



# Disability Rights

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## F L O R I D A

**Your Vote,  
Your Voice,  
Your Choice!**

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Advocacy. Equality. Dignity.

# Learning Objectives

After this session you will know:

- 3 reasons why voting is important
- Who can vote in Florida
- How to register to vote
- 3 different ways you can vote
- Important information to make sure your vote will be counted
- What to do if someone tries to keep you from voting

# What is voting?

- Voting is the process used to elect people for offices such as mayor, governor or President.
- Voting is also used to decide important questions (to create and/or change laws).
- Voting gives you a chance to be heard.

# Why is voting important?

- Voting is your **right and your responsibility** as a citizen of Florida and the United States.
- You can **help select** the officials who make laws, design programs and spend tax dollars.
- You can vote for people who agree with your ideas about health care, education, housing, jobs, transportation, other services and taxes.
- Your vote is **secret**. Nobody will know how you vote unless you choose to tell them.

# Why vote?

- You care about what happens in the community and in the world.
- You want to set a good example.
- You want your voice to be heard.
- If you do not vote, you are letting others decide for you, and you have to live with their decisions.
- **Every Opinion Counts. Your Vote Matters!**

# Who can vote in Florida?

You must be:

- A resident of Florida
- A citizen of the United States
- At least 18 years old on or before Election Day
- Registered to Vote

# Who may not vote in Florida?

- Non-residents of Florida
- Non-citizens of the United States
- Persons younger than 18 years old
- Persons who are not registered
- Persons who have had their right to vote taken away because of a mental disability or a felony conviction

# How to register to vote

- Fill out, sign and submit voter registration application.
- Make sure all required information and check boxes are filled out.
- Make sure the application is signed and dated.
- Submit the application more than 29 days before an election.

# Where to register to vote

- Supervisor of Elections Office
- Public Library
- Center for Independent Living
- Driver's License Office
- Vocational Rehabilitation Office
- APD and DCF Offices
- Print form online and mail to Supervisor of Elections Office

# What are the 3 ways to vote?

- At your **local polling** place on Election Day
  - You must vote at the correct location in order for your vote to be counted.
- At any **Early Voting** location in your county
  - Early voting begins 10 days and ends 3 days before Election Day.
- By **Absentee Ballot** (Vote by Mail)
  - Ballot must be returned to Supervisor of Elections by 7:00 pm on Election Day for your vote to count.

# Why consider early voting?

- Vote at any early voting location within your county
- More flexibility in choosing your voting time and location
- Shorter lines
- Sites are often more accessible than Election Day polling locations
- Poll workers experienced with assistance, accommodation and accessibility.

# Important info to make sure your vote counts

- Vote at the correct polling location
  - Voters at wrong location will vote by provisional ballot that will not count
- Update your voter registration
  - If your name, address or signature has changed since you registered
- Remember to bring picture ID

# New Rules for Change of Address

- All voters must notify the Supervisor of Elections (where they live now) of any change of address.
- If moving within same county, you may change address at new polling place on Election Day.
- If moving between Florida counties, you may notify the new Supervisor of Elections by phone, fax, e-mail, letter or voter registration form.
  - You should include old address, new address, date of birth and signature. Allow several days for processing. Voters who change address at polling place on Election Day vote by provisional ballot.

# Acceptable Forms of ID

- Florida driver's license or state ID card
- United States passport or military ID
- Debit or Credit Card
- Student ID
- Retirement Center ID
- Neighborhood association ID
- Public assistance ID

**Your ID will need your picture and signature**

# Accessibility at the polls

- Federal and state laws require all polling places to be accessible.
- Doors wide enough for wheelchairs.
- Ramps or elevators (if there are steps) leading to and from the polling location.
- Parking lot and walkways accessible.
- Accessible path of travel – clearly marked.
- **Every polling place** required to have accessible voting equipment.

# Assistance with voting

- You may ask for help from a poll worker to read or mark your ballot.
- You may bring someone you choose to assist you with voting.
- You will need to sign a form stating that you need assistance, and the person who helps will also need to sign a form.
- Your employer or agent of your labor union may not assist you with voting.
- If you make a mistake, you may request a new ballot.

# What to do if someone tries to keep you from voting

- If you are registered to vote, you have the right to vote.
- If a poll worker says you cannot vote, ask why. If it is because you are in the wrong polling place, ask them for the proper location.
- Only a court can remove the right to vote, due to criminal conviction or mental incapacity.
- If a family member, care worker or poll worker tries to keep you from voting, contact **Disability Rights Florida** at 1-800-342-0823, or Election Protection at 1-866-OUR-VOTE (687-8683).



# How to be an informed voter

- Get a **sample ballot** from your Supervisor of Elections to learn which candidates and issues will be on your ballot
- **Research** by visiting websites of the candidates, interest groups you trust, the Florida League of Women Voters and newspapers
- Talk to **people you trust**
- Don't always believe TV ads and mailings

# Important dates and deadlines

- General Election: **November 6, 2012**
    - Register by October 9, 2012
    - Early voting begins October 27\*
  - Primary Election: **August 14, 2012**
    - Register by July 16, 2012
    - Early voting begins August 4\*
- \* In these counties, check with your Supervisor of Elections:  
Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough, Monroe

# For more information, contact:

- Disability Rights Florida  
[www.disabilityrightsflorida.org](http://www.disabilityrightsflorida.org)
- Florida Secretary of State  
<http://election.dos.state.fl.us/>
- Florida League of Women Voters  
<http://thefloridavoter.org/>