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# VOTER'S EDUCATION



# GUIDE

## **VOTER RESPONSIBILITIES IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO**

*The purpose of this Voter Education Guide is to give an educational understanding of the importance of your vote and how voting is directly tied into our everyday issues.*

- Know the local voter registration requirements and register to vote
- Notify the Supervisor of Elections Office of any change of address or circumstances that might affect your registration status
- Know the rules and options for absentee ballots and early voting
- Know the hours and location of your polling place
- Know the types of identification is required and bring it to the polls
- Familiarize yourself with the candidates and issues
- Ask for help if you need it



**BECOME INVOLVED!!!!**

## WHY SHOULD I VOTE?

With all this talk of voting you might ask why you should bother to vote at all. Does your vote actually mean anything?

Many call voting a "sacred right," and it is one of the most important parts of our political system, a part that goes back to our earliest days as a nation.

When he left the Constitutional Convention in 1787, Ben Franklin is said to have told a local citizen that the founders had given the nation a Republic, if we could keep it.

By that, Franklin meant that as Americans it is our duty to keep up on what is going on politically, that we should arrive at an informed, logical position about what political ideas we support, and finally that we should be sure and vote our conscience on Election Day.

Many today complain about politicians not listening to the public. Of course, if we do not bother to vote our voice will not be heard by our elected officials in the first place. Our elected representatives are guided by what we say particularly when we vote. And if we don't vote we are telling our politicians that we don't care what they do and that is a dangerous thing to tell them.

*If you want change, your first duty is to vote your Conscience.*

## ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE?

When was the last time you voted? Have you updated your voter registration file at the Supervisor of Election's Office lately?

Go to this link to verify that you are registered.

[http://www.ocfelections.com/voter\\_lookup/voterlookup.aspx](http://www.ocfelections.com/voter_lookup/voterlookup.aspx)

You can verify your voting precinct by going to the link below.

[http://www.ocfelections.com/voter\\_lookup/FindPollingPlace.aspx](http://www.ocfelections.com/voter_lookup/FindPollingPlace.aspx)

**“Voting is not a privilege but a right that is essential for a healthy, well-functioning democracy.” - Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)**

***Voting is YOUR voice. It is your right and it must be enacted.***

***Voting is the only path toward change and works to reverse Florida's long history of denying, limiting, and suppressing Voting Rights for Black Americans.***

### **Voter's Bill of Rights**

Each registered voter in Florida has the right to:

- Vote and have their vote accurately counted
- Cast a vote if they are in line at the time polls close
- Ask for and receive assistance in voting
- Receive up to two replacement ballots if you make a mistake prior to the ballot being cast
- An explanation if their registration or identity is in question
- Cast a provisional ballot if their registration or identity is in question
- Written instruction to use when voting and, upon request, oral instruction in voting from electronic offices
- Vote free from coercion or intimidation by election officers or any other person
- Vote on a voting system that is in working condition and will allow votes to be accurately cast.



## **CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

*Public Safety, Use of Force; Restoration of Civil Rights, Employment (Ban the box) ; End Cash Bail; Law Enforcement excessive use of force; Alternatives to incarceration; Citizen Review Boards; Restructuring of Law Enforcement Agencies; Youth being charged as adults; Sentencing Guidelines. There are three basic parts of Criminal Justice: Law Enforcement, Courts, and Corrections.*

### **ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

Reforming law enforcement as it relates targeting minorities. We need to reduce charging youth as adults and sending them to adult prisons. We must mental illness and law enforcement. Housing is an issue because a person with a felony conviction cannot live in certain housing conditions.

### **OVERSIGHT**

**Police:** Responsible for safety and protection of property.

**Courts:** There are two distinct court systems, the state and federal. Courts are to interpret and apply the law.

**Citizen Review Boards:** Review complaints and making recommendations as to disciplinary action to be addressed.

### **ELECTED OFFICES**

**President and U.S. Congress:** Appoints and confirm the Secretary of the Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, Director for the Department of Justice and Federal Judges.

**Governor:** Appoints Judges and Law Enforcement and works with the state legislature to make laws that govern law enforcement.

**State Senator and House Representative:** Make up the State Legislature which consider matters brought forth by the governor or introduced by its members to create legislation the becomes law. The legislature also approves a state's budget and initiates tax legislation.

**Mayor:** Is responsible for service delivery for the citizens in the city, the head of the county government and chief executive officer. Pre- side at Council Meetings and has veto power; appoint citizens to serve on Advisory Boards, prepares an annual budget and remove department heads.

**State Attorneys:** Are the voice of the people in the courtrooms, enforcing the law and representing the duly elected government at all levels.

**Public Defender:** A lawyer appointed to represent people who cannot afford to hire an attorney to represent them.

## **HOUSING**

*Access to adequate housing has long been viewed as a basic human right and is considered to be an integral factor for the enjoyment of other economic, social and cultural rights.*

### **ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

There is a shortage of affordable homes especially, for low income families. Low income families are paying most of their income in rent. Housing loans are given discriminately, disparity in interest rates. Homeownership for African Americans and people of color often face disparity treatment in financing. Many code violations for rental units in the African American and Latino communities.

### **OVERSIGHT**

**Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD):** HUD is to provide housing and community development assistance and to make sure everyone has access to fair and equal housing.

**Housing Authority:** Operates as a rental agency. Make initial determinations of eligibility of families and must re-determine family income and family composition annually in order to calculate family rent. Make sure that all units meet code specifications.

**Home Owners' Association (HOA):** Responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of common areas while working to preserve the value of properties in the area or building.

### **ELECTED OFFICES**

**President and U.S. Congress:** *appoints and confirm the Secretary of HUD.*

**Governor:** Appoints the Director of Housing and works with the state legislature to make laws governing housing and approves the budget.

**State Senator and House Representative:** Make up the State Legislature which consider matters brought forth by the governor or introduced by its members to create legislation the becomes law. The legislature also approves a state's budget and initiates tax legislation.

**Mayor:** Is responsible for service delivery for the citizens in the city, the head of the county government and chief executive officer. Pre- side at Council Meetings and has veto power; appoint citizens to serve on Advisory Boards, prepares an annual budget and remove department heads.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CLIMATE CHANGE

*“Race is the number one predictor of environmental injustice, given that an African American family making \$50,000 a year is more likely to live next to a toxic facility than a White American family making \$15,000 a year.” Jacqueline Patterson, Director of the NAACP’s Environmental and Climate Justice Program*

### ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Seek to address environmental inequities at the local level and advocate for environmental justice. Energy Efficiency and Investment on Renewable Energy; Pollution; Food Desserts.

### OVERSIGHT

**Department of Energy:** *Responsible for advancing the energy, environmental and nuclear security of the United States.*

**Environmental Protection Agency:** *To protect human health and the environment, to make sure that Americans have clean air, land, and water. Nationally, to reduce environmental risk.*

**Environmental Health Services:** *Provides resources on food safety. Keeping water safe and improving the performance of environmental health services.*

**State Legislature:** *Regulate the environment and climate change through laws, provide funding, and at times oversee standards, and procedures*

**County Government:** *Oversee funds and policies for the county*

### ELECTED OFFICES

**President and U.S. Congress:** *appoints and confirm the Secretary of Energy and votes for regulations and funding related to energy, environment and nuclear weapons programs.*

**Governor:** *appoints the Secretary of State EPA and works with the state legislature on laws and funding.*

**State Senator and House Representative:** *Make up the State Legislature which consider matters brought forth by the governor or introduced by its members to create legislation the becomes law. The legislature also approves a state’s budget and initiates tax legislation.*

**Mayor:** *Is responsible for service delivery for the citizens in the city, the head of the county government and chief executive officer. Pre-side at Council Meetings and has veto power; appoint citizens to serve on Advisory Boards, prepares an annual budget and remove department heads.*

## EDUCATION

The Florida constitution says: *“The education of children is a fundamental value of the people of the State of Florida. It is, therefore, a paramount duty of the state to make adequate provision for the education of all children residing within its borders. Adequate provision shall be made by law for a uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high-quality system of free public schools that allows students to obtain a high-quality education...”*

### ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Returning to school during COVID 19. More mental health programs/ services in schools. Less resource officers and police officers in schools. Boost teacher pay and incentives

### OVERSIGHT

**Federal Department of Education:** *Funding (about 8%), emergency support for education when critical national needs arise.*

**State Board of Education:** *Keeps data and information on all schools in Florida while governing public education and managing funding and testing for local educational agencies*

**State Legislature:** *Regulate schools and homeschooling through laws, provide funding, and at times oversee standards, and procedures*

**County Government:** *Oversee funds and policies for the county*

**Local School Boards:** *Operate, control and supervise all free public schools within their district and determine the rate of taxes within their limits*

### ELECTED OFFICES INVOLVED

**President and U.S. Congress:** *Appoints and confirm the Secretary of Education and approves laws and signs the budget.*

**Governor:** *appoints the Commissioner of Education and works with the state legislature to make laws and approve the budget*

**State Senator and House Representative:** *Make up the State Legislature which consider matters brought forth by the governor or introduced by its members to create legislation the becomes law. The legislature also approves a state’s budget and initiates tax legislation.*

**Local School Board Members:** *Sets policy, the vision, and goals for the School District, and holds the district accountable for results.*