FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Report by the Department of State
On Vote-By-Mail Voting – Security, Privacy and Election Transparency

Prepared by the Florida Department of State pursuant to Section 31 of Chapter 2022-73, Laws of Florida

February 1, 2023
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Executive Summary

This report is prepared by the Florida Department of State pursuant to Section 31 of Chapter 2022-73, Laws of Florida. The Legislature [found] that additional modifications to procedures governing vote-by-mail balloting would help to further ensure election integrity while also protecting voters from identity theft and preserving the public’s right to participate in election processes. To achieve this purpose, the Legislature [directed] the Department of State to:

(1) Provide a plan to prescribe the use of a Florida driver license number, Florida identification card number, social security number, or any part thereof to confirm the identity of each elector returning a vote-by-mail ballot.

(2) Review issues involving the feasibility, development, and implementation of [above] plan, including issues related to:
   (a) Obtaining a Florida driver license number or Florida identification card number and the last four digits of a social security number for each registered voter who does not have such numbers on file in the Florida Voter Registration System in coordination with other agencies such as the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV).
   (b) Populating such numbers in the Florida Voter Registration System.
   (c) Protecting identifying numbers submitted with a vote-by-mail ballot, including, but not limited to, prescribing the form of the return mailing envelope.
   (d) Any necessary modifications to canvassing procedures for vote-by-mail ballots.
   (e) Costs associated with development and implementation of the plan.
   (f) A proposal for a program to educate electors on changes to the vote-by-mail process.
   (g) A proposal for including a declaration of an elector’s current address of legal residence with each written request for a vote-by-mail ballot.

(3) Review relevant processes of other states, relevant federal law, and seek input from supervisors of elections, which must include representation from supervisors of counties with large, medium, and small populations.

(4) Report a plan and any proposed legislation changes to the Legislature.

During the 2021 and 2022 legislative session, the Florida Legislature enacted a number of security measures relating to voter registration and voting as part of its effort to protect voters’ rights to participate in the electoral process and to secure the integrity of the election process. Many of the legislative changes focused on the vote-by-mail process, including the request, the delivery, the return, and the observation of the duplication of damages ballots, signature verification and canvassing. See Chapters 2021-11 and 2022-73, Laws of Florida. These measures bolstered the security and transparency of the vote-by-mail process. The 2022 election cycle was the first major election cycle in which these measures were implemented since they were enacted. While the election cycle was a success without reports of wide-spread fraud that have plagued other states, the impact of some of those changes on voters’ ability to request and vote a vote-by-mail ballot are still in play.
According to the Florida Supervisors of Elections’ Vote-By-Mail Process Revision Workgroup Report (Appendix A), Supervisors of Elections voiced reservations about voter privacy and other logistical challenges that would come from a redesign of the vote-by-mail envelope and changes to the vote-by-mail process including the impact on the complex and labor-intensive procedures to ensure the security and timely delivery, return, verification, canvassing and reporting of results of vote-by-mail ballots. Their report also raised concerns about the current supply chain strain for the procurement of equipment, paper, and other consumables and reeducating voters about significant change to the vote-by-mail process before a presidential election cycle with the Presidential Preference Primary Election scheduled in less than one year (March 2024). The Department also identified similar and additional considerations and challenges in its review.

Considering the foregoing review and challenges that the Department foresees, the Department recommends building on the election integrity measures adopted recently to enhance the security of the vote-by-mail process. The Department proposes legislation to further those objectives by focusing primarily on the vote-by-mail ballot request process.
Overview

Florida Voters
Florida is the third most populous state following California and Texas. Florida is relatively on par with both states in terms of percentage of registered voters and voting age population. Over 4.42 million registered voters are 65 years old or older which represents almost 31% of the number of active registered voters. There are over 365,543 registered voters who identify as military, military dependent and/or overseas.

Florida’s voter registration numbers have more than doubled since 1994.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Active Registered Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>6,559,598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>8,077,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>8,220,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>8,752,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>9,302,360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>10,301,290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>10,433,849</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>11,247,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11,217,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>11,934,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>11,931,533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>12,863,773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>13,278,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>14,441,869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2022</td>
<td>14,503,978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For perspective, the number of voters who voted in the Presidential Election (in November 2020) almost equaled the total number of registered voters in the entire state in 2008 and 2010.

Voting Method
Florida voters enjoy three convenient methods of voting – voting by mail, early voting, or voting on Election Day. In addition to voting in person on Election Day, some form of absentee voting has been

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1 U.S. Census estimates as of July 2022 – California (over 21.9 million of California’s voting age population is registered to vote (81.63%); Texas (Over 17.7 million of Texas’ voting age population is registered (80.1%); and Florida (over 14.5 million of Florida’s voting age population (17.5 million) (82%) is registered to vote). Source: [https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total.html](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/popest/2020s-total.html); [https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/70-92.shtml](https://www.sos.state.tx.us/elections/historical/70-92.shtml); [https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ror/15day-general-2022/historical-reg-stats.pdf](https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ror/15day-general-2022/historical-reg-stats.pdf); [https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/30/2022-06654/estimates-of-the-voting-age-population-for-2021](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/03/30/2022-06654/estimates-of-the-voting-age-population-for-2021)
available since at least 1917. In 2004, the Florida Legislature specifically authorized early voting in the Supervisors of Elections’ main or branch offices. Early voting is a period of time before an election where a ballot is voted and tabulated, just as it is on Election Day. Early voting evolved from absentee voting in person at the Supervisors of Elections’ main and branch offices. In its present state, early voting is offered for a mandatory eight-day period. Supervisors of Elections may offer up to six more days of early voting. Therefore, if a Supervisor of Elections maximizes the number of days and hours of early voting, a voter may have up to 168 hours total of early voting available in their county.

Voting trends over the years show that Florida voters chose to vote equally among the voting methods, with some deviation accounting for the 2020 pandemic and presidential versus a gubernatorial election year.

### Overview - Vote-By-Mail
Florida’s statutory framework reflects the Legislature’s continuous effort to balance the interest in protecting every eligible voter’s right to vote and securing the integrity of the electoral process. In the past two legislative sessions, the Legislature focused on the vote-by-mail process.

The major components of the vote-by-mail law and processes, some of which were enacted in the last few years, include but are not limited to,
- Requiring a personal identifying number in addition to a signed written request if made other than in person or by telephone,
- Prohibiting a vote-by-mail ballot being delivered without a request on file,
- Limiting the number of ballots that may be requested and/or picked up on behalf of another voter,

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2 Section 2, Chapter 7380, Laws of Florida (1917) (absent person could vote anywhere at polls on election day and have ballot mailed back to county of residence to be counted.)

3 Section 101.657, Fla. Stat.

4 Chapter 2021-11, Laws of Florida and Chapter 2022-73, Laws of Florida
- Empowering the voter to track his or her ballot request and ballot return,
- Verifying signatures on ballot certificates,
- Allowing the voter to cure his or her ballot if a signature is missing or mismatches but requires additional identification with a signed affidavit,
- Providing notice to the voter if his or her vote-by-mail ballot was not counted and the reason why, including if was late, to afford the voter the opportunity to remediate the reason for the next election,
- Expiring vote-by-mail ballot requests every general election cycle to allow voters to refresh their request with accurate information,
- Prohibiting ballot harvesting of vote-by-mail ballots,
- Limiting lawful possession of ballots to the voter’s own, and the ballots of their immediate family members and two others, and
- Providing greater transparency to the canvassing process by expanding observation opportunities to include duplication of damaged ballots, signature verification, and other canvassing processes.

**Requesting a Vote-By-Mail Ballot**

Requirements for requesting a vote-by-mail ballot\(^5\) have changed over the years. In 1951, an absent voter had to have an excuse, such as a physical disability that prevented the person from going to the polls without assistance\(^6\) or that the voter would be away from the county.\(^7\) In 2001, the Legislature allowed (without excuse) a request for a ballot to be mailed to an address already on record.\(^8\) The Legislature also required, as part of the request, the date of birth in lieu of the social security number, but retained the witness requirement. In 2004, the witness requirement was repealed.\(^9\) In 2011, the Legislature repealed the last of the stated excuses for requesting a ballot to be mailed to an address other than the one on record.\(^10\) Florida is now one of 27 states, including Washington, D.C., that currently offer no-excuse absentee voting (of which eight of those states have all mail elections.)\(^11\) A number of states require excuses that range from working as a poll worker, serving on a jury, being out

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\(^5\) Terminology changes from absentee ballot to vote-by-mail ballot in 2016. See ch. 2016-37, Laws of Florida

\(^6\) The Americans with Disabilities Act and Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped was enacted in 1984 which required polling places to be accessible for elderly person and persons with disabilities. See 52 U.S.C ch. 201

\(^7\) Chapter 267542, Laws of Florida (1951)

\(^8\) Section 53, Chapter 2001-40, Laws of Florida

\(^9\) Chapter 2004-232, Laws of Florida

\(^10\) Section 37, Chapter 2011-40, Laws of Florida

\(^11\) Eight of those states are reportedly offer all mail elections (California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Vermont (general election only), and Washington). Source: Appendix B - Table 2, Excuses to Vote Absentee. Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All Mail and Other Voting at Home Options, July 12, 2022. See Appendix B, National Conference of State Legislatures - Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options (ncsl.org)
of the county, illness or disability, person over a certain age, out of county on Election Day, student living outside the county, religious belief or practice, or address protected domestic violence victim.\textsuperscript{12}

In 2013, the Legislature required a written signed request to mail a vote-by-mail ballot to an address other than the one on record.\textsuperscript{13} It also prohibited delivery of a vote-by-mail ballot on Election Day except in emergencies as affirmed in an affidavit. Absent uniformed services members and overseas voters are exempted from the requirement. In 2021, the Legislature required any voter requesting a vote-by-mail ballot to provide another identifier to verify the authenticity of the voter’s request. All requests for a vote-by-mail ballot, regardless of the method, to include a Florida driver license number, Florida identification card number or last 4 digits of the voter’s social security number. The number must be verified in the supervisor’s records.

The current process therefore to obtain a vote-by-mail request is as follows:

To initiate a request, the voter can submit the request online, by phone, in person or through another writing (email, fax, etc.). No statewide form exists to request a vote-by-mail ballot, but the law specifies the following information,

1. The name of the elector for whom the ballot is requested;
2. The elector’s address;
3. The elector’s date of birth;
4. The requester’s name;
5. The requester’s address;
6. The requester’s driver’s license number, if available;
7. The requester’s relationship to the elector; and
8. The requester’s signature (written requests only).

A signed written request is required only if the address provided to deliver the ballot is not the same as the address on file. An exception exists for absent stateside, overseas military and overseas civilians. Additionally, a ballot may only be delivered by mail or in person with exceptions carved out for absent uniformed services and overseas voters who may receive the blank vote-by-mail ballot by fax or email.\textsuperscript{14}

A United States uniformed services member on active duty, or a Merchant Marine member, a spouse or dependent thereof and a United States citizen residing outside of the United States have the option to submit a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) that can be used solely as a voter registration form or as a combination voter registration and request for a vote-by-mail ballot. The FPCA is devised by the U.S. Department of Defense’s Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP). The FPCA through FVAP’s Online

\textsuperscript{12}Id.

\textsuperscript{13} Section 11, Chapter 2013-57, Laws of Florida

\textsuperscript{14} Sections 101.697 and. 101.6952, Fla. Stat.
Assistant or as a PDF form. By federal law, they must be able to submit a request for a vote-by-mail ballot by phone, mail, email, or fax.15

Additionally, options exist for persons with disabilities who may receive a blank vote-by-mail ballot by online ballot delivery, if the service is available within their county.16

The deadline to request that a vote-by-mail ballot to be mailed is no later than 5:00 p.m. on the 10th day before the election. A voter can pick up their own vote-by-mail ballot at any time once the ballot becomes available, including Election Day.

A voter can designate any person to pick up their ballot. The designee can pick up the ballot no earlier than nine days before Election Day. A designee is limited to picking up vote-by-mail ballots for two other voters per election (not including their own ballot and the ballots for immediate family members). An immediate family member refers to the designee’s spouse or the parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, or sibling of the designee or of the designee’s spouse. The designee must submit an affidavit to pick-up the voter’s blank ballot. Form DS-DE 37 (English PDF / Español PDF) is a combination form that includes the affidavit for ballot pick-up; the written authorization for the designee and if a request is not already on record, the voter’s request for a vote-by-mail ballot. If a voter or designee waits until Election Day to pick up or have delivered a vote-by-mail ballot, the voter must complete an Election Day Vote-By-Mail Ballot Delivery Affidavit (DS-DE 136 - English PDF / Español PDF). The voter must affirm that an emergency exists that keeps the voter from being able to vote at his or her assigned polling place.

Recent Election Integrity Measures
As noted above, in 2021, the Florida Legislature added another security layer of authentication to process a request for a vote-by-mail ballot.17 Now, all requests for a vote-by-mail ballot must include a Florida driver license or state identification card number, or the last four digits of a social security number, regardless of the method for requesting a vote-by-mail ballot. The number provided must be verified by Supervisor’s records. It also required that this additional information be recorded including the new identifying information and the identity of the designee, if applicable. Additionally, the Florida Legislature expressly prohibited the delivery of a vote-by-mail ballot without a request. It also modified the effective period for a ballot request to all elections held through the end of the calendar year of the next regularly scheduled general election.

15 While a number of special provisions apply for uniformed services members, their spouses and dependents, and overseas civilians exist in Florida’s vote-by-mail laws, these state laws are based on provisions in the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA)(52 U.S.C. § 20301-20311) and the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment Act (MOVE) (part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010) which amended sections of UOCAVA.

16 Section 101.662, Fla. Stat.

17 Section 4, Chapter 2021-11, Laws of Florida
Delivery of Vote-By-Mail Ballots
Ballots for absent stateside and overseas military, and overseas civilian ballots are required to be sent no later than 45 days before an election. Over 365,543 registered voters self-identify as military, military dependent and overseas or have military or overseas addresses on file. The number of ballots sent to absent military and overseas voters who have standing requests at the time of the deadline to mail were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UOCAVA Ballots Sent Based on Requests on File at the Time of Statutory 45-day deadline to Send</th>
<th>2014 (Gubernatorial)</th>
<th>2016 (Presidential)</th>
<th>2018 (Gubernatorial)</th>
<th>2020 (Presidential)</th>
<th>2022 (Gubernatorial)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRIMARY</td>
<td>63,372</td>
<td>55,096</td>
<td>71,901</td>
<td>64,020</td>
<td>95,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENERAL</td>
<td>64,959</td>
<td>73,670</td>
<td>78,118</td>
<td>103,818</td>
<td>95,062</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ballots for domestic voters who have requests on file are required to be delivered within a seven-day window (40-33 days) before the applicable election.

The deadline to request that a vote-by-mail ballot be mailed is no later than 5:00 p.m. on the tenth day before the election. A Supervisor of Elections must mail the ballot out within two business days after receiving a request. The last day for the supervisor to mail a ballot is eight days before Election Day.

Voting by Persons with Disabilities
Federal and state laws require that persons with disabilities be afforded an opportunity to vote that is equal to the opportunity offered to voters without disabilities, whether in person or absentee. This applies to voting at the polls during early voting and on Election Day, and equally to voting by mail. Under the Florida Election Code, “persons with disabilities” means individuals who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. Such activities include but are not limited to blindness or visual impairment, deafness or hearing impairment, mobility, permanent or temporary impairments, or cognitive or mental impairments that may affect recall, concentration or comprehension.

Counties offer a range of accessible voting options. In many counties, the supervisor of elections offers online ballot delivery of a ballot that a voter with disabilities can then mark online at their convenience and use whatever assistive tools are available to him or her. However, the law prohibits the electronic return of such ballot. This means the voter must mark the ballot, print the ballot, and enclose the voted

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ballot in the required privacy sleeve or secrecy envelope and mailing envelope that is provided to all voters who vote by mail.

**Returning a Voted Vote-By-Mail Ballot**

In order to count, assuming all other requirements are met, and eligibility determined, a voted ballot must be received, regardless of postmark, by the Supervisor of Elections’ office no later than 7:00 p.m. (local time) on Election Day. A ten-day extension exists for overseas voters only for Presidential Preference Primary and General Elections, provided the ballot is postmarked or dated by Election Day.

The methods for returning a voted ballot are delivery by mail, in-person, and into a secure ballot intake station during prescribed hours and locations. A voter may also choose to use a commercial expedited or special courier service at their own expense to return their voted ballot.

Only overseas voters (military and civilian) may return their voted ballot by fax in lieu of by mail. All other voters must return their voted ballot by mail, in-person or into a secure ballot intake station during prescribed hours and at designated locations. In the event that a requested vote-by-mail ballot did not arrive in time to meet the state deadline for return, absent stateside and overseas military and overseas civilians can complete and return an official back-up ballot known as the Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot (FWAB). The FWAB ([Online Assistant](https://www.fvap.gov) or [PDF form](https://www.fvap.gov/pdf-forms)) is also available through the Federal Voting Assistance Program. The FWAB can be used to vote in any federal, state or local election. (See section [101.6952](https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bills/SenateBill/0101-1090), Florida Statutes).

The secure ballot intake stations (formerly known as drop boxes) were first formally authorized in law in 2019. The law required Supervisors of Elections to provide secure ballot intake stations to be placed at their main office and branch office(s) and at any designated early voting site, and optionally at any other site that would have qualified as an early voting site, provided staff was available.

**Recent Election Integrity Measures**

In 2021, the Florida Legislature added more security measures to the return of voted ballots by,

- Limiting the use of secure ballot intake stations other than at a supervisor’s office to early voting hours,
- Requiring in-person monitoring of all secure ballot intake stations while accessible for deposit of ballots, and
- Limiting a person’s lawful possession of ballots to his or her own, those of an immediate family member, and two others; expands the definition of “immediate family member” to include a grandchild; and clarifies that supervised voting at assisted living facilities and nursing homes is not subject to the limit.

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22 Section 20, [Chapter 2019-162](https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bills/SenateBill/0101-1090), Laws of Florida

**Duplicating and Canvassing Vote-By-Mail Ballots**

The law allows for the duplication of ballots in the event the ballot cannot be counted by the voting system’s automatic tabulating equipment. A true duplicate copy is required to be created in an open and accessible room in the presence of witnesses.\(^{24}\) This also applies in cases where the vote-by-mail ballot contains an overvoted race or undervoted race, if it can be determined that the voter made a definite choice in the race.\(^{25}\) After a ballot has been duplicated, the defective ballot shall be placed in an envelope provided for that purpose, and the duplicate ballot shall be tallied with the other ballots for that precinct. Ultimately, it is the canvassing board that determines whether the duplicate ballot must be counted.

**Recent Election Integrity Measures**

In 2021, the Florida Legislature added more security and transparency measures, including requiring the presence of at least one canvassing board member during the duplication of ballot, and allowing observers to make a reasonable objection to the duplication of a ballot which then requires presentation to the canvassing board to further adjudicate.\(^{26}\) Specifically, upon request, a physically present candidate, a political party official, a political committee official, or an authorized designee thereof, must be allowed to observe the duplication of ballots upon signing an affidavit affirming his or her acknowledgment that disclosure of election results discerned from observing the ballot duplication process while the election is ongoing is a felony. The observer must be allowed to observe the duplication of ballots in such a way that the observer is able to see the markings on each ballot and the duplication taking place.

One of the key factors attributed to Florida’s success in canvassing ballots and timely preliminary election results is its expanded period for canvassing. In 2021, the Florida Legislature allowed canvassing to begin as early as 40 days before an election, provided the pre-election testing of voting equipment had first been completed.\(^{27}\) This period also corresponds closer in time to when vote-by-mail ballots have already been sent out to absent statewide military, overseas military and overseas civilians. This expanded period allowed election officials including canvassing board members to better manage the canvassing workload, barring a significant number of returned ballots within the last week before Election Day which is out of the control of election officials. This provided election officials the opportunity to be able to focus on preparations for and conduct of early voting and Election Day.

**Verification of Signatures**

For a VBM ballot to be counted, a vote-by-mail voter must sign the certificate with the returned voted ballot. The signature on the certificate is later compared to the voter’s signature on record to authenticate that the registered voter has signed their own ballot.\(^{28}\) In some counties, an initial visual

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\(^{24}\) Section 101.5614, Fla. Stat.


\(^{27}\) Section 27, id., amending section 101.68, Fla. Stat.

\(^{28}\) Section 101.68, Fla. Stat.
review of signatures is made manually. Some county offices supplement the signature verification with automated signature comparison software. While the Supervisor of Elections who is a statutorily designated member of the canvassing board\textsuperscript{29} and his or her staff traditionally conduct the initial verification, it is ultimately the canvassing board who collectively signs off on verified signatures and is responsible for verifying signatures that have been presented to the board. Signature verification training is made available to all Supervisors of Elections, including their staff, and the canvassing board.\textsuperscript{30}

If the signature does not match or the signature is missing, the elections office is required to notify the voter as soon as practicable to provide the voter an opportunity to cure the omission or mismatch.\textsuperscript{31} The voter can “cure” this defect\textsuperscript{32} by completing a Vote-by-Mail Ballot Cure Affidavit (DS-DE 139).\textsuperscript{33} As another layer of authentication, a copy of an identification must be provided with the completed affidavit as follows:

- The signature on the voter’s certificate or the cure affidavit matches the elector’s signature in the registration books or precinct register; however, in the case of a cure affidavit, the supporting identification . . . must also confirm the identity of the elector; or
- The cure affidavit contains a signature that does not match the elector’s signature in the registration books or precinct register, but the elector has submitted a current and valid Tier 1 identification . . . which confirms the identity of the elector. Tier 1 identification or Tier 2 identification are as follows and must be provided:
  - \textit{Tier 1 identification}.—Current and valid identification that includes name and photograph: Florida driver license; Florida identification card issued by DHSMV; United States passport; debit or credit card; military identification; student identification; retirement center identification; neighborhood association identification; public assistance identification; veteran health identification card issued by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs; a Florida license to carry a concealed weapon or firearm; or an employee identification card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the Federal Government, the state, a county, or a municipality; or
  - \textit{Tier 2 identification}.—ONLY IF A PERSON DO NOT HAVE A TIER 1 FORM OF IDENTIFICATION, identification that shows your name and current residence address: current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or government document (excluding voter information card).

The law authorizes the canvassing board to enlist clerical help for other work of the board under specified circumstances.\textsuperscript{34} The canvassing board may employ such clerical help to assist with the work of the board as it deems necessary, with at least one member of the board present always. The canvassing board ultimately determines whether the ballot may be counted or not based on all the

\textsuperscript{29} Section 102.141(1), Fla. Stat. If a supervisor is unable to serve or is disqualified, the chair of the board of county commissioners appoints a substitute member from the county board.

\textsuperscript{30} Section 1, Chapter 2019-162, Laws of Florida, amending section 97.012, Fla. Stat., to add subsection (17)

\textsuperscript{31} Section 101.68, Fla. Stat.,

\textsuperscript{32} Section 101.68(4), Fla. Stat.

\textsuperscript{33} https://www.dos.myflorida.com/elections/forms-publications/forms/

\textsuperscript{34} Section 102.141(8), Fla. Stat.
evidence. Pursuant to law, every person whose vote-by-mail ballot is rejected by the canvassing board is notified of such action and is provided the specific reason why his or her ballot was not counted. The number of ballots not counted for 2020 and 2022 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020 GEN</th>
<th>2022 GEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vote by mail ballots counted</td>
<td>4,864,040</td>
<td>2,773,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voter by mail ballots not counted</td>
<td>9,723</td>
<td>13,179</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reasons why a ballot may not count range from voter-caused error or eligibility issues, missing or mismatched signature that was not cured, no certificate envelope, a challenged voter, no longer a resident of county by time ballot arrived, or receipt after the deadline. The number of ballots received late more than doubled in 2022:35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2020 GEN</th>
<th>2022 GEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballot received late</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>(Factors include but are not limited to postal delays, the voter mailing the ballot late, and inclement weather.)</em></td>
<td>3,580</td>
<td>8,397</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In May 2022, the Florida Department of State revised Rule 1S-2.043, Fla. Admin. Code, to clarify file specifications as to information about the request, delivery, return and canvass of a vote-by-mail ballot. A category was established to distinguish between ballots returned unsigned versus ballots returned with mismatched signatures. For the 2022 General Election, the following number of vote-by-mail ballots were not counted for reasons of signature defects:36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vote-by-mail not counted for signature defect</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Returned – Unsigned (i.e., a voter returned a vote-by-mail ballot with no signature on the Voter’s Certificate or the signature cure affidavit, and/or fails to provide requisite ID with affidavit to cure the omitted the signature.)</td>
<td>4691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mismatched Signature (i.e., a voter returned a vote-by-mail ballot with a mismatched signature on the Voter’s Certificate or the signature cure affidavit, and/or fails to provide requisite ID with affidavit to cure the signature mismatch.)</td>
<td>7028</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recent Election Integrity Measures
Since signature verification is a key factor in authenticating the identity of a registered voter, training is an important requirement. In recognition thereof, the Florida Legislature added a requirement in 201937

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36 County Vote-by-Mail Ballot Request Files for 2022 General Election. These files are required to be filed daily starting 60 days before a primary election and ending 15 days after the general election. See section 101.62(3), Fla. Stat.
37 Section 1, Chapter 2019-162, Laws of Florida
to make available formal signature match training to Supervisors of Elections and county canvassing board members. In 2022, the Florida Department of State contracted with the Florida State University Florida Institute of Government to convert the signature verification training program from a video program to an online multi-module program with testing components and a certificate of completion. The program takes two to three hours to complete. At a biennial Canvassing Board Workshop hosted by the Florida Supervisors of Elections, all canvassing board members and Supervisors of Elections were strongly encouraged to take the program before the 2022 election cycle. Some counties such as Miami-Dade County supplement their signature training with even more advanced courses through county support. To date, over 1,110 persons have taken part in the Department of State’s signature verification online program. The program is publicly available online 24/7 upon the establishment of an account. No mandate currently exists in law for Supervisors of Elections, canvassing board members or any person whose duties involve signature verification to undergo training.

Additionally, counties are permitted to use automated signature verification technology to facilitate preparatory signature verification process. However, no statutory duty exists to test and/or certify automated signature verification software technology. The technology may not be used to replace the duties and responsibilities of the Supervisor of Elections and the canvassing board as the final arbiter.

As an added security and transparency measure, in 2021, the Florida Legislature created new access requirements for a political party or candidate to observe meetings for signature matching and other processes.

Bilingual Requirements

All ballots, instructions, envelopes, affidavits and vote-by-mail materials must be provided in English and Spanish. The Voting Act has several provisions by which a state or local jurisdiction must adhere to bilingual requirements. The State of Florida and all counties are covered under one or more provisions (see Appendix C):

- **Section 203:** Under this section, the U.S. Census Bureau (see www.census.gov) designates covered jurisdictions for language based on decennial census data and subsequent survey data.

[Bibliographic References]


39 Section 21, Chapter 2021-11, Laws of Florida, amending section 101.572, Laws of Florida

40 52 USCA 10503 A jurisdiction is covered under Section 203 where the number of United States citizens of voting age is a single language group within the jurisdiction:

- Is more than 10,000, or
- Is more than five percent of all voting age citizens, or
- On an Indian reservation, exceeds five percent of all reservation residents; and
- The illiteracy rate of the group is higher than the national illiteracy rate.

Covered language minorities are limited to American Indians, Asian Americans, Alaskan Natives, and Spanish-heritage citizens – i.e., the groups that Congress found to have faced barriers in the political process. If a county is subject to a minority language requirement under section 203, the Supervisor must make voting materials and information relating to the electoral process (including registration or voting notices, forms, ballot, instructions, etc.) in the designated language and provide minority language assistance in all elections. Pursuant to state law, in counties subject to multi-language ballot requirements, the supervisor may petition the United States Department of Justice for authorization for the supervisor to print and deliver single-language ballots for each minority language required. See section 101.151(8), Fla. Stat.
in five-year periods, or comparable census data based on any one of four formulas (voting age population, racial/ethnic composition and illiteracy rate).

- **Section 208**: This section provides that “any voter who requires assistance to vote by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to read or write may be given assistance by a person of the voter’s choice, other than the voter’s employer or agent of that employer or officer or agent of the voter’s union.” This section could apply to a voter who is illiterate or has limited English proficiency in a vote-by-mail or polling place scenario. This section is codified in sections 101.051, 101.655, and 101.661, Fla. Stat.

- **Section 2**: This section prohibits voting and election-related practices and procedures that discriminate on the basis of race, color or membership in a language minority group.

Section “(e)” This section entitled “Completion of requisite grade level education in American-flag schools in which predominate classroom language was other than English” pertains to the right to vote of United States citizens educated through at least 6th grade in American-flag schools in any state, territory, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, in a language other than English because of such citizens’ inability to read, write, understand, or interpret English. (*Commonly referred to as 4(e)).

**Tracking**

Any voter who has requested a vote-by-mail ballot can track online the status of his or her vote-by-mail ballot request and/or ballot through the county Supervisor of Elections’ website, or access the county-specific link on our Vote-by-Mail Ballot Information and Status Lookup webpage. The United States Postal Service (USPS) also provides a free service (register online) called Informed Delivery that allows any customer to see in advance a digital image of the address side of certain mail pieces that are scheduled to be delivered to their mailing address which would include a requested vote-by-mail ballot. Other options, if time does not allow for timely return by mail, include in-person delivery, secure ballot intake stations designated by the county Supervisor of Elections, or expedited or special courier services.

In addition to the voter tracking his or her own ballot, Supervisors of Elections have a number of resources available to manage vote-by-mail ballots including USPS’ Intelligent Bar coding to track the outgoing mail piece and vendor tracking tools to encode marks on the return mailing envelope.

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41 52 USCA 10508
42 52 USCA 10301
43 52 USCA 10303 (e)
44 If a voter’s registration information is protected pursuant to section 119.071(2), (4), and/or (5), Florida Statutes, or the registered voter is a participant in the Attorney General Office’s Address Confidentiality Program, the voter will need to contact the Supervisor of Elections’ office about the status of the vote-by-mail ballot and request.
Identification/Verification

For Registration
In the age of cybersecurity, multi-factor authentication (or multiple layers of authentication) is key to ensuring the identity and authority of the person to access any privilege or right. This authentication in Florida begins at the front end (i.e., registration) with verifying a voter’s personal identifying number provided on the voter registration application, even if someone affirms he or she does not have a Florida driver license number, state identification card number or social security number. The requirement to provide a Florida driver license number, state identification number or last four digits of the social security number did not become law until 1998 (becoming effective in 1999).45 Prior to that time and back to at least 1994, a voter had the option to provide a social security number, but the number was not protected from public disclosure.46

Therefore, as of 1999, before a person can register, the person must provide a personal identifying number (Florida driver license, Florida state identification card number or last four digits of their social security number) which must be verified by the Department of State through DHSMV, even if someone affirms on an application he or she does not have a Florida driver license number, state identification card number or social security number. 47 The number or the lack of existence of a number is either verified through DHSMV’s own records or through the Social Security Administration through an agreement with the American Association of Motor Vehicles Administrators.48 Florida driver license and state identification card numbers are safeguarded from public disclosure under the Drivers Privacy Protection Act.49 Social security numbers are also protected under federal law.50

Recent Election Integrity Measures
In 2021, the Florida Legislature required updates to name, party or address made on a voter registration application form to include the personal identifying number just as is required for new voter registration applications.51 As with new registrations, the personal identifying number is then added to the voter’s record as the voter has voluntarily provided the information for purposes of updating his or her voter registration record.

Even before the new laws requiring a personal identifying number for requesting a ballot and for updating a voter record, Supervisors of Elections statewide conducted targeted voter outreach to solicit personal identifying numbers from those voters without the identifier in their records. Since that time, the percentage of total voter records that do not have an identifier in their record or have an incomplete or otherwise invalid identifier is less than 2.5%. See table below:

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45 Section 9, Chapter 98-129, Laws of Florida
46 Chapter 94-224, Laws of Florida
47 Special identification requirements and processes apply when a person registered by mail and if a first-time registrant and voter which exceptions under certain circumstances. See sections 97.0535, 101.6921, 101.6923, Fla. Stat.
48 Section 97.053(6), Fla. Stat.
49 18 U.S.C. 2721
51 Section 5, Chapter 2021-11, Laws of Florida, amending section 97.053(6), Fla. Stat.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>DL and/or SSN</th>
<th>Pct</th>
<th>No or Invalid DL/SSN</th>
<th>Pct2</th>
<th>Total Active and Inactive Voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/4/2021</td>
<td>14,478,290</td>
<td>95.50%</td>
<td>681,481</td>
<td>4.50%</td>
<td>15,159,771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/25/2023</td>
<td>15,280,154</td>
<td>97.69%</td>
<td>361,351</td>
<td>2.31%</td>
<td>15,641,505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For Voting**

The integrity of an election is contingent on the security surrounding voting processes. Therefore, the process for authentication continues when a voter presents to vote during early voting or on Election Day; a voter is required to provide one of 12 acceptable photo identifications with signature, which is, in essence, two-factor authentication.\(^{52}\)

1. Florida driver license.
2. Florida identification card issued by DHSMV.
3. United States passport.
4. Debit or credit card.
7. Retirement center identification.
10. Veteran health identification card issued by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.
11. A license to carry a concealed weapon or firearm issued pursuant to section 790.06, Florida Statutes.
12. Employee identification card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the Federal Government, the state, a county, or a municipality.

The purpose of the photo is for the poll worker to visually compare the person standing in front of the poll worker with the person in the photo and to compare the signature on the identification with the signature that the voter just signed on the paper or electronic precinct register.

If a photo and signature identification is not available, the voter is permitted to vote a provisional ballot. If a question arises as to the identification, the person is given the option to vote a provisional ballot. If a question arises as to the signature, the voter has an opportunity to execute a signature affidavit reaffirming his or her signature before being allowed to vote a regular ballot, otherwise the voter is given the option to vote a provisional ballot.\(^{53}\)

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\(^{52}\) Section 101.043, Fla. Stat.

\(^{53}\) Section 101.045, Fla. Stat.
To vote by mail, authenticating a voter’s right to vote a mail ballot occurs at the front end with a signature verification and now the personal identifying number. The authentication again occurs at the back end when the signature comparison is made.

Recent Election Integrity Measures
As of 2022, all persons requesting a vote-by-mail ballot regardless of method (in person, phone, email, mail, online, fax, etc.) must provide a personal identifying number (Florida driver license number, Florida identification card number or last four digits of their social security number) that can be verified by the Supervisor of Elections. If the request is in writing, the request must also be signed – an exception exists for absent uniformed services voters or overseas voters.

Authentication requirements for voting by mail range across states and are not uniform. They may include but are not limited to one or more combination of the following: signature, photo identification, voter identification number and witness.

Other States
State elections law across the county are generally not uniform making statutory, regulatory and procedural comparisons difficult. Voting by mail is no exception:

- Florida is one of at least 19 states that allows a voter to request a ballot online (The states are Alaska, Arizona, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, New York, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Wisconsin).

- Florida is one of 26 states, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands to compare the absent voter’s information against the registration records. At least 11 states verify the signature in addition to checking information and eligibility. Examples of what other states require for verification include requiring a copy of an ID, requiring an application, or other signed oath or one or more witnesses to authenticate.
  - For example, Georgia provides a statewide form to submit a request (online or downloadable form). The request must include a date of birth and a Georgia driver license number or state identification card number, or an affirmation that neither has been issued with a copy of other acceptable forms of identification. See Appendix D.

54 Section 24, Chapter 2021-11, Laws of Florida
55 Source: Appendix B - Table 6, States with Online Ballot Request Applications, Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options (ncsl.org)(July 2022), National Conference of State Legislatures.
57 Application for Georgia Official Absentee Ballot (ga.gov); https://securemyabsenteeballot.sos.ga.gov/resource/1674861954000/AbsenteeBallotPDF
Texas requires the submission of a statewide form online with a few exceptions for persons with disabilities, absent state-side military and overseas military and civilians. See Appendix E. The Texas form also requires the state driver license number, the state identification number, election identification certification number, or the last four digits of the social security number. Texas, unlike Florida and Georgia, requires an excuse to vote by mail (over 65 years of age, have a disability, expect to give birth within three weeks of an election, absent from the jurisdiction with specified date of absence and return, or in jail or involuntary commitment).

- Florida is one of 31 states that allow someone to return a vote-by-mail ballot for the voter. Many of those states limit who may return the ballot and how many and when they can be returned, and for how long they can be in the person’s possession.
- Florida is one of 17 states including the Virgin Islands that require a secrecy sleeve (also known as a privacy sleeve, inner envelope, or identification envelope).
- Florida is one of at least 23 states which addresses drop boxes or secure ballot intake stations for the return of voted vote by mail ballots.
- Florida is one of 27 states that conduct signature verification on returned absentee/mail ballots, which entails comparing the signature on the absentee/mail ballot envelope with a signature already on file for the voter. It is the most reported method of verification. Nine states, the Virgin Islands and Washington, D.C., verify that an absentee/mail ballot envelope has been signed but do not conduct signature verification. Nine states require the signature of a witness in addition to the voter’s signature. These states may conduct signature verification as well.

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58 Application For a Ballot by Mail (state.tx.us) https://webservices.sos.state.tx.us/forms/5-15f.pdf

59 Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Texas. Some limit who may return including Alabama which requires the return only by the voter either in person or by mail. See Appendix B - Table 10: Ballot Collection Laws, Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options (ncsl.org) (July 2022), National Conference of State Legislatures.

60 See Appendix B - Table 13: States That Require Secretary Sleeves for Absentee/Mail Ballots, Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options (ncsl.org) (July 2022), National Conference of State Legislatures.

61 See Appendix B - Table 9: Ballot Drop Box Laws, Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options (ncsl.org) (July 2022), National Conference of State Legislatures.


63 Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Kansas, Maryland, Nebraska, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Virgin Islands, and Wyoming.

64 Alabama (two witnesses or a notary), Alaska (witness or a notary), Louisiana, Minnesota (witness or notary), North Carolina (two witnesses or a notary), Rhode Island* (two witnesses or a notary), South Carolina*, Virginia and Wisconsin. Military and overseas voters are exempt from this requirement.
Three states require the absentee/mail ballot envelope to be notarized. Arkansas requires a copy of the voter’s ID be returned with the absentee/mail ballot. Georgia requires the voter’s driver’s license number or state identification card number, which is compared with the voter’s registration record. Minnesota and Ohio also require the driver’s license number, though Minnesota also requires a witness signature. Ohio conducts signature verification. Within the last year, Texas enacted law to also require a personal identifying number on the returned ballot certificate for a ballot to be counted.

Logistical Considerations

The following section details the logistical considerations and challenges identified through the Department’s review of the issues and processes set forth in Section 31 of Chapter 2022-73, Laws of Florida. Some of the considerations and challenges reflect input from the Florida Supervisors of Elections (FSE). In addition to conference discussions, the FSE submitted a workgroup report entitled Vote-By-Mail Process Revision Workgroup Report, Florida Supervisors of Elections (January 2023). See Appendix A. The workgroup consisted of thirteen county Supervisors of Elections, plus the chair. The thirteen counties included representation from the small, medium, and large size counties.

Privacy

The FSE workgroup highlighted the paramount importance of securing the privacy of voters’ personal identifying information if personal identifying information is required on vote-by-mail certificates. Unfortunately, signatures adjacent to personal identifying numbers may make the vote-by-mail ballot even more of a target for identity or voter fraud according to the workgroup. The workgroup’s report acknowledged that while “an additional return envelope to protect the certificate or re-engineering a new certificate envelope with a larger flap, once sealed, protects the information. . . [b]oth solutions create additional costs and logistical challenges in a complex system where time is already of the essence.”

The FSE workgroup also foresees the challenge of redaction in response to public records requests. Unlike signatures, which may be publicly inspected but not copied, the Florida driver license number, state identification card number and social security number are confidential and exempt from public disclosure. The Department also notes that a requirement to add a personal identifying number on a returned voted ballot certificate would impact the public observation of signature verifications. These public observations would have to incorporate new procedures to redact and preserve the confidential and exempt Florida driver license, state identification card or social security number on the certificate before certificates are presented or projected for viewing.

65 Mississippi, Missouri, and Oklahoma


68 Section 97.0585, Fla.Stat.
Capacity/Workload

The FSE report states that the first option to add an envelope would require added steps in the in-bound mail processing, while the second option to re-engineer a new certificate with a flap solution would “stretch the capabilities” of in-house equipment currently used by supervisors and mail house vendors. According to the FSE report, it is currently unknown whether vendors even have the capacity to produce such envelopes with flaps large enough to accommodate all the information required, particularly amid paper shortages and supply chain constraints.

The issue of supply chain challenges and paper shortage impacting ballots and envelopes has been a topic of ongoing national-level discussions led by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission level since at least 2020. Both state and federal election officials in consort with vendors continue to strategize mitigation efforts for which the risks remain high for future elections. Election officials across the country saw a significant uptick in lead time for request for supplies whether paper, equipment or other goods or products or services necessary to conduct an election. Revamping the vote-by-mail ballot envelopes at this juncture could further strain availability of paper and equipment.

Florida’s vote-by-mail laws are tightly choreographed to manage volume and workload involved with processing requests, canvassing, ensuring vote-by-mail ballots are counted for eligible voters and reporting election results. One of the key factors attributed to Florida’s timely reporting of elections results is the change in law that allowed an expanded pre-election canvassing period for returned vote-by-mail ballots. In Florida, mail ballots may be canvassed as early as 40 days before an election, provided the pre-election testing of voting equipment is completed first. This falls within the five days after UOCAVA ballots are required to be sent and coincides with the seven-day window to mail out domestic vote-by-mail ballots. Additional requirements to processing a redesigned vote-by-mail ballot with protect information would significantly add to the workload.

For context of volume, Supervisors of Elections in Florida received over 2.7 million vote-by-mail ballots for the 2022 General Election. In comparison, Georgia and Texas, two states who require personal identifying information on the vote-by-mail certificate, had substantially fewer vote-by-mail ballots to process, with over 256,000 vote-by-mail ballots for Georgia, and over 359,000 for Texas in the 2022 General Election.

In the 2020 Presidential Election year, 4.8 million registered voters voted by mail in the General Election. According to the FSE, any additional steps for opening and processing, including verification, seriously risk impacting the timely reporting election results which Florida voters, candidates and parties have come to expect, and may undermine confidence in the elections process.\textsuperscript{71}

Challenges for Voting Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons

As stated previously, federal and state laws require that persons with disabilities be afforded the same opportunity to vote that is equal to the opportunity offered to voters without disabilities, whether in

\textsuperscript{69} Supply Chain Considerations for Election Officials | U.S. Election Assistance Commission [eac.gov]; https://www.eac.gov/election-officials/supply-chain-considerations-election-officials

\textsuperscript{70} See section 101.62(4), Fla. Stat.; 52 U.S.C. § 20302. Ballots must be sent no later than 45 days before a federal election to uniformed military (absent stateside and overseas) and overseas civilians with requests on file.

\textsuperscript{71} See Appendix A, p. 4, Vote-By-Mail Process Revision Workgroup Report, Florida Supervisors of Elections, January 2023
person or absentee.\textsuperscript{72} This applies to voting at the polls during early voting and on Election Day and equally to voting by mail.

While information about the number of registered voters who would fall in the category of persons with disabilities is not available, the statewide voter registration application solicits optional information as to whether a voter will need assistance at the polls, which streamlines the process for the voter so that he or she need not complete a declaration for assistance at the polls if he or she presents to vote during early voting or on Election Day. As of January 2023, over 462,528 of the registrants (which may range from 18 and older) have indicated that they may need assistance at the polls. Since this field is voluntarily reported, this figure underrepresents the unreported number of registered voters who may have physical or mental impairments.\textsuperscript{73}

A voter with disabilities who may avail themselves of online ballot delivery of a ballot or other assistive tools for marking a vote-by-mail ballot must still contend with the return of their ballot as electronic return is not allowed. This means the voter must mark the ballot, print the ballot, and still enclose the voted ballot in the required privacy sleeve or secrecy envelope and mailing envelope that is provided by mail concurrently to all voters who vote by mail. Any additional physical or other requirements for returning a voted ballot must ensure that legal requirements do not pose impediments to access to mail in voting for persons with disabilities. Input from this community is warranted as to the potential impact.

Should new requirements be implemented, a statewide voter education program including a video preceding the launch of its redesigned vote-by-mail ballot envelope would be warranted for all voters.

Costs
The FSE workgroup stated that adding a personal identifying information element to a vote-by-mail certificate, as any redesign of a vote-by-mail ballot, will increase the cost of elections including material, labor, freight, vendor, facility, and postage costs. These costs, in turn, impact the vote-by-mail process.

Florida law requires vote-by-mail ballots to be sent first class by nonforwardable return if undeliverable mail. Costs reportedly can vary widely based on weight, volume, and presort level. A vote-by-mail ballot packet typically includes the ballot which may be one or more pages, an instructional insert, a secrecy sleeve or privacy envelope, and return mailing envelope. Aside from initial costs in redesigning a vote-by-mail ballot packet, the addition of a secrecy flap or another privacy envelope for the voter certificate will increase average cost. Very few counties provide pre-paid postage for the return of voted vote-by-mail ballots. The current cost ranges from one to two Forever Stamps (up to three ounces). If the postage is prepaid, it would be a metered rate (60 cents per ounce., 84 cents for two ounces, and $1.08 for three ounces).\textsuperscript{74}

The USPS practice and policy is to deliver ballot envelopes even if it does not have sufficient postage. The cost is assessed against the local election official. Depending on the number of such returned


\textsuperscript{73} According to the Center for Disease Control, 4.5 million adults in Florida have a disability, representing 26% or one in four adults in Florida. \url{https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/impacts/florida.html}

\textsuperscript{74} Source: Communications with FSE President and Supervisor of Elections for Leon County, Mark Earley.
ballots, the cost can be significant. Military and overseas voters have an option to use special free postage paid envelopes. Regardless of postage prepaid or not, the USPS recommends that domestic nonmilitary voters mail back their voted ballots at least one week before the Election Day deadline to account for any unforeseen events or weather issues.\textsuperscript{75} The U.S. Department of Defense’s Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) recommends even earlier timelines (see timetable at the bottom of FVAP’s website) for absent military and overseas voters.\textsuperscript{76}

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures as of 2022, most states leave it to the voter to pay for postage for the return of a voted ballot in most states.\textsuperscript{77} Nineteen states and Washington, D.C., provide return postage for mailed ballots.

As of 2019, in lieu of mailing back their voted ballots, Florida voters have the low-cost option to return their ballot in person themselves or to have someone else on their behalf\textsuperscript{78} to a secure ballot intake station at their Supervisor of Elections’ office or to any designated secure ballot intake station during the early voting period.\textsuperscript{79}

**Bilingual Requirements**
The Department notes that any changes contemplated for the voting by mail process, including the envelope, must take into consideration the federal and state law requirements that require that registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance or other materials or information relating to the electoral process, including ballots, be provided in the applicable minority language as well as in the English language. With the requirement for bilingual election materials, spacing to include instructions and fields to complete may be challenging with little option except to reduce font size to accommodate the limitations on vote-by-mail ballot material design.

\textsuperscript{75} Election Mail - about.usps.com

\textsuperscript{76} Chapter 1 (fvap.gov)

\textsuperscript{77} See Appendix B - Table 12: States with Postage-Paid Election Mail, Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options (ncsl.org)(July 2022), National Conference of State Legislatures.

\textsuperscript{78} Florida law limits the maximum number of ballots a person may possess including voted vote-by-mail ballots. See section 104.0616, Fla. Stat.

Design Ballots/Envelopes
Florida law sets forth the requirements ranging from uniform standards for ballot format and content, to instructions for vote-by-mail voters, to specifications for mailing envelope, secrecy sleeve/privacy envelope, and return envelope. Current requirements and instructions for the delivery and return of vote-by-mail ballots encompass the detailed process and instructions as shown below, all of which must also be made available in Spanish:

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101.64 Delivery of vote-by-mail ballots; envelopes; form.

1. The supervisor shall enclose with each vote-by-mail ballot two envelopes: a secrecy envelope, into which the absent elector shall enclose his or her marked ballot; and a mailing envelope, into which the absent elector shall then place the secrecy envelope, which shall be addressed to the supervisor and also bear on the back side a certificate in substantially the following form:

Note: Please Read Instructions Carefully Before
Marking Ballot and Completing Voter’s Certificate.

VOTER’S CERTIFICATE

I, , do solemnly swear or affirm that I am a qualified and registered voter of County, Florida, and that I have not and will not vote more than one ballot in this election. I understand that if I commit or attempt to commit any fraud in connection with voting, vote a fraudulent ballot, or vote more than once in an election, I can be convicted of a felony of the third degree and fined up to $5,000 and/or imprisoned for up to 5 years. I also understand that failure to sign this certificate will invalidate my ballot.

(Date) (Jail Address) (Home Telephone Number)

(b) Each return mailing envelope must bear the absent elector’s name and any encoded mark used by the supervisor’s office.

(c) A mailing envelope or secrecy envelope may not bear any indication of the political affiliation of an absent elector.

2. The certificate shall be arranged on the back of the mailing envelope so that the line for the signature of the absent elector is across the seal of the envelope; however, no statement shall appear on the envelope which indicates that a signature of the voter must cross the seal of the envelope. The absent elector shall execute the certificate on the envelope.

3. In lieu of the voter’s certificate provided in this section, the supervisor of elections shall provide each person voting absentee under the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act with the standard oath prescribed by the presidential designee.

4. The supervisor shall mark, code, indicate on, or otherwise track the precinct of the absent elector for each vote-by-mail ballot.

5. The secrecy envelope must include, in bold font, substantially the following message:

IN ORDER FOR YOUR VOTE-BY-MAIL BALLOT TO COUNT, YOUR SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS MUST RECEIVE YOUR BALLOT BY 7 P.M. ON ELECTION DAY. IF YOU WANT TO MAIL YOUR BALLOT, YOUR VOTE MIGHT NOT COUNT. TO PREVENT THIS FROM OCCURRING, PLEASE MAIL OR TURN IN YOUR BALLOT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

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81 See section 101.64, Fla. Stat. (delivery of vote-by-mail ballots, envelopes; form); section 101.65, Fla. Stat. (instructions to absent voters).
82 At least two county jurisdictions (Broward and Miami) also provide voting materials in Creole in response to constituent demographics that are significant but not yet enough to trigger bilingual requirements under federal law.
The Department notes that while these requirements are explicit, a properly designed mail piece is a critical component to minimizing voter confusion, ensuring timely delivery, and obtaining cost-efficient election mail rates. Therefore, Supervisors of Elections work closely with mail piece design analysts who are specially trained USPS employees to advise and evaluate mail pieces for machinability (processing), automation compatibility, artwork specifications that can work with Intelligent Mail barcode services,83

83The Intelligent Mail barcode is a 65 bar USPS barcode used to sort and track letters and flats. [https://www.usps.com/election-mail/creating-imb-election-mail-kit.pdf](https://www.usps.com/election-mail/creating-imb-election-mail-kit.pdf) Many Supervisors of Elections also use Informed Visibility to track their mail pieces in near-real time, which helps Supervisors identify mail delivery trends and predicted delivery dates.
and automation-based prices. Supervisors of Elections must submit their questions and templates (as may be modified) months in advance to avoid unanticipated costs and/or untimely delivery for the mail pieces as designed or redesigned.

Only two counties have redesigned their vote-by-mail ballot envelope in a way to protect the signed voter certificate from plain view. Brevard and Duval counties implemented their redesigned envelope in 2010. The following details information about their envelopes and the impact:

- According to the Brevard County Supervisor of Elections, each returned vote-by-mail ballots must be manually ‘deflapped’ prior to running it through the sorter. No special equipment exists for that purpose. The redesigned vote-by-mail envelope costs more than the regular envelope. Additionally, there are a limited number of vendors that produce envelopes with signature flap. The process for ‘deflapping’ requires a significant number of staff. Brevard County relies on temporary staff to help with this time-consuming process. As noted by Brevard County, this process can impact timely reporting if a large number of voted ballots are closer in time to Election Day. For example, in the 2022 General Election, Brevard County reported that over 6,000 vote-by-mail ballots were returned on Election Day hours before the 7:00 p.m. deadline. This directly impacted Brevard County’s ability to complete its reporting of its preliminary election night results until 3:00 a.m. the next day. Over 34% of voters (92,641) in Brevard voted by mail in the 2022 General Election. Brevard County does provide a prepaid postage return envelope. A link to a vote-by-mail instructional video is currently available on the Brevard County Supervisor of Elections’ webpage relating to vote-by-mail ballots. See Appendix F for vote-by-mail materials and screen shots of the instructional video.

- Duval County Supervisor of Elections similarly reported that the flaps of returned voted ballot envelopes must be pulled off by hand and that no special equipment exits for that purpose. The processing time for vote-by-mail ballots can grow exponentially when the county has more than a two-page ballot. The redesign of the vote-by-mail envelope with the flap redesign cost 25 cents more than a regular return ballot envelope. The time-consuming processing of these styled vote-by-mail ballot envelopes has also impacted Duval County’s ability to complete reporting preliminary election night results until the following day. Over 18% of Duval County voters (over 61,289) voted by mail in the 2022 General Election. This represents an additional cost of $15,000 for the special envelope over a regular styled vote-by-mail ballot envelope. Duval County provides prepaid postage return envelopes for its voters. The Supervisor of Elections’ office has an instructional video that details the process for completing a vote-by-mail ballot and returning the voted ballot. This vote-by-mail instructional video is currently available on their webpage relating to vote-by-mail ballots. See Appendix G for photos of screen shots of the instructional video.

84 https://pe.usps.com/MailpieceDesign/Index
85 Information obtained through communications with Brevard County Supervisor of Elections’ Tim Bobanic and Duval County Supervisor of Elections’ Mike Hogan.
86 https://www.votebrevard.gov/Ballots-by-Mail/Mail-Ballot-Information
87 https://www.duvalelections.com/Voter-Information/Vote-By-Mail
Recommendations
While the FSE workgroup recommended unanimously to not make any further changes to the vote-by-mail process as suggested in the legislative proposal, it asked that if any such legislative changes are proposed, that implementation of such changes be postponed until after the 2024 Presidential Election cycle.\(^8\)

The Florida Legislature’s election integrity measures enacted within the last three years have significantly enhanced the security and transparency of the voting process, particularly as applied to voting by mail. This, in turn, fortifies and boosts voter confidence in the electoral process.

One of the current strengths of Florida’s electoral process is the Supervisors of Elections’ ability to meet their statutory duties for conducting elections, canvassing, and reporting election results timely and accurately within existing time constraints and deadlines. Any proposed changes to the vote-by-mail process must consider the significant impact on these activities and the voter. This is particularly important as Florida heads into a Presidential election cycle in which the voter turnout will likely exceed 70%. This is 20% higher than the turnout in the 2022 General Election.

Therefore, the Department of State recommends the following legislative proposals in the continuing effort to review and secure the integrity of elections:

- Prescribe a statewide uniform application form to request a vote-by-mail ballot. The form must include fields for the information required in section 101.62(1), Florida Statutes, including signature, Florida driver license or state identification card number, or last four digits of the social security number, and declaration or re-affirmation of legal residential address.
- Clarify that Supervisors of Elections must verify the personal identifying number in the vote-by-mail ballot request against their records and/or the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. Once verified, the number must be added to the voter’s registration record if not already in the record. This is our recommendation for populating such numbers into the Florida Voter Registration System for those registered voters who do not have those numbers on file. This process would build on election integrity measures adopted in 2021 which require voters to submit a personal identifying number whenever updating an address, name, or party in the voter’s record. This also would ensure that these personal identifying numbers are consistent across voter and voting records.
- Require Supervisors of Elections to verify the voter’s signature on a written request for a vote-by-mail ballot.
- Eliminate requests by telephone for vote-by-mail ballot.
- Require vote-by-mail ballot envelopes to clearly state “Do Not Forward.”
- Prescribe when a voter or his/her designee may pick up a vote-by-mail ballot within early voting when an emergency precludes voting at the polls; allow for exceptions under certain circumstances.

• Require first-time voters who registered by mail, have never voted in Florida, and have never been issued a Florida driver license, Florida state identification card or a social security card to vote in person the first time and conform vote-by-mail ballot return instructions with instructions for regular vote-by-mail ballots.

• Prescribe circumstances under which a vote-by-mail ballot envelope returned with two ballots will not count.

• Prescribe circumstances under which a vote-by-mail ballot may still be counted if the voter changes legal residency between counties.
Appendices
VOTE-BY-MAIL PROCESS

REVISION WORKGROUP REPORT

JANUARY 2023
Vote-by-Mail Process Revision Workgroup

BACKGROUND

During the 2022 regular session, the Florida Legislature passed SB 524, which was signed into law by Governor DeSantis. Section 31 addressed voter privacy, election integrity and access for the vote-by-mail (VBM) provisions as currently outlined in the Florida Election Code. The exact verbiage for Section 31 is as follows:

Section 31. (1) It is the intent of the Legislature to

- balance the security of vote-by-mail balloting with voter privacy and election transparency. The legislature finds that further modifications to procedures governing vote-by-mail balloting would help to further ensure election integrity while also protecting voters from identity theft and preserving the public’s right to participate in election processes. To achieve this purpose, the legislature directs the Department of State to provide a plan to prescribe the use of a Florida driver license number, Florida identification card number, social security number, or any part thereof to confirm the identity of each elector returning a vote-by-mail ballot.

  (2) The Department of State shall review issues involving the feasibility, development, and implementation of such a plan, including issues related to:

  (a) In coordination with other agencies such as the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, obtaining a Florida driver license number or Florida identification card number and the last four digits of a social security number for each registered voter who does not have such numbers on file in the Florida Voter Registration System.

  (b) Populating such numbers in the Florida Voter Registration System.

  (c) Protecting identifying numbers submitted with a vote by-mail ballot, including, but not limited to, prescribing the form of the return mailing envelope.

  (d) Any necessary modifications to canvassing procedures.
In accordance with SB 524, Section 31, a workgroup was commissioned by Supervisor of Elections Mark Earley, President of the Florida Supervisors of Elections (FSE), comprised of the following Supervisors:

**Chair**
The Honorable Brian Corley – Pasco County

**Members**
The Honorable Maureen Baird – Citrus County
The Honorable Tim Bobanić – Brevard County
The Honorable Tomi Brown – Columbia County
The Honorable Chris Chambliss – Clay County
The Honorable Mark Earley – Leon County
The Honorable Lori Edwards – Polk County
The Honorable Alan Hays – Lake County
The Honorable Kaiti Lenhart – Flagler County
The Honorable Julie Marcus – Pinellas County
The Honorable Charles Overturf – Putnam County
The Honorable Joe Scott – Broward County
The Honorable Amanda Seyfang – Bradford County
The Honorable Christina White – Miami Dade County

The following analysis regarding SB 524, Section 31 is derived from responses to a survey sent to all 67 Florida Supervisors, a forum discussion during the FSE 2022 Mid-Winter Conference that included vendors and representatives from the Department of State, and the workgroup’s individual and collective expertise.

Florida Supervisors of Elections remain committed to protecting Florida voters and ensuring both the integrity of and public faith in elections.

Security, Logistics and Time

Protecting mail ballot voters’ personally identifiable information (PII), e.g.: driver license number, Florida identification card number or the last four digits of their social security number, is of paramount concern when requiring voters to write this information on their certificate envelopes. Proposed remedies to protect PII include adding an additional return mailing envelope to protect the certificate or engineering a new certificate envelope with a larger flap that, once sealed, protects the information. Both solutions create additional costs and logistical challenges in a complex system where time is already of the essence.

First, providing a return mailing envelope for the certificate envelope will both require the extra steps involved in removing the certificate from the mailing envelope during in-bound mail processing.

Alternatively, newly engineered envelopes with larger flaps will stretch capabilities of in-house equipment used by supervisors and the mail house vendors used by many counties. It is unclear if vendors have the capacity to produce such envelopes amid ongoing paper shortages and supply chain constraints.

Regardless, an automated computer solution is currently not available to imerge PII on the certificate envelope and display it on election worker computer terminals for human verification. Thus, verifying PII would be a manual process in which election workers must handle every certificate envelope at their workstations – adding risk for error and an unknown amount of time.

Mail ballots must be received 7:00 p.m. on Election Day. Any additional time required to verify PII will result in delays of reporting election results.

Additionally, requiring voters to provide PII introduces another opportunity for error; we cannot quantify how many voters may write it illegibly or return certificate envelopes without it.
If voters do provide the information legibly, another confounding factor remains. Most Florida voters register to vote at Tax Collector’s Offices while obtaining a driver license. This results in a driver license number being the only PII data field in most voter files. Contrastingly, most voters provide the last four digits of their social security number when asked to verify their identities using PII. As such, a disparity exists between what information is in the voter file and what information voters provide to be verified. Supervisors do not have tools to reconcile these differences.

In all cases, when voters do not provide the information, write it illegibly or provide different information than what is in the file, under current law, voters have no cure option. If the Legislature provides cure options, presumably Supervisors would follow the same process for signature deficiencies which includes sending these voters a letter via first class mail when time permits, a text message, an email (if an email address exists in the voter file) and a phone call. Without increasing legally mandated deadlines, timely certification may be jeopardized.

A cascading effect from delays of opening additional envelopes, the process involved in verifying PII and potentially offering the opportunity to cure deficiencies on certificate envelopes dominoes into delays of tabulating votes and reporting results.

Requiring voters to provide PII adjacent to their signatures makes VBM mailings a high-value target for those seeking to commit identity theft, voter fraud and/or undermine faith in elections administration.

It should be noted that Florida law requires voters to confirm their PII before Supervisors are allowed to mail them a ballot. In addition, ballots are not forwardable; voters who want a ballot sent to an address that is not on file, must provide that request in writing; and every signature on a certificate envelope must be verified using the signature in the voter file.

Additionally, Section 97.0585(1)(c), Florida Statutes exempts the social security number, driver license number, and identification number of a voter from public viewing outlined in Section 119.07(1), Florida Statutes. The proposed PII requirements would strain compliance with exemption laws and the provisions in Section 101.572. Even if precautions are taken to protect PII, the FSE fears the stated goal of Section 31 to protect voters from identity theft achieves exactly the opposite.

A skeptical public already expresses concerns around identity theft and postulating that bad actors discard ballots from competing political parties. Section 31 may exacerbate this by adding new concerns that bad actors could remove the concealment flap to steal voter’s identities and/or steal a highly visible voted certificate envelopes prior to receipt by supervisors.
Cost to Taxpayers/Voters:

Each time a process or legal requirement is added, costs to conduct elections increases. Similarly, adding the PII element to the election process will increase material, labor, freight, postage, vendor and facility costs.

Perhaps the greatest cost is intangible and unquantifiable. Floridians — and voters across the nation — largely trust our election results because they are reported within hours of polls closing. This trust that exists hard-won and tenuous. Examples for how this trust is violated can be found in states where results take days to be reported. We fear the same fate will befall Florida if this law is enacted.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS:

Florida has been a nationwide model for timely reporting of election results. The provisions within Section 31 would result in delays that will rankle the respective election stakeholders, to include voters, the public, media, and candidates.

Unanimously, Florida Supervisors of Elections view this legislative proposal as unnecessary and lacking adequate feasibility for implementation. Therefore, with regard to the tenets of Section 31 contained in SB 524, the workgroup — and for the record — all Supervisors of Elections in the State of Florida, oppose legislative efforts to implement this provision of Florida Law.

It is the recommendation of this workgroup to cease any further implementation of Section 31. However, if the legislature desires to proceed, we recommend not adopting the provisions prior to the 2024 presidential election cycle and determining statewide feasibility.

As noted above, the concerns and objections with implementing Section 31 of SB 524 primarily centered on securing PII, time, logistics, and cost. Voter education, however, must not be overlooked. Such a seismic change in vote-by-mail requirements must be communicated to every stakeholder: voters, candidates, political parties, and committees alike.

We, the Supervisors of the above referenced workgroup, submit this report to Supervisor of Elections Mark Earley, President of the Florida Supervisors of Elections.

Respectfully submitted on January 10, 2023.
Appendix B: NCSL Report: Voting Outside the Polling Place: Absentee, All-Mail and other Voting at Home Options (ncsl.org)
Updated July 12, 2022, National Conference of State Legislatures. Links to Tables below can be found through the link above.
## Appendix C: Bilingual Requirements by Jurisdiction

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(In 2021, U.S. Census designated Collier (Spanish) and Glades (American Indian) under section 203. See Federal Register Vol. 86, No. 233 (December 8, 2021) 2021-26547.pdf (govinfo.gov).)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of Florida</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503) - statewide issued or prescribed voter registration/voting forms/materials/information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broward</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503) - County voluntarily offers materials in Creole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collier</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glades</td>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hardee</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
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<td>Hillsborough</td>
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<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lee</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miami-Dade</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503) - County voluntarily offers materials in Creole</td>
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<tr>
<td>Orange</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Osceola</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503); County previously offered Spanish based on 2002 consent order based on alleged violations of Section 208, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10508) and Section 2, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10301) which was released in 2005 but federal monitoring still occurs in county resulting from subsequent cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palm Beach</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pinellas</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
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<td>Polk</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminole</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section 203, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10503)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All counties</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Section &quot;(e)&quot;, Voting Rights Act (52 USCA 10303 (e)); All counties; see <a href="http://www.frules.org">www.frules.org</a> for Rule 1S-2.032, eff. 04/23/2020 regarding uniform ballots and language, and Rule 1S-2.034, eff. 04/23/2020 regarding polling place procedures for language assistance for statewide application. Prior history: Volusia County is a formally designated section (e) county by virtue of 2009 stipulation to provide expanded assistance and bilingual materials including ballots based on Section (e) allegations by Puerto-Rican born residents U.S. citizens in American-flag schools where Spanish was the dominant language.</td>
</tr>
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Appendix D: Application for Georgia Absentee Ballot (Request)

(Two-page application)
Application for Georgia Official Absentee Ballot

Print voter name

Required

Your name as it appears on your voter registration.

First    Middle    Last    Suffix

Assisting a voter?
If yes, the assistant must complete this section. Voter assistance is only allowed if the voter is illiterate or physically disabled.

By signing as assisting the voter, you are swearing under oath that the voter is entitled to assistance. Assisting a voter who is not entitled for assistance in completing this application violates Georgia law and is punishable by a fine up to $1,000, or imprisonment for up to 1 year, or both.

Assistant’s name:

Assistance’s signature:

Date (mm/dd/yyyy)

Requesting a ballot on behalf of a voter?
If yes, complete this section. The voter must be physically disabled or temporarily residing out of the county** and must still be eligible to vote in the county** where he or she is registered.

I swear that the facts contained in this application are true and that I am either the mother, father, grandparent, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, spouse, son, daughter, niece, nephew, grandchild, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law of the age of 18 and acknowledge that making a false statement on this application regarding my relationship to the voter violates Georgia law and is punishable by a fine up to $1,000, 12 months in jail, or both.

Relationship to voter:

I swear (or affirm) that the above named voter is:

☐ physically disabled
☐ temporarily residing out of the country**

Signature of authorized and eligible requestor:

Ballot request opt in:
Optional
If you meet the eligibility criteria, you may opt in to receive an absentee ballot for the rest of the election cycle without making another application.

☐ I opt into receive an absentee ballot for the rest of the election cycle. I am eligible for the reason selected below:
☐ D- Disabled. I am physically disabled
☐ E- Elderly. I am 65 years of age or older
☐ U- UOCAVA. I am a uniformed service member, spouse or dependent of a uniformed service member, or other US citizen residing overseas. (Complete the information to the right)

UOCAVA Voters only:
My current status is (check one):
☐ MOS - Military Overseas
☐ MSTD - Military Statewide
☐ OST - Overseas Temporary Resident
☐ OSP - Overseas Permanent Resident

(Optional) By entering my email, I request that my absentee ballot be transmitted to me electronically.

Email:

Acceptable forms of identification if you do not have a Georgia Driver's License or State Identification Card Number:

Identification with your photograph:
• United States Passport
• Georgia voter identification card
• Other valid identification card issued by a branch, department, agency, or entity of the State of Georgia, any other state, or the United States authorized by law to issue personal identification
• United States military identification card
• Employee identification card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the United States government, Georgia state government, or Georgia county, municipality, board, authority, or any other entity of the state of Georgia
• Tribal identification card

Documents that show your name and address:
• Current utility bill
• Bank statement
• Paycheck
• Government check

How to return your absentee ballot application:
Absentee ballot applications must be received 11 days before the date of the election.
You can return the form by:
• mail (as an attachment)
• fax (in person at your election office)

Your County Board of Registrars Office information can be found online:
hits:lections.sos.ga.gov/ Elections/CountyRegistrars.do

For state, county, and federal elections, your elections office is your county elections office. In municipal elections, your elections office is your municipal elections office.
**Or, in municipal elections, municipality.

No person or entity other than the elector, a relative authorized to request an absentee ballot for such elector, a person signing as assisting an illiterate or physically disabled elector with his or her application, a common carrier charged with returning the ballot application, an absentee ballot clerk, a registrar, or a law enforcement officer in the course of an investigation shall handle or return an elector’s completed absentee ballot application. A complete application must include the following information:

This is NOT an official government publication and was not provided to you by any governmental entity and this is NOT a ballot.
It is being distributed by:

Pursuant to O.C.S. §52-2 381(e)(c)(i).
Appendix E: Texas Application to Request a Vote-by-Mail Ballot

Application for a Ballot by Mail

If you want to vote by mail, you must fill out this form and mail it to the Early Voting Clerk. You must include a copy of your identification with your signatures on the form. You must also mail the completed form to the Early Voting Clerk. You must complete the Witness/Assistant Box below.

1. Voter Information

- Name: First, Last
- Residence Address as shown on your Voter Registration Certificate
- Date of Birth: __/__/__

2. Mail My Ballot To:

- My Residence Address (as listed on my Voter Registration Certificate)
- My Other Address (as applicable)
- Address of the ballot to be mailed
- Date of return to residence address: __/__/__

3. Reason For Voting by Mail:

- 65 Years of Age or Older
- Disability as defined in Texas Election Code §2.022(a)
- If I have a disability or physical condition that prevents me from appearing at the polling place on Election Day without a likelihood of needing personal assistance or of injuring my health.
- If I expect to be out of state or the United States on Election Day
- If I expect to be out of state or the United States on Election Day
- If I am a prisoner in a certain but not necessarily maximum security facility
- If I am a member of the armed forces overseas

4. Send me a Ballot for the Following Elections:

- Primary Election (even numbered years only)
- General Election (odd numbered years only)
- Uniform Election Dates
- May Election (not a primary runoff)
- Primary Election (even numbered years only)
- Democratic Primary
- Republican Primary
- Any Resulting Runoff

5. Sign Here:

- I certify that the information given in this application is true, and I understand that giving false information in this application is a crime.
- Date: __/__/__

6. If someone helps you complete this form or mails, emails, or faxes the form for you, that person must complete the section below.

Instructions for Witnesses and Assistants: See back of this form for the definitions of Witness and Assistant. Check only one box below.

- Witness: If you are acting as a witness to the applicant’s signature or mark, you must state your relationship to the applicant here.
- Assistant: If you assisted the applicant in completing this application or the applicant’s signature or mark, you must state your relationship to the applicant here.

Signature of Witness/Assistant: __________
Printed Name of Witness/Assistant: __________
Appendix F: Brevard County Supervisor of Elections’ Vote-by-Mail Election Materials – Photos and screen shots of instructional video

1. Vote-by-Mail Election Materials

Mailing envelope – front and back
Prepaid postage notice included in envelope – English and Spanish

No Postage Necessary if returned in the United States.

The USPS has recommended that you should anticipate a **minimum of 8 days return delivery time** for your voted mail ballot to reach my office.

Should you wish to return your voted mail ballot **in person**, you may drop it off at one of the secure ballot intake stations, located at:

Any Election Administrative Office

Titusville Elections Office - 400 South Street, Titusville, FL 32780

Viera Elections Office - 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera, FL 32940

Melbourne Elections Office - 1515 Samo Road, Melbourne, FL 32935

Palm Bay Elections Office - 450 Cogan Drive SE, Palm Bay, FL 32909

Track the status of your mail ballot:

[www.VoteBrevard.gov](http://www.VoteBrevard.gov)

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No Es Necesario El Sello para devolver en los Estados Unidos.

El USPS también recomendó que debe anticipar un tiempo **mínimo de entrega de devolución de 8 días para** que su boleta por correo votada llegue a mi oficina.

Si desea devolver su boleta de voto por correo votada en persona, puede dejarla en una de las estaciones seguras de depósito de boletas, localizadas en:

Cualquier Oficina Administrativa Electoral

Titusville Elections Office - 400 South Street, Titusville, FL 32780

Viera Elections Office - 2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera, FL 32940

Melbourne Elections Office - 1515 Sarno Road, Melbourne, FL 32935

Palm Bay Elections Office - 450 Cogan Drive SE, Palm Bay, FL 32909

Puede seguir el estado de su boleta de votación por correo:

[www.VoteBrevard.gov](http://www.VoteBrevard.gov)
Secrecy Sleeve – English and Spanish sides

HOW TO MAKE YOUR MAIL BALLOT

1. Only use black pen.
2. Complete all in the oval.
3. Do not cross out or place checkmarks in Xs.
4. If you make a mistake, fill in the oval for a new choice when you intend to vote for the other, scratch through the incorrect vote with an X, fill in the oval to the left of the choice for which you intend to vote, and write "This one" beside it.
5. Do not mark any parts of your ballot.
6. Place with sides of your ballot.
7. If you are returning your ballot by mail, and to: Joe Scott, Supervisor of Elections, PO BOX 8000, Melbourne, FL 32902

USE YOUR BALLOT IN THIS SECRET SLEEVE AND RETURN IN THE MAILING ENVELOPE PROVIDED

If you do not return your ballot by mail, you may vote in person at your early voting location.

PLACER TUS BALLOTAS EN ESTE SUTETO SECRETO Y DEVUÉNLAS EN EL SUTETO DE ENVÍO POR CORREO QUE SELECCIONES.

SI NO REGRESAS TUS BALLOTAS POR CORREO, PUEDES VOTAR EN PERSONA EN LA VOTACIÓN TEMPRANA.

CUBIERTA DE CONFIDENCIALIDAD

SECRÉT SLEEV

LEA ambas ORITSTIONES OBTEN

NTE DE MARCAR LA BOLITA

1. ONLY IMPORTA TO MARK A MVC LIFE BALLOT.
2. COMPLETE A LEH BALLOT.
3. Do not mark any part of your ballot.
4. Place with sides of your ballot.
5. Return your ballot at the address provided.

IF YOU ARE RETURNING YOUR BALLOT BY MAIL, AND TO: Joes Scott, Supervisor of Elections, PO BOX 8000, Melbourne, FL 32902

PLACER TUS BALLOTAS EN ESTE SUTETO SECRETO Y DEVUÉNLAS EN EL SUTETO DE ENVÍO POR CORREO QUE SELECCIONES.

SI NO REGRESAS TUS BALLOTAS POR CORREO, PUEDES VOTAR EN PERSONA EN LA VOTACIÓN TEMPRANA.

CUBIERTA DE CONFIDENCIALIDAD

SECRÉT SLEEV

LEA ambas ORITSTIONES OBTEN

NTE DE MARCAR LA BOLITA

1. ONLY IMPORTA TO MARK A MVC LIFE BALLOT.
2. COMPLETE A LEH BALLOT.
3. Do not mark any part of your ballot.
4. Place with sides of your ballot.
5. Return your ballot at the address provided.

IF YOU ARE RETURNING YOUR BALLOT BY MAIL, AND TO: Joes Scott, Supervisor of Elections, PO BOX 8000, Melbourne, FL 32902
Did you remember to sign your name below?
¿Te acordaste de firmar tu nombre abajo?

FOLD DOWN AND SEAL FLAP
DOBLE Y SELLE LA SOLAPA

SAMPLE

I, do solemnly swear or affirm that I am a qualified and registered voter of Broward County, Florida, and that I have not and will not vote in any other election held before the date of this election. I understand that if I attempt to vote twice in this election, I may be found guilty of a felony by any other election in this county in which I have voted. I also understand that failure to sign this certificate will invalidate my ballot. SEE VOTER CERTIFICATE TO THE RIGHT BEFORE SIGNING. ONE BALLOT PER ENVELOPE.
Return Mailing Envelope – inside mailing envelope with open secrecy flap on bottom.

Return Mailing Envelope – outside mailing envelope with open secrecy on bottom.
2. Brevard County Instructional Video Screen Shots

How to Return Your Mail Ballot

Step #1 -

• Place your voted ballot inside the secrecy sleeve.
• Insert the ballot inside the envelope.
• Seal the flap
• Fill out the voter's certificate
• After reading the oath, print your name

Providing current contact information helps in case we need to contact you about your ballot.
• Sign and date your voter's certificate

Step #2:
Fold the secrecy sleeve on the line under "FOLD HERE" as indicated by the arrows.
Return your mail ballot:

- By mailing it via the USPS
- Dropping it off at an Early Voting location during hours of operation
- Putting it in a Secure Ballot Intake Station at any of the 4 elections administrative offices

REMEMBER -
Mail ballots must be received in the Supervisor of Elections office on Election Day by 7:00 p.m. in order to be counted!
Appendix G: Duval County Vote-by-Mail Ballot Material – Instructional Video

Screen Shots

Screen shots of instruction video

Content of vote-by-mail ballot envelope – ballot, secrecy sleeve, instructions, return mailing envelope with certificate
Voter certificate on return mailing envelope
Marking the ballot

Placing ballot in secrecy sleeve
Placing ballot in secrecy sleeve within envelope

Completing the voter certificate
Return mailing/prepaid postage
Removal of adhesive tape in fold and on edge of envelope to seal
Seal envelope by folding towards adhesive edge