



## FLORIDA SUPERVISORS OF ELECTIONS

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March 17, 2021

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### General Counsel

Ronald Labasky, Esq.

During each legislative session, the Florida Supervisors of Elections (FSE), an association of Florida's 67 elections officials, shares information with state legislators on policy measures that could positively impact the conduct of elections and voter experience in Florida. While we have already put forth a list of legislative priorities, we feel there is a need to provide some perspective around some Vote By Mail reforms that have been discussed.

In 2020, Florida was universally praised for our exemplary conduct of elections – from the very highest offices at the federal and state level to our most important stakeholders, voters. This was due in large part to the strong laws currently in place around Vote By Mail. While Vote By Mail has been growing steadily in popularity, the pandemic made this the method of choice for many more voters than ever before. During the 2020 cycle, Governor DeSantis issued an executive order allowing us to start processing mail ballots sooner, and the suggestion to codify this into law is appreciated and supported by FSE. Our ability to keep up with Vote By Mail tabulation as the ballots were received was a key factor in our ability to report almost all of Florida's results on Election Night.

In Florida, only voters who request mail ballots may receive them. Supervisors cannot send Vote By Mail ballots to all voters. This is good policy. Cancelling the current requests that voters have on file with our offices, which has been suggested by some lawmakers, is a disservice to voters who are already expecting to receive mail ballots in 2022. Lawmakers should also be aware that this would come at a significant cost to taxpayers, as Supervisors will be required to send mailings to millions of voters to let them know their request is no longer valid. In addition, requiring voters to renew their request for mail ballots every election cycle, instead of every two election cycles, also has financial impact, resulting in twice as much clerical work to process the requests.

Finally, concern has been expressed about the use of Vote By Mail drop boxes. Florida's Supervisors adhere to the current law, which requires us to have secure drop boxes at all elections offices and Early Voting sites, and allows drop boxes at any sites that would otherwise qualify as an Early Voting site. We agree that voted ballots must remain secure and protected at all times. If lawmakers feel the need to clarify requirements around how to secure drop boxes, that would be supported by FSE. However, Florida's Supervisors of Elections strongly disagree with the idea of eliminating drop boxes. This would create an unnecessary barrier for voters who like to receive their ballots in the mail and return them in person. In fact, voters who used drop boxes in 2020 expressed appreciation for their convenience and security. Nearly 1.5 million voters chose this option.

Florida's Supervisors of Elections feel strongly that we must be advocates for our voters. It's our intention that all eligible voters have convenient and ample opportunities to vote, and that the elections in which they cast their ballots are safe and secure. The three methods of voting currently provided for in law, and the flexibility provided to Supervisors around these methods, is critical to ensuring that we can serve our voters efficiently and effectively.

Craig Latimer, President, Florida Supervisors of Elections