

Should School Board Elections in Florida become Partisan, or should they remain Nonpartisan?

Learn how your choice will impact:

- The future of public education in Florida.
- Who can vote in future school board elections.

Anticipated ballot language:

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



Election Day: November 5, 2024

Early Voting: October 21- November 2, 2024*

*check dates & locations in your county

About the League of Women Voters

The League of Women Voters was founded more than 100 years ago to educate voters and to defend democracy. The League is nonpartisan and does not endorse or oppose any candidate for public office. However, after in-depth research, the League does take positions on issues of importance to voters.

*In November of 2024, Floridians will vote on a far-reaching constitutional amendment to require **partisan** school board elections. The League of Women Voters of Florida urges voters to carefully consider the issues outlined in this brochure.*

After careful study, the League recommends a “NO” vote to the amendment so that school board elections remain nonpartisan.

For more detailed information, use this QR code to read the LWVFL’s White Paper on partisan school board elections:



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**On your November 2024 Ballot
YOU will decide on an Amendment to
the Florida Constitution**

Partisan VS Nonpartisan School Board Elections



**What’s the difference?
Why does it matter?**

Who can vote in nonpartisan school board elections now?

Local school board elections in Florida are currently nonpartisan. All registered voters regardless of party can vote in the primary and general election for the candidates of their choice.

What's new for voters on the November 2024 ballot?

Floridians will vote on an amendment to the State Constitution requiring district school board elections to be **partisan**. If passed by 60% of the voters, future ballots would list each candidate's political party. This would make school board elections part of Florida's **closed** primary system.

How will this amendment change who can vote in school board elections?

- In a closed primary only voters registered with a political party can vote for candidates of that party.
- Voters registered as No Party Affiliates (NPAs) or with minor parties, by law, cannot vote in a closed primary election. This excludes 30% of Florida's voters.
- If only one party has candidates, the primary would be open to all voters. This is called a *Universal Primary Contest (UPC)*.
- **BUT** Florida's write-in loophole provides a way to close the UPC primary. A write-in candidate specifies no party affiliation and runs only in the general election. The write-in candidate often doesn't even campaign.
- **Yet the write-in candidate loophole gives voting rights only to members of the party holding the primary.** Over 8 million voters were excluded from voting in Florida primaries as a result of the write-in loophole from 1998-2022.

Arguments for school boards to remain nonpartisan (A "NO" vote):

***All registered voters, regardless of party affiliation can vote in nonpartisan elections.**

Nearly 4,000,000 NPA voters in Florida would be excluded from voting for school board candidates in primaries if school board elections become partisan. In some circumstances, only voters of one party would have a say in selecting candidates.

***Nonpartisan boards may have more incentives for collaboration and compromise.**

An effective school board requires collaboration and compromise for the greater good of the district and its students. Partisan members may make decisions based on the 'party line' and could increase political polarization, resulting in problems not solved and needs not met.

***Nonpartisan elections maintain local control.**

Partisan candidates may support their party's agenda rather than using first-hand knowledge and experience of the local district's needs, issues, and best interests to provide the appropriate guidance and leadership.

***Nonpartisanship promotes a school community with diverse perspectives and experiences.**

Partisan elections may create a politically charged school environment. This may reduce applications from potentially exemplary board members, highly qualified teachers, effective school administrators, and community volunteers

DID YOU KNOW? New legislation passed in 2023 permits candidates from outside your county to run for your local school board. They need to move only if elected. Non-resident partisan candidates may be unfamiliar with your local district and may choose to focus more on a narrow political agenda than on local needs.

Arguments for school boards to become partisan (A "YES" vote):

***Partisan school boards may contribute to transparency.**

A candidate's party affiliation may predict how they will vote on controversial school board issues.

***Partisan school boards are a logical outgrowth of the politicization of education.**

Since public education in Florida has become politicized with ideological differences reflected in new legislation, most school board elections have already become partisan.

***Partisan school boards will align with other partisan races.**

Other local offices such as county commissioners and sheriffs are already partisan. School board races should be no different.

References:

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