
KNOW YOUR RIGHTS FLORIDA

Republicans in the Florida legislature overhauled election laws in 2011, modifying 80 separate sections of the state's election code. Here's what you need to know if you want to vote in Florida in 2012.

VOTING AT THE POLLS

At the polls, you will be asked to provide a valid photo ID with signature. The following photo IDs will be accepted:

- Florida driver's license
- Florida identification card issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
- United States passport
- Debit or credit card
- Military identification
- Student identification
- Retirement center identification
- Neighborhood association identification
- Public assistance identification

If your photo identification does not contain your signature, you will be asked to provide an additional ID that includes a signature.

If you do not have the proper identification, you will be provided with a provisional ballot. Your provisional ballot will count if the signature on the provisional ballot envelope matches the signature on your voter registration application.

WHAT HAS CHANGED

Restrictions on Voters Who Move

Previously, a registered voter who moved anywhere in the state could update his or her address at the polls and cast a regular ballot. Now, only voters who move within the same county or are active uniformed services personnel or a family member thereof can update his

or her address at the polls and cast a regular ballot. Registered voters who move outside of their county now must cast a provisional ballot.

In order to avoid delays at the polling place and to ensure your vote is counted, you should update your address before you go to vote. To do this, contact the supervisor of elections in the county of your new residence. You can make that change in person, by phone, by fax, by e-mail, or by other signed written notice (including a voter registration application), provided it includes your date of birth. If you submit your change to any other supervisor of elections in the state, to the Division of Elections, to the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, or any voter registration agency, you have to use a voter registration application.

Reductions to Early Voting

Legislation passed in 2011 significantly reduces early voting opportunities, restricting citizens' access to the voting booth. The new law:

- Shortens early voting dates. Previously, citizens could vote early up to 14 days before an election. Now, it's only eight days.
- Eliminates early voting on the Sunday before an election.
- Permits supervisors of elections to offer as little as 48 hours of early voting (as opposed to 96 hours under the previous law).

Restrictions on Voter Registration

New legislation passed in 2011 places restrictions on groups that conduct voter registration drives, like the League of Women Voters. As a result of the harsh new requirements, many groups already have suspended their registration activities in Florida. All voter registration organizations now must:

- Submit to onerous registration and reporting requirements, including mandating that all volunteers

complete documentation requirements before assisting in registration drives;

- Return completed registration applications on tight deadlines. All completed voter registration forms must be turned over to the state within 48 hours (rather than the previous 10 days); and
- Submit themselves to steep penalties. All organizations will be fined \$50 for any forms returned later than 48 hours, and could face fines up to \$1,000.

The new law also gives the Florida attorney general unprecedented authority to issue injunctions prohibiting organizations from conducting any voter registration activities.

Exceptions to the New Voting Law Changes

In five counties, any changes to Florida's voting procedures must be cleared by the Department of Justice or a federal court in the District of Columbia before they can go in effect. Those counties are Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough and Monroe. If you live in one of those counties, the new voting procedures are not applicable to you. Florida currently is seeking approval of the new voting procedures in the federal court. Should the court grant Florida's request, the new changes will take effect in those five counties.

For more information, please contact votingrights@afcio.org.

