

WHO'S WHO? in Florida Politics



NATIONAL LATINA
INSTITUTE FOR
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH
Florida LAN
Salud | Dignidad | Justicia



Voting is a public way of saying, “Our families count, and all of our lives matter!”

Civic participation means getting everyday folks involved in the decisions that affect our families and communities. Election season is an especially important time for us to speak up, and there are many ways we can all get involved in the process, regardless of our citizenship status or whether we can vote.

Elections matter because elected leaders can make decisions that can either help or hurt our families. Politicians pay more attention to communities who participate in elections. Voting is a public way of saying, “Our families count, and all of our lives matter!”

To make it easier to vote, Floridians can vote on Election Day, before Election Day at Early Voting locations, or by requesting a Vote-By-Mail (or Absentee) ballot to be mailed to your home. You can choose to vote by mail or vote early for any reason.



Sign up at [NLIRH.TURBOVOTE.ORG](https://nlirh.turbovote.org)
to register to vote, sign up for an absentee ballot, or receive reminders about upcoming elections.

NATIONAL ELECTED POSITIONS

US CONGRESS • Congress is made up of two separate bodies: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Together they form the legislative (law-making) branch of the Federal Government. There are no limits on the number of terms that a member of Congress can serve.

US REPRESENTATIVE

There are 435 members of the House of Representatives. All seats in the House are up for re-election every two years. The number of representatives from each state is based on population. Currently Florida has 27 representatives.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Makes and passes federal laws.
- Decides the budget for federal programs.
- Determines federal tax guidelines.
- Can propose changes to the Constitution.
- Has the power to declare war.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Decides whether programs such as Head Start, Medicaid, Cash Assistance, Social Security, relief for victims of natural disasters, military spending, child care, health care and domestic violence services are funded or cut.



Creates federal laws governing immigration, healthcare, education, criminal justice, student loan interest rates, labor and environmental protections.

US SENATOR

There are 100 US Senators. Each state elects two senators in statewide election for six-year terms. Senate races are staggered so only one senator in a state is up for election at a time. Florida does not have a senate race in 2014.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Same as House of Representatives (see page 1).
- In addition, the Senate approves the President's appointments to important positions, including the US Supreme Court and the Cabinet (the board that advises the President and holds offices in key departments).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Same as US House of Representatives (see page 1).

FLORIDA STATEWIDE ELECTED POSITIONS

GOVERNOR

Heads the state executive branch. Elected every four years in non-presidential election years ("mid-terms"). Can only serve two terms or eight years.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Develops the state's annual budget for review by the legislature. Must have a balanced budget. The Governor has a "line item" veto to cut specific funding from the legislature's budget.
- Has the power to veto bills passed by the state legislature.
- Appoints critical positions in agencies, boards and commissions.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Can call a special session of the state legislature to deal with a specific urgent issue.



Appoints Secretary of State, who is responsible for managing elections and can ensure that elections are executed fairly.

FLORIDA ATTORNEY GENERAL

The state's chief legal and law enforcement office. Elected every four years, with a two term or eight year limit.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Enforces health, safety, and consumer regulations.
- Enforces civil rights laws including disability rights, economic discrimination in mortgage lending, racial profiling, and discrimination in public accommodations.
- Serves as one of four members of the cabinet, overseeing all major executive decisions.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Represents the state and state's position in all legal matters in court.



Issues opinions and interpretation of Florida laws or proposed laws such as local taxes, charter schools and law enforcement.



Establishes and enforces child support orders.



WHAT IF I CAN'T VOTE?

You must be 18 and a US citizen to vote, and if you have a past felony conviction in Florida, you cannot vote unless you get a pardon from the Governor. But you can still make a difference!

- Encourage and educate people who can vote.
- Share this guide at your church or with your neighbors.
- Write letters to your local paper about issues you care about.

STATE LEGISLATURE • The Florida legislature is divided into two parts: the Florida State Senate and the Florida House of Representatives. Proposed laws must be approved by both houses and signed by the Governor to become law. The legislature meets every year for sixty days. Special sessions can be called as needed.


FLORIDA STATE REPRESENTATIVES


KEY RESPONSIBILITIES


WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The state has 120 House Districts. Each district elects one representative. All House seats are up for election every two years, with a two-term limit (eight years).

- Initiates state laws in areas such as state taxes, business regulation, education, child care and conservation of natural resources.
- Shares budget-making responsibilities with the Governor.
- Can override a veto by the Governor with a two-thirds majority vote in the legislature.

 Decides how much of the state budget should fund public and higher education or the CHIP program for low-income children.

 Can propose expanding Medicaid, allowing low-income people to receive federal subsidies for health insurance.

 Can propose laws to limit or expand access to health care, including reproductive health care; raise the minimum wage, ensure equal pay; and oppose discrimination.

FLORIDA STATE SENATORS

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

The state is divided into 40 Senate Districts and each district elects one Senator. State senate seats are up for election every four years, with a two-term limit (eight years).

Same as Florida House of Representatives (above).

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LOCAL ELECTED POSITIONS


SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS


KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

Each of the 67 Florida counties has its own school district, and each one has a locally elected school board. School board members serve staggered, four-year terms so that the entire board is not up for election at the same time. Most are non-partisan (no party listed on ballot) elections.

- Adopts policies to guide the school district.
- Approves the annual budget.
- Serves as the public voice in the school system.
- In 26 districts the school board is responsible for selecting the Superintendent, including Miami/Dade. In 41 districts the Superintendent is elected independently.

 Approves curriculum for use in the district on all subjects including science, history, sexuality education, and civics.

 Determines if district will use corporal punishment (paddling).

COUNTY COMMISSION

Serves as the governing body of the county and has broad powers to set policy for county services. Commissioners are usually elected by residents in specific “districts” or are elected “at-large” by voters in the entire county.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Determines policies for all services provided by county agencies.
- Provides metropolitan services like garbage and recycling, public transportation like buses and rail, public housing, and libraries.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Can provide financial support to community services which support low-income women and families.



Makes zoning decisions that can either promote or prevent the development of low-income housing.

CITY COUNCIL OR COMMISSION

Creates city policies and ordinances. City council members are usually elected by residents living in specific “districts” or are elected “at-large” by voters in the entire city.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Sets city taxes and the city budget.
- Oversees all construction and improvement projects in the city.
- Works with the mayor and city staff to develop city’s strategic plan.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU



Can provide money to community services which support low-income women and families.



Makes zoning decisions that can either promote or prevent the development of low-income housing.



THE NATIONAL LATINA INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

is the only national reproductive justice organization dedicated to building Latina power to advance health, dignity, and justice for 25 million Latinas, their families, and communities in the United States through leadership development, community mobilization, policy advocacy, and strategic communications.

STRONG FAMILIES is a program of Forward Together. NLIRH is a member of Strong Families, joining more than 125 groups working to change how we think, feel, act, and make policy about families.

THE FLORIDA LATINA ADVOCACY NETWORK

The Florida Latina Advocacy Network (FL LAN) operates as an extension of NLIRH, serving as the voice and advocacy presence in Florida. FL LAN works with activists throughout Miami-Dade County to organize our communities around issues-based campaigns that impact our families and our lives.

For more information, contact NLIRH at 786-766-8199 or 786-571-7973



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