Decide Who To Vote

There are two types of voting. Prospective Voting means “looking forward.” The voters look at both candidates and evaluate how their future will be if they vote for each person. This requires looking closely at the issues.

Retrospective Voting means “looking backwards.” The voter looks at how things have been in recent years. If things have been good, the voter is likely to re-elect the incumbents. If things are not so good, the voter is likely to vote for the challengers.

Every Vote Counts

Democracy is for all of us and it takes all of us to make it work. Many voters go to the polls only to cast votes for the President and Vice President and do not vote for local candidates and issues.



Your single vote can be even more important in state and local races. Remember, for the things that count most in your everyday life - schools, highways, water supply, police and fire protection - your vote is just as important for local issues as it is in Federal elections.

In past Presidential Elections, over 60 million Americans did not vote. In an average group of American citizens, chances are that only one out of three people will vote for national candidates and in local elections, one out of ten might vote. Why do so many forfeit their right to vote? Many people falsely believe that one vote doesn't make a difference, so why bother!

As citizens of a free country, we have both the privilege and responsibility to make choices that determine how and by whom we will be governed. It is the right to vote in a secret ballot that makes a democracy strong or weak. **Know the issues and VOTE!**

Did You Know?

**ONE
VOTE**

- ★ In 1829, in Illinois, James C. Allen defeated William B. Archer 8,452 to 8,451 for his seat in the House of Representatives.
- ★ In 1920, one vote passed the 19th Amendment which gave women the right to vote. Tennessee was the last state needed to ratify the Amendment, and it passed by one vote.
- ★ In 1948, one vote per precinct in California gave Harry Truman the presidency.
- ★ In 2009, one vote declared Jack McDonald the Mayor of Palm Beach, Florida.



Statistics

SENATORS

- ★ There are 2 U.S. Senators from Florida.
- ★ There are 40 State Senators in Florida.
- ★ There is 1 State Senator in Senate Districts 5 who represents Levy County.

REPRESENTATIVES

- ★ There are 27 U.S. Representatives from Florida.
- ★ There is 1 U.S. Representative in Congressional District 3 who represents Levy County.
- ★ There is 1 State Representative in District 22 who represents Levy County.

Going Back In Time

Here's a brief look at Voting Rights in America.

... From the adoption of the U.S. Constitution on September 17, 1787 until 1821, voters were white male citizens who owned property, age 21 or older.

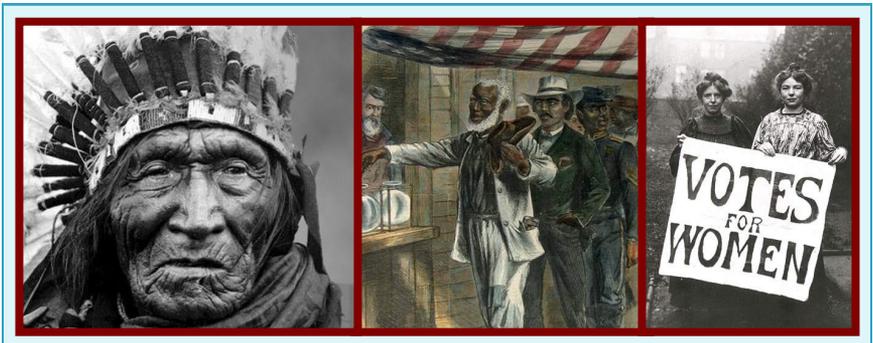
... Voters in 1850 were white male citizens, age 21 or older.

... Voters in 1870 were white or black male citizens, age 21 or older.

... Voters in 1920 were white or black male citizens and female citizens, age 21 or older.

... Voters in 1924 were white, black or native American males and female citizens, age 21 or older.

... Voters in 1971 were all American citizens, age 18 or older.



U.S. Voting Rights

When the Constitution was written, only white male property owners (about 10 to 16 percent of the nation's population) had the right to vote. Over the past two centuries, the term "government by the people" has become a reality. During the early 1800s, states gradually dropped property requirements for voting. Later, groups that had been excluded previously gained the right to vote. Other reforms made the process fairer and easier.



1700

1790

Only white male adult citizens who own property have the right to vote.

1800

1810

Last religious prerequisite for voting is eliminated.

1850

Property ownership and tax requirements were eliminated by 1850, almost all adult white males could vote.

1855

Connecticut adopts the nation's first literacy test for voting. Massachusetts follows suit in 1857. The tests were implemented to discriminate against Irish-Catholic immigrants.

1870

The 15th Amendment is passed. It gives former slaves the right to vote and protects the voting rights of adult male citizens of any race.

1889

Florida adopts a poll tax. Ten other southern states will implement poll taxes.

1890

Mississippi adopts a literacy test to keep African Americans from voting. Numerous other states—not just in the south—also establish literacy tests. However, the tests also exclude many whites from voting. To get around this, states add grandfather clauses that allow those who could vote before 1870, or their descendants, to vote regardless of literacy or tax qualifications.

1900

1913

The 17th Amendment calls for members of the U.S. Senate to be elected directly by the people instead of State Legislatures.

1915

Oklahoma was the last state to append a grandfather clause to its literacy requirement (1910). In *Guinn v. United States* the Supreme Court rules that the clause is in conflict with the 15th Amendment, thereby outlawing literacy tests for federal elections.

1920

The 19th Amendment grants women the right to vote.

1924

Indian Citizenship Act grants all Native Americans the rights of citizenship, including the right

U.S. Voting Rights, cont'd



to vote in federal elections.

1944

The Supreme Court outlaws "white primaries" in *Smith v. Allwright* (Texas). In Texas, and other states, primaries were conducted by private associations, which, by definition, could exclude whomever they chose. The Court declares the nomination process to be a public process bound by the terms of 15th Amendment.

1957

The first law to implement the 15th amendment, the Civil Rights Act, is passed. The Act set up the Civil Rights Commission—among its duties is to investigate voter discrimination.

1960

In *Gomillion v. Lightfoot* (Alabama) the Court outlaws "gerrymandering."

1961

The 23rd Amendment allows voters of the District of Columbia to participate in presidential elections.

1964

The 24th Amendment bans the poll tax as a requirement for voting in federal elections.

1965

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., mounts a voter registration drive in Selma, Alabama, to draw national attention to African-American voting rights.

1965

The Voting Rights Act protects the rights of minority voters and eliminates voting barriers such as the literacy test. The Act is expanded and renewed in 1970, 1975, and 1982.

1966

The Supreme Court, in *Harper v. Virginia Board of Elections*, eliminates the poll tax as a qualification for voting in any election. A poll tax was still in use in Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia.

1966

The Court upholds the Voting Rights Act in *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*.

1970

Literacy requirements are banned for five years by the 1970 renewal of the Voting Rights Act. At the time, eighteen states still have a literacy requirement in place. In *Oregon v. Mitchell*, the Court upholds the ban on literacy tests, which is made permanent in 1975. Judge Hugo Black, writing the court's opinion, cited the "long history of the discriminatory use of literacy tests to disenfranchise voters on account of their race" as the reason for their decision.

1971

The 26th amendment sets the minimum voting age at 18.

1972

In *Dunn v. Blumstein*, the Supreme Court declares that lengthy residence requirements for voting in state and local elections is unconstitutional and suggests that 30 days is an ample period.

1995

The Federal "Motor Voter Law" takes effect, making it easier to register to vote.

2003

Federal Voting Standards and Procedures Act requires states to streamline registration, voting, and other election procedures.

Questions & Answers

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q ★ When can I register to vote?

A ★ You can pre-register at 16 years old by completing a Florida Voter Registration Application. The week of your 18th birthday, you will receive a voter registration card.

Q ★ What is the benefit of pre-registering?

A ★ If your birthday falls within the 29 day window of an election, you are eligible to vote. If you have not received a voter information card before the election, you are still able to vote so long as you are 18 and bring a form of both photo and signature identification, such as a driver's license or Florida ID card.

Q ★ How do I vote if I am away at college or in the Armed Forces?

A ★ You may request a Vote by Mail ballot by phone, mail or online. If you leave the county or state permanently, contact the Elections Office to cancel your registration and be sure to register in your new county and state. If you are moving to a new county in Florida, you only need to make an address change on the voter registration application.

Q ★ How do I decide party affiliation or for whom to vote?

A ★ This is a personal choice. Contact the different parties and candidates to request information on their platforms. Study the issues that are important to you and make your choice accordingly.

Q ★ How do I know when and where to vote?

A ★ Your voter information card will have your precinct number and polling location listed. The newspaper will publish election dates and information. If you have any questions, you can always call the Elections Office at (352)486-5146 or view current and updated election information on our Website: www.votelevy.com

Q ★ What do I do if I lose my voter information card or move?

A ★ You may request a new card or make an address change by calling or writing the Elections Office. You may download a Florida Voter Registration Application to make changes to your voter registration on our Web site, www.votelevy.com

**NOTE TO STUDENTS OR
ANYONE PLANNING ON
GOING INTO ANY MILITARY
BRANCH:**

If you move away from home, you have the option to remain a registered voter in Levy County.

You can request a VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT for each election. This request for VOTE BY MAIL BALLOT can be found on our website at:

www.votelevy.com

Exercise Your Right... VOTE!

TAMMY JONES, LEVY COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS



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