



Florida House of Representatives
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**HOUSE DEMOCRATS SEEK TO INCREASE
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT & ELECTIONS**

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. --- Several bills sponsored by Florida House Democratic Caucus members that aim to encourage voter participation and turnout in elections were introduced today in a workshop held by the House Government Affairs Policy Committee.

“Floridians are demanding that we continue striving to improve our state’s elections process,” said House Democratic Leader Pro Tempore Geraldine Thompson, D-Orlando. “Florida House Democrats are pleased to sponsor several important proposals to increase citizen participation in government and encourage voter turnout for elections. Today’s discussions are a good beginning.”

Among the bills discussed in committee today are:

House Bill 57 – Early Voting -- Rep. Joe Gibbons (D-Hallandale Beach). The bill requires more early voting hours and encourages supervisors of elections to extend early voting to 12 weekend hours. Currently, early voting is limited to 8 hours per weekday and 8 hours in total on weekends. Representative Gibbons also seeks to give supervisors flexibility to place early-voting polling sites at more locations.

House Bill 213 – Congressional Vacancies -- Rep. Rick Kriseman (D-St. Petersburg). The legislation calls for U.S. Senate vacancies to be handled identically to the manner of vacant U.S. House seats. The idea is to ensure that voters—not political officeholders—select their public servants in Washington.

House Bill 681 – Challenging A Person Desiring to Vote -- Rep. Geraldine Thompson (D-Orlando). The bill seeks to protect prohibit “voter caging” activities, which can deny residents the opportunity to vote when challenged by someone without actual knowledge of their qualification to vote. Voter caging is often used to target vulnerable populations, including racial minorities and people whose properties are in foreclosure.

House Bill 407 – Student Voter Education -- Rep. Ronald Brise (D-Miami). The bill requires all school boards to work with county elections officials to educate students about the voting process and how to register to vote.

House Bill 835 – Elections -- Rep. Bill Heller (D-St. Petersburg). The bill creates an option for voters to request permanent absent ballots instead of having to renew their absentee ballot request every two years.

House Bill 625 – Voter Information Cards -- Rep. Audrey Gibson (D-Jacksonville). HB 625 requires voter information cards to include polling place addresses. It also requires new voter information cards to be issues when voter’s change address or when their polling place is relocated.

House Bill 869 -- Political Advertisements -- Rep. Darryl Rouson (D-St. Petersburg) and Rep. Eric Eisnaugle (R-Orlando). The bill is an attempt to address the use of new Internet communications during political campaigns. The bill considers advertising links on sites such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, and cell-phone texting for political campaign purposes.

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