

January 13, 2023

BY CERTIFIED U.S. MAIL AND EMAIL

Hon. Cord Byrd Florida Secretary of State R.A. Gray Building 500 South Bronough Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-0250

Re: Florida's Non-Compliance with the National Voter Registration Act

Dear Secretary Byrd,

Pursuant to 52 U.S.C. § 20510(b), we write on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Florida, the Florida State Conference of the NAACP, the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Florida, Inc., the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, and persons similarly situated to formally notify you that Florida's uniform statewide voter registration application violates the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 ("NVRA").

In 2018, Florida voters overwhelmingly approved Amendment 4, a constitutional amendment that automatically restored voting rights to most people with felony convictions, except those convicted of murder or a felony sexual offense, after they complete their sentence, including probation and parole. Shortly thereafter, in 2019, state lawmakers and Gov. Ron DeSantis enacted Senate Bill 7066, which defined the phrase "felony sexual offense" and term "murder" in Amendment 4 to include an enumerated list of crimes, and the phrase "completion of all terms of sentence" in Amendment 4 to include satisfaction of certain, disqualifying legal financial obligations ("LFOs") ordered by a court as part of a sentence for a felony conviction.

As described in more detail below, Florida's uniform statewide voter registration application violates the NVRA by failing to provide sufficient

¹ Fla. Const. art. VI, § 4(a)–(b) (amended 2018).

² Fla. Stat. § 98.0751.

³ *Id.* § 98.0751(2)(b); *id.* 98.0751(2)(c).

⁴ *Id.* § 98.0751(2)(a). As a general matter, disqualifying LFOs only include fines, fees, costs, or restitution that are "contained in the four corners of the sentencing document." *Id.* LFOs that accrue after sentencing, such as fees or surcharges, need not be paid before voting rights are restored. *Id.* § 98.0751(2)(a)5.c.

information to inform applicants with felony convictions of the eligibility requirements for voting in Florida. This matter takes on particular urgency in light of the ongoing arrests and prosecutions of Floridians with past convictions for what appear to be honest mistakes about their voter eligibility.⁵

As Florida's chief election official, you are responsible for the state's compliance with the NVRA. We seek confirmation that you will immediately modify Florida's statewide voter registration application so that it provides sufficient information to inform applicants with felony convictions of the eligibility requirements for voting in Florida.

Continued use of the statewide voter registration application violates the NVRA because it does not adequately inform applicants with felony convictions of their eligibility under Florida law.

The NVRA requires states to "inform applicants . . . of . . . voter eligibility requirements." Statewide voter registration forms must specify "each eligibility requirement."

Florida's statewide voter registration application provides that applicants who "have been convicted of a felony... cannot register until [their] right to vote is restored." It further asks applicants to affirm "that [they are] not [] convicted felon[s], or if [they are], [their] right to vote has been restored." However, the application does *not* include all of the requirements that applicants with felony convictions must satisfy in order to be eligible to vote in Florida. The application likewise fails to mention the different mechanisms through which an individual who lost their voting rights may regain them.

Specifically, the statewide voter registration application is inadequate for at least three reasons. *First*, it fails to inform those convicted of murder or a felony sexual offense in Florida or another state that they are not eligible to vote unless

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⁵ See, e.g., Bianca Fortis, A Government Official Helped Them Register. Now They've Been Charged with Voter Fraud, ProPublica (July 21, 2022), https://www.propublica.org/article/florida-felonies-voter-fraud; 4 Sex Offenders Charged with Illegal Voting in Central Florida as More Being Investigated, WESH Orlando (July 25, 2022), https://www.florida-us-more-being-investigated/ar-AAZXDnS; Press Release, Fla. Department of Law Enforcement, In case you missed it: FDLE arrests convicted murders, sex offenders for voting illegally (Aug. 18, 2022), http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/News/2022/August/In-case-you-missed-it-FDLE-arrests-convicted-murde">http://www.fdle.state.fl.us/News/2022/August/In-case-you-missed-it-FDLE-arrests-convicted-murde [hereinafter FDLE Press Release].

⁶ 52 U.S.C. § 20507(a)(5).

⁷ See id. §§ 20504(c)(2)(C)(i), 20505(a)(2), 20506(a)(6), 20508(b)(2)(A).

⁸ See Florida Voter Registration Application, https://files.floridados.gov/media/704789/dsde39-english-pre-7066-20220429.pdf (last visited Jan. 13, 2023).

⁹ See id.

they received clemency or a pardon. *Second*, it does not inform those convicted of a felony in Florida (other than murder or a felony sexual offense) that they must not be on parole, probation, or community custody and that they must pay off all disqualifying LFOs that were assigned at the time of their felony sentence to regain the right to vote. *Third*, the application does not inform those with out-of-state felony convictions (other than murder or a felony sexual offense) that their eligibility to vote in Florida depends on whether they would be eligible to vote in the state where they were convicted. ¹⁰

As a result, Florida's statewide voter registration application violates the NVRA by not informing all applicants sufficiently of voter eligibility requirements.

The dearth of information on Florida's statewide voter registration application, coupled with the state's flawed and inadequate system for determining voter eligibility, ¹¹ puts applicants with felony convictions at risk of criminal liability. In fact, Florida has already started prosecuting at least 27 people with past felony convictions for allegedly submitting false voter registration information, including for falsely affirming that their voting rights have been restored. ¹² Yet publicly available information suggests most, if not all, of those charged likely did not know they were ineligible, ¹³ nor could they have determined the requirements for their eligibility based on the information in Florida's statewide voter registration application.

¹⁰ Constitutional Amendment 4/Felon Voting Rights, Fla. Division of Elections, https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/for-voters/voter-registration/constitutional-amendment-4felon-voting-rights/ (last visited Jan. 13, 2023) ("A felony conviction in another state makes a person ineligible to vote in Florida only if the conviction would make the person ineligible to vote in the state where the person was convicted."); see also Department of State Advisory Opinion 04–05 (May 27, 2004), http://opinions.dos.state.fl.us/searchable/pdf/2004/de0405.pdf ("Those persons convicted of felonies outside of Florida whose voting rights were restored by the state wherein the felony was committed, may register to vote in Florida. No evidence of the civil rights restoration is required at the time of registration.").

¹¹ A federal court found that it is "sometimes hard, sometimes impossible" to determine how much a person with a past felony conviction in Florida must pay in order to become eligible to register and to vote. *Jones v. DeSantis*, 462 F. Supp. 3d 1196, 1241 (N.D. Fla. 2020).

¹² See Fortis, supra note 5; FDLE Press Release, supra note 5.

¹³ See, e.g., Lawrence Mower, 'What Is Wrong with This State?' Video Shows Stunned Floridians Arrested for Voting, Miami Herald (Oct. 19, 2022), https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article267303557.html; Sam Levine, 'What's This About?': Body-Cam Footage Shows Confusion as Florida Man Arrested for Voter Fraud, The Guardian (Sep. 1, 2022), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/sep/01/bodycam-footage-florida-man-voter-fraud]; Matt Dixon, Defendants Targeted in DeSantis' Voter Fraud Crackdown Were Told They Could Vote, Politico (Aug. 26, 2022), https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/26/desantis-voter-fraud-defendants-florida-00053788; Sam Levine, Floridians Charged Over Voting Believed They Were Eligible, Documents Show, The Guardian (Aug. 25, 2022), https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/25/florida-voting-fraud-charges-eligibility.

Immediate steps are needed to avoid a violation of the NVRA.

To ensure that Florida is complying with the NVRA, we seek:

- 1. Assurance that your office will develop a revised statewide voter registration application that complies with the NVRA;
- 2. A revised statewide voter registration application that informs individuals convicted of murder or a felony sexual offense in Florida or another state that they must have received elemency or a pardon to be eligible to vote;
- 3. A revised statewide voter registration application that informs individuals convicted of a felony in Florida (other than murder or a felony sexual offense) that they must not be on parole, probation, or community control and that they must have paid off all disqualifying LFOs that were assigned at the time of their felony sentence to be eligible to vote; and
- 4. A revised statewide voter registration application that informs individuals convicted of a felony in another state (other than murder or a felony sexual offense) that they are eligible to vote if they would be eligible to vote in the state where they were convicted.

In addition, we seek assurances that your office will take immediate steps to update the <u>Florida Online Voter Registration ("OVR") application</u>, as well as the Division of Elections' "<u>Constitutional Amendment 4/Felon Voting Rights</u>" and "<u>FAQ – Voter Registration</u>" webpages, so that they likewise include all of the requirements that applicants with felony convictions must satisfy in order to be eligible to vote in Florida.

We welcome the opportunity to work with your office to develop a plan to take immediate steps to resolve these issues and ensure that Florida meets its obligations under the NVRA as soon as possible. To that end, we have enclosed proposed modifications to the statewide voter registration application that would bring it into compliance with the NVRA. This language could also be incorporated into the OVR application and the Division's webpages noted above. In addition, we are happy to work with your office to make said applications and webpages more accessible in terms of design and readability.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please contact Sean Morales-Doyle at (646) 292-8310 or morales-doyles@brennan.law.nyu.edu for further discussion.

Sincerely,

/s/ Patrick Berry

Patrick Berry

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Enclosure

Información en español: Sirvase llamar a la oficina del supervisor de elecciones de su condado si le interesa obtener este formulario en español.

To Register in Florida, you must be:

- a U.S. citizen.
- a Florida resident.
- at least 18 years old (you may pre-register at 16 or 17, but cannot vote until you are 18).

If you have been convicted of a felony, or if a court has found you to be mentally incapacitated as to your right to vote, you cannot register until your right to vote is restored.

For more information on voter eligibility for people with felony convictions, please see page 3 of this application

If you do not meet any <u>ONE</u> of these requirements, you are not eligible to register.

Questions?

Contact the Supervisor of Elections in your county: dos.myflorida.com/elections/contacts/supervisor-of-elections

Visit the Florida Division of Elections' website at: dos.myflorida.com/elections

CRIMINAL OFFENSE: It is a 3rd degree felony to submit false information. Maximum penalties are \$5,000 and/or 5 years in prison.

PUBLIC RECORD: Once filed, all information including your phone number and email address as provided become public record except for the following which can only be used for voter registration purposes: your FL DL#, FL ID#, SSN, where you registered to vote, and whether you declined to register or to update your voter registration record at a voter registration agency. Your signature can be viewed but not copied. (Section 97.0585, Fla. Stat.)

qualified to register as an elector under the Constitution and laws of the State of Florida, and that all information provided in this application is true.

Where to Register: You can register to vote by completing this application and delivering it in person or by mail to any supervisor of elections' office, office that issues driver's licenses, or voter registration agency (public assistance office, center for independent living, office serving persons with disabilities, public library, or armed forces recruitment office) or the Division of Elections. Mailing addresses are on page 2 of this form.

Deadline to Register: The deadline to register to vote is 29 days before any election. You can update your registration record at any time, but for a Primary Election, party changes must be completed 29 days before that election. You will be contacted if your new application is incomplete, denied or a duplicate of an existing registration. Your Voter Information Card will be mailed to you once you are registered.

Identification (ID) Requirements: New applicants must provide a current and valid Florida driver's license number (FL DL#) or Florida identification card number (FL ID#). If you do not have a FL DL# or FL ID#, then you must provide the last four digits of your Social Security number (SSN). If you do not have any of these numbers, check "None." If you leave the field and box blank, your new registration may be denied. See section 97.053(6), Fla.Stat.

Special ID requirements: If you are registering by mail, have never voted in Florida, <u>and</u> have never been issued one of the ID numbers above, include one of the following with your application, or at a later time before you vote: 1) A <u>copy</u> of an ID that shows your name and photo (acceptable IDs--U.S. Passport, debit or credit card, military ID, student ID, retirement center ID, neighborhood association ID, or public assistance ID); **or** 2) A <u>copy</u> of an ID that shows your name and current residence address (acceptable documents--utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document).

The special ID is not required if you are 65 or older, have a temporary or permanent physical disability, are a member of the active uniformed services or merchant marine who is absent from the county for active duty, or a spouse or dependent thereof, or are currently living outside the U.S. but otherwise eligible to vote in Florida.

Political Party Affiliation: Florida is a closed primary election state. In primary elections, registered voters can only vote for their registered party's candidates in a partisan race on the ballot. In a primary election, all registered voters, regardless of party affiliation, can vote on any issue, nonpartisan race, and race where a candidate faces no opposition in the General Election. If you do not indicate your party affiliation, you will be registered with no party affiliation. For a list of political parties, visit the Division of Elections' website at: <a href="document-

 $\label{lem:reconstruction} \textbf{Race} \mbox{\bf /Ethnicity:} \ \mbox{\bf It is optional to list your race or ethnicity.}$

Boxes: Please check boxes (□) where applicable.

Numbered rows 1 through 7 and 12 must be completed for a new registration.

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2	2 I affirm that I am not a convicted felon, or if I am, my right to vote has been restored.																							
3	I affirm that I have not been adjudicated mentally incapacitated with respect to voting or, if I have, my right to vote has been restored.																							
4	Date of Birth (MM-DD-YYYY) -								-	-				FVRS No:										
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8	Mailing Address (if different from above address)							Apt/Le	ot/Un	nit City				State or Country		Zip Code								
9	Address Where You Were Last Registered to Vote							Apt/Le	ot/Un	nit City				State			Zip	Zip Code						
10	Former Name (if name is changed)						Gend		State or Country of				Telephone No. (optional)				al)							
11	☐ Email me SAMPLE BALLOTS if option is available in my county. (See Public Record Notice above) My email address is:																							
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Address your envelope to your County Supervisor of Elections. (Rev 04/2022)	Flagler-Supervisor of Elections	Lake-Supervisor of Elections	Pasco-Supervisor of Elections
	PO Box 901	PO Box 457	PO Box 300
	Bunnell FL 32110-0901	Tavares FL 32778 -0457	Dade City FL 33526-0300
	Phone: 386-313-4170	Phone: 352-343-9734	Phone: 800-851-8754
Alachua-Supervisor of Elections	Franklin-Supervisor of Elections	Lee-Supervisor of Elections	Pinellas- Supervisor of Elections
515 N Main St Ste 300	47 Ave F	PO Box 2545	13001 Starkey Rd
Gainesville FL 32601-3348	Apalachicola FL 32320-1723	Fort Myers FL 33902-2545	Largo FL 33773-1416
Phone: 352-374-5252	Phone: 850-653-9520	Phone: 239-533-8683	Phone: 727-464-8683
Baker-Supervisor of Elections	Gadsden-Supervisor of Elections	Leon- Supervisor of Elections	Polk-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 505	PO Box 186	PO Box 7357	PO Box 1460
Macclenny FL 32063-0505	Quincy FL 32353-0186	Tallahassee FL 32314-7357	Bartow FL 33831-1460
Phone: 904-259-6339	Phone: 850-627-9910	Phone: 850-606-8683	Phone: 863-534-5888
Bay- Supervisor of Elections	Gilchrist-Supervisor of Elections	Levy- Supervisor of Elections	Putnam-Supervisor of Elections
830 W 11th St	112 S Main St Rm 128	421 S Court St	2509 Crill Ave Ste 900
Panama City FL 32401-2336	Trenton FL 32693-3260	Bronson FL 32621-6520	Palatka FL 32177-4267
Phone: 850-784-6100	Phone: 352-463-3194	Phone: 352-486-5163	Phone: 386-329-0224
Bradford-Supervisor of Elections	Glades-Supervisor of Elections	Liberty- Supervisor of Elections	Santa Rosa-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 58	PO Box 668	PO Box 597	6495 Caroline St Ste F
Starke FL 32091-0058	Moore Haven FL 33471-0668	Bristol FL 32321-0597	Milton FL 32570-4592
Phone: 904-966-6266	Phone: 863-946-6005	Phone: 850-643-5226	Phone: 850-983-1900
Brevard-Supervisor of Elections	Gulf-Supervisor of Elections	Madison- Supervisor of Elections	Sarasota-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 410819	401 Long Ave	239 SW Pinckney St	PO Box 4194
Melbourne FL 32941-0819	Port St Joe FL 32456-1707	Madison FL 32340-2470	Sarasota FL 34230-4194
Phone: 321-290-8683	Phone: 850-229-6117	Phone: 850-973-6507	Phone: 941-861-8600
Broward-Supervisor of Elections	Hamilton-Supervisor of Elections	Manatee-Supervisor of Elections	Seminole-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 29001	1153 US Hwy 41 NW Ste 1	PO Box 1000	PO Box 1479
Ft Lauderdale FL 33302-9001	Jasper FL 32052-5899	Bradenton FL 34206-1000	Sanford FL 32772-1479
Phone: 954-357-7050	Phone: 386-792-1426	Phone: 941-741-3823	Phone: 407-585-8683
Calhoun-Supervisor of Elections	Hardee-Supervisor of Elections	Marion- Supervisor of Elections	St. Johns-Supervisor of Elections
20859 Central Ave E Rm 117	311 N 6th Ave	PO Box 289	4455 Ave A Ste 101
Blountstown FL 32424-2266	Wauchula FL 33873-2319	Ocala FL 34478-0289	St Augustine FL 32095-5200
Phone: 850-674-2449	Phone: 863-773-6061	Phone: 352-620-3290	Phone: 904-823-2238
Charlotte-Supervisor of Elections	Hendry-Supervisor of Elections	Martin-Supervisor of Elections	St. Lucie-Supervisor of Elections
226 Taylor St Unit 120	PO Box 174	PO Box 1257	4132 Okeechobee Rd
Punta Gorda FL 33950-4458	LaBelle FL 33975-0174	Stuart FL 34995-1257	Ft Pierce FL 34947-5412
Phone: 941-833-5400	Phone: 863-675-5230	Phone: 772-288-5637	Phone: 772-462-1500
Citrus-Supervisor of Elections	Hernando-Supervisor of Elections	Miami-Dade-Supervisor of Elections	Sumter-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 1870	20 N Main St Rm 165	PO Box 521550	7375 Powell Rd Ste 125
Lecanto FL 34460-1870	Brooksville FL 34601-2850	Miami FL 33152-1550	Wildwood FL 34785-4228
Phone: 352-564-7120	Phone: 352-754-4125	Phone: 305-499-8363	Phone: 352-569-1540
Clay-Supervisor of Elections	Highlands-Supervisor of Elections PO Box 3448 Sebring FL 33871-3448 Phone: 863-402-6655	Monroe-Supervisor of Elections	Suwanee-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 337		530 Whitehead St # 101	302 Pine Ave SW
Green Cove Springs FL 32043-0337		Key West FL 33040-6577	Live Oak FL 32064-2315
Phone: 904-269-6350		Phone: 305-292-3416	Phone: 386-362-2616
Collier-Supervisor of Elections	Hillsborough-Supervisor of Elections	Nassau-Supervisor of Elections	Taylor -Supervisor of Elections
3750 Enterprise Ave	2514 N Falkenburg Rd	96135 Nassau PI Ste 3	PO Box 1060
Naples FL 34104-3659	Tampa FL 33619-0917	Yulee FL 32097-8699	Perry FL 32348-1060
Phone: 239-252-8683	Phone: 813-744-5900	Phone: 904-491-7500	Phone: 850-838-3515
Columbia-Supervisor of Elections	Holmes-Supervisor of Elections	Okaloosa-Supervisor of Elections	Union-Supervisor of Elections
971 W Duval St Ste 102	201 N Oklahoma St Ste 102	302 N Wilson St Ste 102	175 W Main St
Lake City FL 32055-3709	Bonifay FL 32425-2243	Crestview FL 32536-3474	Lake Butler FL 32054-1639
Phone: 386-758-1026	Phone: 850-547-1107	Phone: 850-689-5600	Phone: 386-496-2236
Desoto- Supervisor of Elections	Indian River-Supervisor of Elections	Okeechobee-Supervisor of Elections	Volusia-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 89	4375 43rd Ave	304 NW 2nd St Rm 144	1750 South Woodland Blvd
Arcadia FL 34265-0089	Vero Beach FL 32967-1024	Okeechobee FL 34972-4146	DeLand FL 32720-7915
Phone: 863-993-4871	Phone: 772-226-4700	Phone: 863-763-4014	Phone: 386-736-5930
Dixie- Supervisor of Elections	Jackson-Supervisor of Elections	Orange-Supervisor of Elections	Wakulla-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 2057	2851 Jefferson St	PO Box 562001	PO Box 305
Cross City FL 32628-2057	Marianna FL 32448-4614	Orlando FL 32856-2001	Crawfordville FL 32326-0305
Phone: 352-498-1216	Phone: 850-482-9652	Phone: 407-836-2070	Phone: 850-926-7575
Duval- Supervisor of Elections	Jefferson- Supervisor of Elections	Osceola-Supervisor of Elections	Walton- Supervisor of Elections
105 E Monroe St	1175 W Washington St	2509 E Irlo Bronson Memorial Hwy	571 US Hwy 90 E
Jacksonville FL 32202-3213	Monticello FL 32344-1126	Kissimmee FL 34744-4909	DeFuniak Springs FL 32433-1374
Phone: 904-255-8683	Phone: 850-997-3348	Phone: 407-742-6000	Phone: 850-892-8112
Escambia-Supervisor of Elections	Lafayette-Supervisor of Elections	Palm Beach-Supervisor of Elections	Washington-Supervisor of Elections
PO Box 12601	PO Box 76	PO Box 22309	1331 South Blvd Ste 900
Pensacola FL 32591-2601	Mayo FL 32066-0076	West Palm Beach FL 33416-2309	Chipley FL 32428-2233
Phone: 850-595-3900	Phone: 386-294-1261	Phone: 561-656-6200	Phone: 850-638-6230

Eligibility to Vote in Florida After a Felony Conviction

- If you were convicted of murder or a felony sexual offense in Florida or another state, you **CANNOT** register to vote unless your voting rights have been restored through clemency or a pardon.
- If you were convicted of a felony in Florida (other than murder or a felony sexual offense) <u>AND</u> you are
 not on parole, probation, or community control <u>AND</u> you do not owe any fines, fees, costs, or restitution
 that you were ordered to pay at the time of your felony sentence, you <u>CAN</u> register to vote.
 - If you are still on parole, probation, or community control for a felony conviction, you <u>CANNOT</u> register.
 - If you still owe fines, fees, costs, or restitution that you were ordered to pay at the time of your felony sentence, you <u>CANNOT</u> register.
- If you were convicted of a felony in another state (other than murder or a felony sexual offense) **AND** your right to vote was restored in that state, you **CAN** register to vote.
- If you are in jail for a misdemeanor or you are in jail awaiting trial, you **CAN** register to vote unless you are ineligible because of past felony convictions (see above).
- If you only have misdemeanor convictions, you <u>CAN</u> register to vote.

For more information, visit: <u>dos.myflorida.com/elections/for-voters/voter-registration/constitutional-amendment-4felon-voting-rights/.</u>