

2024 NONPARTISAN VOTER GUIDE

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF FLORIDA

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A NOTE FROM THE League of Women Voters of Florida

BY DEBBIE CHANDLER, ESQ. & CECILE M. SCOON, ESQ.,
League of Women Voters of Florida Co-Presidents

The League of Women Voters of Florida remains steadfast in our mission to empower voters and defend democracy throughout the Sunshine State. The League's commitment to nonpartisanship remains unwavering—we do not endorse or oppose candidates or political parties. For more than 100 years, the League has fought to protect the rights of voters and expand access for those who've been left out. **It is with these convictions that we present our 2024 Nonpartisan Florida Voter Guide, a critical resource for all Floridians as they navigate the complexities of the 2024 election.** This guide provides essential information on statewide candidates, constitutional amendments and significant changes in our state's voting laws that could impact your ability to cast a ballot.

The threats to our democracy have intensified since the 2020 election. In response to unfounded claims of voter fraud since the last presidential election, Florida has enacted several restrictive measures designed to make voting more difficult since the last presidential election. These changes include:

- **Restricted Secure Ballot Intake Stations (Drop Boxes):** Drop boxes have been renamed to "secure ballot intake stations". There are no longer secure ballot intake stations outside all Supervisor of Elections (SOE) offices and early voting sites that were once available to use 24/7. Most secure bal-

lot intake stations are inside SOE and early voting sites, although some counties have them outside. Most voters will need to go inside the SOE's office, during regular business hours, or visit an early voting site to use the secure ballot intake stations. The hours may vary by county, please check your local SOE's website to get hours of availability and locations. *This change disproportionately affects those who are disabled, work long hours, shift work, and may not have the flexibility to drop off their ballots when the secure ballot intake stations drop boxes are accessible. The League urges voters to plan ahead and ensure their ballots are submitted on time or early.*

- **Limits on Ballot Collection:** Volunteers can no longer collect more than two completed vote-by-mail ballots per election, unless they are from immediate family members. This rule creates significant barriers for elderly and disabled voters who may rely on community assistance to mail their ballots or deliver their ballots to secure drop boxes at early voting locations or to the Supervisor of Elections offices. *Voters affected by this change should explore alternative ways to ensure their ballots are submitted safely and on time.*

- **Voter Suppression and Intimidation:** In this heightened political climate, voter suppression and intimidation are real threats. *If you encounter any form of harassment or obstruction while voting, we encourage you to call*

1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683) immediately. Your right to vote must not be infringed. You may also see Voter Protection volunteers wearing t-shirts or pins that identify them. They can also help you. When you call the hotline you will be routed to trained volunteers and attorneys will be available to assist.

- **Voting Rights for Returning Citizens:** Despite the passage of a constitutional amendment to restore felons voting rights in 2018, many returning citizens (those with felony convictions) still face hurdles in exercising their right to vote. *If you or someone you know is unsure of their voting status due to a past conviction, please contact our helpline at 407-710-5496 or email canivote@lwvfl.org. We will connect you with pro bono legal assistance to ensure your rights are protected and assist getting your voting rights restored.*

The League of Women Voters of Florida urges every eligible voter to check their registration status at VOTE411.org. This free, award-winning site provides personalized election information, including details on how to ensure your voting record is up to date. **In 2024, more than ever, your voice matters. Our democracy is under threat, and your vote is one of the most powerful tools we have to defend it. Join us in our mission to educate, activate, and motivate citizens to vote across Florida. Democracy belongs to us all, and together, we can safeguard it for future generations.**

Getting to Know The Candidates: U.S. Senator

Rick Scott (R)

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE:
rickscott.com

What reforms to the US immigration system do you support? Why?

Candidate declined to respond by time of printing; check VOTE411.org for updates.

Do you believe climate change is a financial threat to the economy of the nation? Why or why not?

Candidate declined to respond by time of printing; check VOTE411.org for updates.

Name your top two legislative priorities for this upcoming term.

Candidate declined to respond by time of printing; check VOTE411.org for updates.

Do you support passage of federal voting rights legislation to provide national standards for voter registration and access to the ballot? Why or why not?

Candidate declined to respond by time of printing; check VOTE411.org for updates.



Do you support passage of a federal law codifying access to contraception?

Candidate declined to respond by time of printing; check VOTE411.org for updates.

Do you support or oppose passage of a federal law codifying access to abortion?

Candidate declined to respond by time of printing; check VOTE411.org for updates.

EXPLAIN: Do you support or oppose passage of a federal law codifying access to abortion?

Candidate declined to respond by time of printing; check VOTE411.org for updates.

To read third party and independent candidates responses, please visit VOTE411.org

The League of Women Voters of Florida is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public.

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell (D)

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE:
debbieforflorida.com

What reforms to the US immigration system do you support? Why?

We have to address the crisis at our borders. That's why, in the Senate, I would have supported the bipartisan border compromise. We have to fund border security to protect our national interests and to ensure the safety of our communities. But we also need comprehensive immigration reform that preserves legal pathways to citizenship for people like me who came here under the Reagan Administration. I'd also like to see our leaders in Congress come together to fight authoritarianism and stop organized crime in Latin America. To address the crisis at the border, we have to send funding to our border while also taking action to stop people from feeling like they need to flee their home countries.

Do you believe climate change is a financial threat to the economy of the nation? Why or why not?

Absolutely. Just look at the effects the climate crisis has had on Floridians. The climate crisis has raised our property insurance rates and



hurt our fisheries and our oyster harvesters. I pay attention to what I'm hearing from Florida voters, and they're talking to me about the insurance and affordability crisis our state is facing. They're talking to me about climate change and how these extreme weather events are affecting our communities and our economies. During my time serving in Congress, I received a 100% score from the League of Conservation Voters. They have already endorsed me for Senate, and I am committed to taking steps to stop climate change and protect our environment and economy.

Name your top two legislative priorities for this upcoming term.

I am running for Senate to lower costs for Florida families, and to fight to protect our fundamental freedoms like protecting

access to abortion. The government has no right to interfere and make decisions about women's health care. We have to stop Rick Scott from spearheading and voting for yet another national abortion ban in the Senate. As Senator, I would support legislation to lower prescription drug costs and cap insulin costs. I would join proposals to cut the cost of property insurance by 25%. In my affordability plan, I also talk about supporting bills like the End Hedge Fund Control of American Homes act, which would stop hedge funds from driving up the prices of homes and edging out Floridian homebuyers.

Do you support passage of federal voting rights legislation to provide national standards for voter registration and access to the ballot? Why or why not?

In Congress, I voted for advancing the Voting Rights Act by restoring preclearance requirements in areas with a history of voting rights violations. I was also proud to vote for the For the People Act in Congress which would have ended partisan gerrymandering and restored voting rights for all Americans with prior

felony convictions. We need federal legislation to ensure access to polls and fair maps, and as your Senator this will be a top priority for me. In the Senate, I'll fight to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights Act – legislation that should have been passed long ago.

Do you support passage of a federal law codifying access to contraception?

Strongly support

Do you support or oppose passage of a federal law codifying access to abortion?

Strongly support

EXPLAIN: Do you support or oppose passage of a federal law codifying access to abortion?

I know that the decision to have an abortion is a decision that must be made between a woman, her family, and her doctor – not extremist politicians who want to criminalize health care providers. As a mother to two daughters, I am committed to fighting to protect every woman's right to make the decision that is best for them, and I will proudly support passage of a federal law codifying access to abortion, including by pausing the filibuster if necessary.



Voter Registration

To vote in an election, you must have been a registered voter in Florida at least 29 days before that election.

- **Deadline to register for the November 5, 2024 General Election is October 7, 2024**

To register as a voter, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Be a legal resident of Florida.
- Be a legal resident of the county in which you seek to be registered.
- Be at least 16 years old to preregister or at least 18 years old to register and vote.
- Not be a person who has been adjudicated mentally incapacitated with respect to voting in Florida or any other state without having your right to vote restored.
- Not be a person convicted of a felony without having your right to vote restored.

You can register to vote online at RegisterToVoteFlorida.org provided you have a valid FL driver license or FL identification card and know the last four digits of your social security number. Otherwise, a printed voter registration application can be obtained at your local Supervisor of Elections office or library.

Identification Assistance

Registering to vote and requesting a vote-by-mail ballot requires personal identification. If you do not have a valid FL identification card or FL driver license, there is an organization that can help you in both English or Spanish. Visit VoteRiders.org or call/text them at 1-866-ID-2-VOTE (1-866-432-8683).

Updates or Changes to Voter Registration

- You may change your address on file with your county's supervisor of elections at any time, including on Election Day.
- It's recommended that you update your signature on file periodically. You may do this by submitting an updated voter registration form to the Supervisor of Elections office.

Ways to Vote

1. In-person during Early Voting

- You may vote at any early voting location in your county.
- Early voting dates vary by county so consult your county's Supervisor of Elections (SOE) website for the latest information on days, hours and locations. Find your SOE at dos.elections.myflorida.com/supervisors

2. In-person on Election Day

- On election day, you may vote only at your assigned polling location.
- Your polling place on election day is likely to be different from locations available during the early voting period. Voting hours on election day are strictly 7:00am – 7:00pm. You are allowed to vote as long as you are in line by 7:00pm.
- *If you encounter any form of harassment or obstruction while voting, we encourage you to call 1-866-OUR-VOTE (1-866-687-8683) immediately. Your right to vote must not be infringed.*

Forms of identification

When voting in person during early voting or on election day, you will be asked for identification. There are 12 accepted forms of identification for FL voters. The ideal identification includes your photo and signature, such as a valid FL driver license or FL identification card. These items are not used to check your address but only to confirm your identity.

3. Vote-by-Mail

- Deadline to request that a vote-by-mail ballot be mailed to you is 12 days before the election:
 - **Deadline to make a request for the November 5, 2024 General Election is October 24, 2024 at 5pm.**
- You can request a vote-by-mail ballot online at your county's Supervisor of Elections website. You can also request by calling the elections office or by sub-

mitting a written request. If the latter, you must provide your FL identification or FL driver license number, or the last four digits of your social security number in your request. To avoid delays in processing your written request, we recommend that you submit both sets of information.

- You can request and pick up a vote-by-mail ballot during early voting days or on election day at your county's Supervisor of Elections office by providing an emergency affidavit.

- You can return a vote-by-mail ballot using the U.S. Postal Service, taking into consideration that it must be received (not postmarked) by the elections office no later than by 7:00pm on Election Day for your vote to be counted. Late arriving ballots are not allowed to be counted.

- Your vote-by-mail ballot can be returned to a secure ballot intake station located at early voting sites during the early voting period or directly to your county's Supervisor of Elections office by 7:00 p.m. on Election Day.

- On Election Day, you may return your vote-by-mail ballot only to the elections office, or you may surrender your ballot at your assigned polling location for a new ballot and vote in person.

- Some Vote-by-Mail tips:

- *Only one ballot can be returned in each ballot mailing envelope. If two or more ballots are included in the same envelope, neither ballot will be counted and you will be required to complete a Vote-by-Mail Ballot Cure Affidavit in order to have your vote counted.*

- If you receive a vote-by-mail ballot but decide to vote in person, you can take your mail ballot with you, surrender it to a poll worker, and vote a regular ballot. If you do not bring your mail ballot, you will still be allowed to vote in person, once it has been determined that the mail ballot was not already received by the elections office. If this cannot be determined, you may vote with a provisional ballot.

Dangers of Mis- and Disinformation in 2024

As we head into the 2024 election, mis- and disinformation are more prevalent than ever, threatening to undermine our democracy and the value of every person's voice. With the rise of social media and instant communication, false information can spread rapidly, often coming from our own friends and family. Learning to recognize and combat these threats is crucial to ensuring a fair and informed electoral process.

WHAT IS MIS- AND DISINFORMATION?

Misinformation: Sharing false information without the intent to harm.

Example: Your sister says a trusted friend told her that a local ballot measure will raise taxes.

Disinformation: Spreading false information with the intent to deceive.

Example: Your sister lies to you about a local ballot measure, telling you that it will raise taxes, because she knows that's the only way you won't support it.

While disinformation may seem worse, misinformation can be just as damaging. Remember the game "telephone"? Every day, we inadvertently play this game in conversations and online, often distorting important political information.

In 2024, we face a particularly challenging election landscape. With numerous high-stakes races across the country, political tensions are at an all-time high. This environment makes it easy for misinformation and disinformation to thrive, often spreading through personal networks. Information shared by friends and family is often trusted more than content from anonymous online sources, making it more likely for misinformation to be accepted and further spread. Social media algorithms often create echo chambers, where we are exposed to information that aligns with our existing beliefs. This can make it harder to recognize false information, especially when it comes from people we know and trust. Mis- and disinformation can be emotionally charged, designed to provoke strong reactions. When this information comes from close contacts, it can feel more personal and impactful.

HOW CAN YOU SPOT MIS- AND DISINFORMATION?

We're all susceptible, but these steps can help you spot false information before it spreads:

- **Research the Source:** Who is sharing this information? If it's online, does the website seem reputable, or does it have known political affiliations? If it's in person, is this individual known for exaggeration, or do they have relevant expertise?

- **Check the Date:** Don't get incensed over old articles that no longer apply. Always check the publication date.

- **Cross-Check:** Are reliable news sources reporting the same information? If not, it's unlikely your smaller source has a scoop others don't.

- **Read Past the Headline:** Headlines can be misleading. Make sure to read the entire article for context.

- **Question Emotionally Charged Content:** Is the person or outlet using emotionally manipulative language to provoke a reaction? That's a red flag. Reliable sources let facts drive the narrative, not emotions. Be aware of loaded language.

HOW TO STOP MIS- AND DISINFORMATION

Once you've identified false information, follow these steps to prevent its spread:

- **Don't Engage:** It might be tempting to comment on an inaccurate post, but engagement only increases its visibility. Avoid liking, clicking, sharing, or commenting on such content.

- **Share Correct Information:** For every piece of misinformation you encounter, try to share accurate information. Redirect the conversation towards facts.

- **Report When Needed:** If you see disinformation online, report it to ReportDisinfo.org. You can also report misleading social media posts directly to the platforms.

By recognizing and combating mis- and disinformation, we can ensure that our democracy remains strong and that every person's voice is heard accurately and fairly.

How Amendments Get on the Ballot in Florida

In November 2024, six proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution will be on every ballot. Amendments to the Florida Constitution need 60% of the vote for an amendment to pass. These amendments are described below and got on the ballot through one of the following methods:

1 A joint resolution of the Florida Legislature: This is the only authorized method by which the legislature may propose amendments to the State Constitution. The resolution must pass each house by a three-fifths vote of the membership. Amendments 1, 2, 5 & 6 were placed on the 2024 ballot by a joint resolution of the Florida legislature.

2 A citizens' initiative: This process requires a specific number of petitions signed by registered Florida voters before the proposed amendment can appear on the ballot. Per the Florida Constitution, the number of signatures required is eight percent of the voters who cast ballots in the last presidential election. In addition, the signatures must also come from voters in at least one-half of the congressional districts of the state. Amendments 3 & 4 were placed on the 2024 ballot by citizens' initiatives.

3 A proposal from the Constitution Revision Commission (CRC): The CRC convenes once every 20 years to examine the Florida Constitution and propose changes. The CRC has authority to propose to voters a revision of all or any part of the Florida Constitution. No amendments were placed on the 2024 ballot by the CRC.

4 A proposal from the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission: The 22-appointed-member commission convenes once every 20 years (alternate 10 year intervals from the CRC) to examine the state's budget and expenditure processes and revenue needs. No amendments were placed on the 2024 ballot by the Taxation and Budget Reform Commission.

5 By Constitutional Convention: A state constitutional convention is a gathering of elected delegates who propose revisions and amendments to a state constitution. In Florida, there have been six conventions since 1838. None have occurred since the current constitution was ratified in 1968. No amendments were placed on the 2024 ballot by a Constitutional convention.



AMENDMENTS

FLORIDA AMENDMENT 1 PARTISAN ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARDS

Ballot Language:

Proposing amendments to the State Constitution to require members of a district school board to be elected in a partisan election rather than a nonpartisan election and to specify that the amendment only applies to elections held on or after the November 2026 general election. However, partisan primary elections may occur before the 2026 general election for purposes of nominating political party candidates to that office for placement on the 2026 general election ballot.

Synopsis:

School board elections in Florida are currently non-partisan. That means all registered voters, no matter their party affiliation, can currently vote for the school board candidate of their choice in the primary and the general elections. In addition, candidates for school board races, like candidates for all nonpartisan offices, are currently prohibited from campaigning based on party affiliation.

Florida had partisan school board elections until 1998 when voters approved Amendment 11 with 64% of the vote. Amendment 11 prohibited partisan primaries and party labels in school board elections. Amendment 11 was referred to the ballot by the Florida Constitution Revision Commission. Florida is one of 41 states with state laws providing for nonpartisan school board elections.

Proposed Amendment 1 was referred to the ballot by a majority vote in the 2023 Legislature. (Senate: 29 Yes to 11 No; House: 79 Yes to 34 No).

Proposed Amendment 1 would require members of district school boards to be elected in partisan elec-

tions, with their political party designated on the ballot.

Since Florida is a "closed" primary state, only voters registered with a political party can vote for candidates in their party's primary election. Voters registered as No Party Affiliation (NPA) cannot, by law, vote in any partisan primary election. Other local offices such as county commissioners, supervisor of elections, state attorneys and public defenders are currently partisan races, while judges and many city councils are nonpartisan races. Closed partisan primaries exclude nearly 30% of registered voters who are classified as NPAs, nearly 4 million voters.

Opponents to this amendment, including Florida Tax Watch and the League of Women Voters of Florida, argue that partisan school board races would exclude NPAs from voting in primaries and increase political polarization. Schools should not be politicized and everyone should be welcome at schools regardless of party affiliation.

Supporters of the amendment, including the majority of the Florida Legislature, state that since public education has become polarized through cultural issues reflected in new legislation that school board elections may have already become partisan. Additionally, a candidate's party affiliation may predict how they will vote on controversial school board issues.

A YES VOTE WOULD...: Change School Board elections to partisan elections beginning in 2026, requiring the candidate's political party to be designated on the ballot and triggering closed primary elections.

A NO VOTE WOULD...: Leave School Board elections as nonpartisan elections with no closed primaries, allowing all voters to vote for any candidate.

FLORIDA AMENDMENT 2 RIGHT TO FISH AND HUNT

Ballot Language:

Proposing an amendment to the State Constitution to preserve forever fishing and hunting, including by the use of traditional methods, as a public right and preferred means of responsibly managing and controlling fish and wildlife. Specifies that the amendment does not limit the authority granted to the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission under Section 9 of Article IV of the State Constitution.

Synopsis:

The right to hunt and fish is presently in the Florida Statutes. In 2002, Florida Statute Title XXVIII, Chapter 372 recognized that "hunting, fishing, and the taking of game are a valued part of the cultural heritage of Florida, and as such, should be preserved for Floridians".

The proposed Amendment 2 contains two provisions. One would provide and preserve forever a state constitutional right to hunt and fish. The second would declare that hunting and fishing are the preferred means of "responsibly managing and controlling fish and wildlife."

This amendment was referred to the ballot by a majority vote of the 2023 Legislature. (Senate: 38 Yes to 1 No; House: 116 Yes to 0 No)

As of 2023, a total of 23 states had constitutional provisions that protected the right to hunt and fish. However, only 11 of these 23 states specify in their constitutions that hunting and fishing shall be the preferred means of managing and controlling wildlife and fish.

Supporters of this amendment, including American Sportfishing Association, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, Bonefish & Tarpon Trust, Coastal Conservation Association, Congressional Sportsman Foundation, Delta Waterfowl, Everglades Coordinating Council, Florida Airboat Association, Florida

Guides Association, Florida Sportsman's Conservation Association, Future Hunting in Florida, International Order of T. Roosevelt, National Deer Association, National Shooting Sports Foundation, and Safari Club International, state the economic value of fishing and hunting provides Florida with approximately \$15 billion annually and that enshrining the right in the constitutions will ensure that there are no future bans on fishing and hunting.

Opponents, including Sierra Club Florida, Humane Society of the United States, Humane Wildlife Consulting of South Florida, American Ecosystems, Inc., Animal Wellness Action, Bear Defenders, Center for a Humane Economy, Florida Bar Animal Law Section, Humane Society of the US, League of Humane Voters of Florida, One Protest, Paws and Recreation, Rutgers New Jersey Medical School, Save-a-Turtle.org, Speak Up for Wildlife, World Animal Protection, are concerned that science-based methods of managing and controlling wildlife and fish will become secondary to hunting and fishing. The phrase "traditional methods" could be interpreted as a return to currently prohibited methods of hunting and fishing, such as steel traps, spearfishing and gill nets. They also say, if we have a statute protecting the right to hunt and fish already, why does this need to be placed in the Constitution now? Opponents warn of potential interference with private property rights by trespassing hunters.

A YES VOTE WOULD...: Establish a constitutional right to hunt and fish in Florida and the preferred means of responsibly managing and controlling fish and wildlife.

A NO VOTE WOULD...: Not establish a constitutional right to hunt and fish, but the 2002 Florida statute preserving the right to hunt and fish would remain in place.

AMENDMENTS

FLORIDA AMENDMENT 3 ADULT PERSONAL USE OF MARIJUANA

Ballot Language:

Allows adults 21 years or older to possess, purchase, or use marijuana products and marijuana accessories for non-medical personal consumption by smoking, ingestion, or otherwise; allows Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers, and other state licensed entities, to acquire, cultivate, process, manufacture, sell, and distribute such products and accessories. Applies to Florida law; does not change, or immunize violations of, federal law. Establishes possession limits for personal use. Allows consistent legislation. Defines terms. Provides effective date.

Synopsis:

Presently, non-medical possession and use of marijuana is illegal under state and federal law and violators of that law are subject to criminal prosecution depending upon the amount of marijuana they possess or use.

Proposed Amendment 3 would legalize recreational marijuana for adults 21 years old and older. Individuals would be allowed to possess up to three (3) ounces of marijuana (about 85 grams), with up to five (5) grams in the form of concentrate. Existing medical marijuana treatment centers would be authorized under the initiative to sell marijuana to adults for personal use. The State Legislature could modify state law to permit the licensing of entities other than existing medical marijuana treatment centers to cultivate and sell marijuana products.

The amendment's financial impact primarily comes from expected sales tax collections. If the amendment passes, sales of non-medical marijuana would be subject to sales tax. Based on other states' experiences, expected retail sales of non-medical marijuana would generate between \$195.6 and \$431.3 million annually in state and local sales tax revenues once the retail market is fully operational. If Florida adds an excise tax, like some other states that have legalized recreational marijuana, the amount of new revenue could more than double. A new regulatory structure will be needed, but regulatory costs estimated to be \$11.4

million after the first year, will probably be offset by regulatory fee income.

This amendment was placed on the ballot through a citizen's initiative. Currently, 24 states have legalized recreational marijuana. This amendment would not bar additional legislation from restricting where people can smoke, such as legislation that restricts people from smoking tobacco and vaping on state beaches. Additionally, marijuana is still illegal at the Federal level, meaning it is still not allowed on Federal land or college campuses that receive federal funding.

Supporters, including Smart & Safe Florida, Trulieve, Howard Bellamy and David Bellamy, say that tax revenue from the legal cannabis industry for federal and state governments are projected to reach over \$4 billion in 2025, and there is no evidence that legalizing marijuana for medical or recreational use at the state level, as 37 states have already done, has boosted underage consumption from the regulated marketplace.

Opponents, including Floridians Against Recreational Marijuana, Drug Free America, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida Attorney General, Ashley Moody, and the Florida Republican Party, say the proposed amendment is misleading and marijuana is illegal under federal law and will remain illegal even if proposed Amendment 3 passes. Additionally, some fear usage may lead to use of more serious addictive illegal drugs.

A YES VOTE WOULD...: Legalize recreational marijuana use in Florida by adults 21 years old and older, allowing individuals to possess up to three ounces of marijuana and authorizing existing Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers to acquire, cultivate, process, manufacture, sell, and distribute marijuana products and accessories. Allow the Florida Legislature to enact additional legislation restricting where people can smoke and to license other entities to acquire, cultivate, process, manufacture, sell, and distribute marijuana products and accessories.

A NO VOTE WOULD...: Not legalize marijuana for adult recreational use in Florida and maintain the current regulations for medical use.

FLORIDA AMENDMENT 4 AMENDMENT TO LIMIT GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE WITH ABORTION

Ballot Language:

No law shall prohibit, penalize, delay, or restrict abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider. This amendment does not change the Legislature's constitutional authority to require notification to a parent or guardian before a minor has an abortion.

Synopsis:

The following is the history of abortion regulations in Florida:

In 2022, in a 5-4 vote, the Supreme Court of the United States found there was no federal constitutional right to abortion and overruled *Roe v. Wade* (1973). It was left to the states to regulate abortion.

Before 2022, abortions were legal in Florida up to the federal limits of *Roe*. In 2004, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment requiring parental notification for minors seeking abortions. In 2012, voters rejected an amendment limiting public funds for abortion. In 2022, the Florida legislature passed a bill which created a ban on most abortions after 15 weeks. And in 2023, the Florida legislature passed a second bill, to ban abortion after six weeks (limited exceptions for the life of the woman, rape, or incest). The six-week ban took effect on May 1, 2024.

Proposed Amendment 4 states that the government cannot interfere with a woman's decision to have an abortion up to viability (see definition below). After viability, if abortion is necessary to protect the woman's health, that decision is between the woman and her medical care provider.

This amendment does not mandate unlimited abortion in Florida. The amendment does not override parental notification for an abortion in Florida. This amendment allows abortion before fetal viability (see definition below) or when necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider.

In the State of Florida, viability is defined by Florida Statute Title XXIX - Public Health, Chapter 390, 390.011. "Viability" means the stage of fetal development when the life of a fetus is sustainable outside the womb through standard medical measures. During all of 2021 and the 1st half of 2022, under *Roe v. Wade*, the Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration reported that 0% of abortions were performed in the 3rd trimester (beginning of 24th week).

Proposed Amendment 4 was placed on the ballot through a citizen's initiative. Since 2022, seven U. S. States have had an abortion-related Amendment on the ballot. Four of those amendments were written to create a constitutional right to abortion and all four amendments passed. Three of the proposed amendments were written to prohibit abortion and all three were defeated.

Supporters, including Floridians Protecting Freedom, the ACLU of Florida, Planned Parenthood, Florida Women's Freedom Coalition, Florida Rising, SEIU 1199 Florida, Women's Voices of Southwest Florida, Florida Democratic Party and the League of Women Voters of Florida, say "All Floridians deserve the freedom to make personal medical decisions, free of government intrusion."

Opponents, including the Republican Party of Florida, Florida Voters Against Extremism, the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, Florida Family Policy Council, Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, Florida Family Action, say the amendment is too vague and will lead to an unregulated abortion industry.

A YES VOTE WOULD...: Prevent any law from prohibiting, penalizing, delaying, or restricting abortion before viability or when necessary to protect the patient's health, as determined by the patient's healthcare provider.

A NO VOTE WOULD...: Not provide a constitutional right to abortion before viability and leave Florida's current 6-week abortion ban in place.

AMENDMENTS

FLORIDA AMENDMENT 5 ANNUAL ADJUSTMENTS TO THE VALUE OF CERTAIN HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS

Ballot Language:

Proposing an amendment to the State Constitution to require an annual adjustment for inflation to the value of current or future homestead exemptions that apply solely to levies other than school district levies and for which every person who has legal or equitable title to real estate and maintains thereon the permanent residence of the owner, or another person legally or naturally dependent upon the owner is eligible. This amendment takes effect January 1, 2025.

Synopsis:

Property taxes (millage rates) are set by counties, school districts, cities, and special districts. Homes in Florida are assessed at just value or market value minus the homestead exemption. The homestead exemption reduces the taxable value of a property. A primary residence is eligible for a \$25,000 homestead exemption from all property taxes. For homestead's value between \$50,000 and \$75,000, another \$25,000 homestead exemption is applied, which exempts that amount from all property taxes, except school district taxes.

This amendment would apply an annual inflation adjustment for the property tax exemption applied to the value of the homestead between \$50,000 and \$75,000. The adjustment would be made every year on January 1 (beginning 2025) based on the percent change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) reported by the U.S.

Department of Labor. The adjustment would occur only if the CPI increases. There is no adjustment if the CPI decreases.

This amendment would decrease the amount of tax dollars available for counties, cities and special districts budgets for programs and services. Although there would be no impact to school district taxes, the estimated impact on non-school local government property taxes in Fiscal Year 2025-26 (the first year of implementation) would be an approximate reduction of \$22.8 million in tax revenue, growing to an approximate reduction of \$111.8 million in 2028-29, assuming current tax rates.

This amendment was referred to the ballot by the 2024 Florida Legislature. (Senate: 25 Yes to 15 No; House: 86 Yes to 29 No)

Supporters, including the majority of the Florida Legislature, say the amendment could lead to more savings for property owners who apply for homestead property tax exemptions.

Opponents, including the Florida League of Cities, say the amendment would reduce revenue available to cities and counties by millions of dollars.

A YES VOTE WOULD...: Increase the homestead exemption amount each January 1, beginning 2025, if the Consumer Price Index increases, thereby reducing the amount of property taxes on primary residences and reducing the amount of tax dollars available for county, city and special district programs and services.

A NO VOTE WOULD...: Leave the current homestead exemption amount as is.

FLORIDA AMENDMENT 6 REPEAL OF PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FINANCING REQUIREMENT

Ballot Language:

Proposing the repeal of the provision in the State Constitution which requires public financing for campaigns of candidates for elective statewide office who agree to campaign spending limits.

Synopsis:

Presently, there is a right to public financing under Section 7 of Article VI of the Florida Constitution, which requires that the state provide a public campaign financing program for candidates for statewide office (Governor and Cabinet).

If proposed Amendment 6 passes, it would repeal the right to public financing for candidates running for state-wide offices. Implementing legislation would also come into effect to repeal the Florida Election Campaign Financing Act.

Florida enacted a public campaign financing law in 1986 and in 1998 Floridians added it to the state constitution with 64% of the vote. The constitution currently requires that candidates for governor, attorney general, chief financial officer, and commissioner of agriculture are able to access public campaign financing if they agree to spending limits. Presently, Florida law (106.31 F.S.), provides for public financing for campaigns and the stated "purpose of public campaign financing is to make candidates more responsive to the voters of the State of Florida and as insulated as possible from special interest groups." This statute would be repealed if this amendment passes.

More specifically, under the current public campaign financing program, candidates can access matching funds for contributions made by individual Florida residents who are contributing \$250 or less. To qualify for these matching funds, a candidate must:

- not be running unopposed
- agree to limit their total spending to \$2.00 for each registered Florida voter (for gubernatorial candidates) or \$1.00 for each registered Florida voter (for cabinet candidates)
- raise \$150,000 (for gubernatorial candidates) or \$100,000 (for cabinet candidates)
- limit loans or contributions from the candidate's personal funds to \$25,000 and limit contributions from political parties to \$250,000

- report campaign financing data to the division of elections and submit to a post-election financial audit.

In 2022, the spending limit for gubernatorial candidates receiving public campaign financing was \$30.29 million (\$2.00 per registered voter) and the limit for cabinet candidates was \$15.14 million (\$1.00 per registered voter). This amendment would remove these spending limits. Actual spending in 2022 for public campaign financing was \$13 million, roughly equivalent to 0.01% of the state's \$109.9 billion 2022-2023 budget.

This amendment was referred to the ballot by the 2024 Florida Legislature (Senate: 85 Yes to 15 No; House: 82 Yes to 29 No). In 2010, the Legislature referred this same amendment to the ballot and it received 52.49% of the vote, falling short of the 60% required for passage.

Opponents of this amendment, including Common Cause and the League of Women Voters of Florida, state that the matching fund program gives small-dollar donors a greater voice and encourages candidates to seek support from broad groups of voters. Further, if the program is repealed, wealthy donors and special interest groups would no longer be limited in the amounts they can contribute to these candidates. In addition, public financing enables candidates who are not wealthy or who have more limited access to financing to be able to run for office, leading to a more diverse pool of candidates.

Supporters of this amendment, including the majority of the Florida Legislature, state that this financing, which comes from Florida's general fund, could be used for other programs such as education, health care or housing.

A YES VOTE WOULD...: Repeal Section 7, Article VI from the Florida Constitution (passed in 1998) and repeal the Florida Election Campaign Financing Act, ending Florida's public campaign financing program and spending limits for publicly-funded candidates for Governor, Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Agriculture.

A NO VOTE WOULD...: Leave the current public campaign financing program, including spending limits for publicly-funded candidates, in place.

Supreme Court Justices Up for Retention

FL Supreme Court Justices decide death penalty appeals and appeals from decisions of the appellate courts; resolve conflicts among appellate courts; and oversee the administration of Florida's court system.

TERM: 6 YEARS SALARY: \$258,957

JUSTICE MEREDITH SASSO



On May 23, 2023, Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Justice Meredith L. Sasso to be the 93rd justice of the Supreme Court of Florida.

In August 2016, Justice Sasso joined the Office of the General Counsel to Governor Rick Scott, serving as Chief Deputy General Counsel. In this role, she represented the Governor in litigation before the Florida Supreme Court, the First District Court of Appeal, and state and federal trial courts. In 2019, Governor Rick Scott appointed her to the Fifth District Court of Appeal. Governor Ron DeSantis recommissioned her to the newly created Sixth District Court of Appeal on January 1, 2023, where she was elected by her colleagues to serve as its first Chief Judge.

She is a member of the American Enterprise Institute Leadership Network and the Federalist Society.

JUSTICE RENATHA FRANCIS



Justice Renatha Francis is the 92nd Justice of the Florida Supreme Court.

After graduating from law school in Jacksonville, Florida, she clerked at the First District Court of Appeal for 6 ½ years. She joined Shutts & Bowen, LLP, Of Counsel, in Miami-Dade, where she was a member of the Mass Litigation and Class Action Practice Group, representing large corporate clients.

On August 5, 2022, Governor Ron DeSantis appointed Justice Renatha Francis to the Florida Supreme Court. Previously, Governor DeSantis appointed her to the 15th Judicial Circuit Court in Palm Beach County, where she successfully retained her seat for a six-year term in 2022. Justice Francis also served on the Circuit and County Courts in the 11th Judicial Circuit of Miami-Dade from 2017-19 by appointment to each by then-Governor Rick Scott.

Retention Vote of Florida Supreme Court Justices and District Courts of Appeal Judges

The FAQ below is provided courtesy of The Florida Bar.

Why are appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices on the ballot this year?

Florida law requires Florida Supreme Court justices and appeals court judges to be placed on the ballot in nonpartisan elections every six years so voters can determine whether they should remain on their courts for another six-year term. These are called "merit retention" elections. This year, two Supreme Court justices and 23 appeals court judges will be on the ballot.

What are the differences between a county judge, a circuit judge, an appellate judge and a state Supreme Court Justice?

In Florida, both county and circuit judges are trial judges. County judges hear criminal misdemeanors – those are crimes that have possible sentences of up to one year in jail – and civil cases in which the amount in dispute is \$50,000 or less. Circuit judges deal with criminal felonies, domestic relations, juvenile matters, probate issues and civil cases in which the disputed amount is greater than \$50,000. Judges on the six District Courts of Appeal and the Florida Supreme Court review the decisions of county and circuit trial courts.

What do "Yes" and "No" votes mean?

A "Yes" vote means you want the judge or justice to stay in office. A "No" vote means you want the judge or justice to be removed from office. The majority of voters decide.

Do appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices have opponents?

No. Your vote determines whether each judge or justice should remain on the court. They are not running against opponents or each other. Merit retention elections are nonpartisan. In nonpartisan elections, candidates appear on the ballot without reference to any political party, (e.g. Democrat or Republican). Florida law requires judicial elections to be nonpartisan in order to preserve impartiality.

How do appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices get into office?

The governor appoints judges or justices from lists submitted by Judicial Nominating Commissions, which screen candidates and make recommendations based on their merits. Newly appointed judges go on the ballot for the first time within two years after appointment. If voters retain them, they then go on the ballot again every six years.

Can appeals court judges and Supreme Court justices state their views on issues that may come before them?

Canon 7 of the Code of Judicial Conduct forbids judges and justices from saying how they will decide future cases. Judges and justices must remain impartial and decide cases without regard to their personal views or beliefs.

Can I read the opinions of the judges and justices in cases they decided?

Yes. Records of judges' decisions can be found on the decision pages of the websites for the District Courts of Appeal and the Florida Supreme Court's websites.