



Voter's Manual

A Guide to Voting in Palm Beach County 2004

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League of Women Voters of South Palm Beach County
League of Women Voters of Florida Education Fund
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WACHOVIA

ELECTION 2004

Dates to Remember

Tues., MARCH 9, 2004: Presidential Preference Primary
Voter Registration Deadline: February 9, 2004

**Tues., AUGUST 31, 2004: Party Primaries and
Non Partisan Elections**
Voter Registration Deadline: August 2, 2004

Tues., NOVEMBER 2, 2004: General Election
Voter Registration Deadline: October 4, 2004

Polls are open from 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM

WHO WILL WE ELECT IN 2004?

- President and Vice President of the United States
- United States Senator
- U. S. Representatives
- State Senators and Representatives
- Merit Retention of State Supreme Court Justices and
Appellate Court Judges
- Election of Circuit and County Court Judges
- County Commissioners
- County Constitutional Officers
- County School Board
- Boynton Beach City Council

**Special issues may appear on any of the ballots.
Watch local media for information.**

Introduction

One of the most baffling things about coming to Florida—or coming of age in Florida—can be learning enough about its government so you can vote wisely. Who is eligible to vote? What are the procedures for voting in a primary? How do I know which representatives and state senators I can vote for? What is the role of a County Commissioner? What are the responsibilities of the Palm Beach County School Board?

These are some of the questions you may have as you prepare to cast your first vote. Or perhaps you've lived in Florida all your life but have questions about Florida government and recent changes that you may have found confusing.

This manual was developed with you in mind by the League of Women Voters of South Palm Beach County. The following pages will answer many questions and give you places to contact if your specific questions are not addressed.

Palm Beach County uses touch screen voting machines. You may contact the Supervisor of Elections for demonstrations of voting equipment and at the polls you may take as long as necessary for a demonstration before you vote.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

**Visit the League web site www.lwvpsc.org or
phone us at 561-276-4898**

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REGISTER TO VOTE

If you received a Florida's driver's license recently, you may be registered to vote. A Voter Identification Card would have been mailed to you. If not...

HERE'S WHERE & HOW:

You can get a Voter Registration Application at any Supervisor of Elections Office, city hall, county office, library, driver's license bureau, many banks and offices that provide public assistance.

You may prefer to obtain an application online at www.pbcelections.org or call the Supervisor of Elections at **1-866-868-3321** for an application by mail.

To complete the application, you will need your Social Security number and must sign a printed oath on the form swearing that the information you provide is true.

WHO CAN VOTE:

A U.S. citizen 18 or older, and a resident of Palm Beach County. Seventeen year olds may register but must be 18 by election day.

Two exceptions: Convicted felons who have not had civil rights restored and individuals declared mentally incompetent by a court may not vote.

REGISTRATION DEADLINES:

You may register at any time, but you must register at least 29 days before an election if you wish to vote. **See deadline dates inside front cover.**

IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY:

You can indicate that you need help at the polls on your application. When you vote you may obtain assistance from two election officials or from a person of your choice who is not an employer or union agent.

IF YOU MOVE: (Don't lose your right to vote!)

You must notify the Supervisor of Elections at least 29 days before the election in which you wish to vote. Simply fill in the address change form on the back of your Voter Identification Card and return it to the Supervisor's office. You may prefer to write to the Supervisor of Elections or fill out a new registration form.

You will receive a new Voter Identification Card in the mail.

You must vote in the precinct where you live.

PARTIES, PRIMARIES and ELECTIONS

JOIN A PARTY to be eligible for the Primary Elections

When you register to vote, you can declare a party preference. This information appears on your Voter Identification Card and in the register. If you do not wish to join a political party, specify "No Party Affiliation".

To change your party affiliation, or register for a party for the first time, fill in the back of your Voter ID Card or write the Supervisor of Elections at least 29 days before the Primary Election.

WHAT IS A PRIMARY?

When two or more individuals in one political party qualify as candidates, they enter the primary election. The candidate with the highest number of votes becomes the party's candidate in the November General Election.

Primaries are scheduled nine weeks before the General Election (late August or early September).

Florida holds primary elections for Republican and Democratic candidates only. All other parties choose their candidates on their own.

Florida runs a closed primary: registered Republicans and Democrats may vote only for candidates in their party. No crossover votes are allowed.

NOTE: However, if all candidates for a particular office have the same party affiliation and the winner will have no opposition in the General Election, **all qualified voters, regardless of party affiliation, may vote in the Primary for that office.**

Among offices that may require a primary are governor and state cabinet members, federal and state legislators, county constitutional officers, and county commissioners.

THE PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARY

Held **the second Tuesday in March** in presidential election years. Republicans and Democrats may express preferences for their party's presidential candidate.

You must vote in the precinct where you live. Polls open 7AM to 7PM.
When you enter your polling place, you must show a photo/signature ID and sign the voter register. You will be given a plastic Voter Card to activate the voting machine. It will instruct the machine to show only candidates running in your districts and, if it's a primary, your party.

NONPARTISAN ELECTIONS

The nonpartisan election is held the **same day as the primary election**. **All voters regardless of party affiliation should participate in these important elections** for Palm Beach County School Board, judicial candidates, and some County Constitutional Officers. The candidates do not run as representatives of any political party.

If one candidate does not receive over 50% of the vote, runoffs are held in November at the General Election.

If you are unsure whether there are contests or issues for which you are eligible to vote, call the Supervisor of Elections.

- You will vote for:**
- A School Board candidate from your district.
 - County Constitutional Officers (Presidential election years only): Property Appraiser, Sheriff, and Supervisor of Elections.
 - Circuit Court and County Court judges.
 - Supreme Court Justices and Appellate Court Judges for a vote on their retention or rejection.

THE GENERAL ELECTION

National election day is the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. This is the election for national, state and county offices. Also, if no candidate won more than 50% of the vote in the nonpartisan elections, a runoff of the top two candidates is held on this day.

Amendments to the Florida Constitution and local referenda may also be on the general election ballot. **All registered voters vote for any candidate or questions on the ballot regardless of party affiliation.**

A candidate who has no opposition is elected automatically and his or her name will not appear on the ballot.

WHAT HAPPENS IF . . .

YOU FORGOT YOUR PHOTO ID?

If you forget to take a signed photo ID to the poll, or if you do not have one, you will be asked to sign an **affidavit** attesting to your identity.

Examples of photo/signature ID include Florida Driver's License, an ID Card issued by a Florida State Agency, employee badge or ID.

YOUR NAME IS NOT ON THE ROLLS?

Provisional Ballot

If your name does not appear on the rolls at your precinct, and you believe you are registered, the poll worker will check the database. If you belong in another precinct, the poll worker will direct you to it.

If your eligibility cannot be verified, ask for a **Provisional Ballot** which will be placed in a sealed envelope and deposited in a ballot box. If the Supervisor of Elections verifies that you are properly registered in the precinct where you voted, your ballot will be counted.

YOU CAN'T MAKE IT TO THE POLLS?

Absentee Ballot

If you know that you will not be able to go to the polls on Election Day, you, or someone from your immediate family, may request an **Absentee Ballot** from the Supervisor of Elections. The request may be made in person, by mail, telephone or online at www.pbcelections.org. One request can cover all elections within a calendar year.

The person requesting the Absentee Ballot must provide:

- The voter's name, address, and date of birth.
- The requester's name, address and driver's license number if available.
- The requester's relationship to the voter, and the requester's signature on written requests.

The marked ballot must be signed by a witness at least 18 years old and mailed or delivered in person, to the Supervisor of Elections office no later than 7 PM election day.

You may also vote early by going to one of the Supervisor of Elections offices listed on the inside back cover of this booklet.

YOU MOVE AFTER THE 29 DAY DEADLINE?

- If you move to ***another county in Florida*** after the registration books are closed, you may vote for President and Vice President, US Senator, statewide offices and statewide issues in your **former county** in the general election. You must register in the new county after that to vote in future elections.
- If you move to a ***new precinct within the county*** after the registration books are closed, you can go to your **new precinct**. The Precinct Advisor will verify the database and you will be able to vote by **provisional ballot**. If it is found that you should have voted in another precinct, the provisional ballot is never opened or counted.
- If you move ***from another state*** after the books are closed, check with your former state of residence to see if you are allowed to vote by absentee ballot.
- If you move from Florida ***to another state*** after the books have closed for the election in that state, Florida will allow you to vote by absentee ballot for President and Vice President only.

YOU ARE IN LINE TO VOTE WHEN THE POLLS CLOSE?

You, and everyone in line will be allowed to vote, however long it takes.

IN ADDITION, EACH REGISTERED VOTER HAS THE RIGHT TO:

- Written instructions to use when voting, and, upon request, oral instructions in voting from Election Officers.
- Vote free from coercion or intimidation by Election Officers or any other person.
- Vote on a voting system that is in working condition and that will allow votes to be accurately cast.

YOUR VOTER IDENTIFICATION CARD

All registered voters receive a Voter Identification Card in the mail.

This card will guide you to your voting precinct, but will not get you into a voting booth. You need a photo and signature ID to cast a vote.

However, the Voter Identification Card (sample below) has important information you need to participate in the election process.

- The number and address of your voting precinct is at the top of the card.
- The numbers in the box indicate the districts in which you live. The state and county are divided into different political districts for each office.

YOUR PRECINCT NUMBER IS

YOUR POLLING LOCATION IS:
SCIENCE OF THE MIND CENTER
2 SW 12TH AVE

YOU ARE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE FOR A REPRESENTATIVE
IN EACH DISTRICT LISTED BELOW:

US CONGRESS	STATE SENATE	STATE HOUSE
22	25	87
COUNTY COMMISSION	SCHOOL BOARD	MUNICIPALITY
4	5	BR

REGISTRATION NUMBER

NOTIFY THE ELECTIONS OFFICE OF ANY INCORRECT INFORMATION
THERESA LePORE • SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

In this example, the voter lives in the 22nd Congressional district*, 25th State Senate district, etc. BR stands for Boca Raton.

District information will help you identify your candidates during the election campaigns.

Knowing your districts and the candidates running for office in those districts helps you sort through campaign literature and media coverage. Also, watch for public forums, held by various groups, to help you assess candidate views.

Your party preference, if you selected one, is on the back of the card.

At your precinct on election day the plastic card you receive to activate the voting machine is programmed to match your Voter Identification Card.

*A WORD ABOUT THE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

The term "US Congress" as used on your card needs to be interpreted as the **US House of Representatives**. Generally, US Congress means the US Senate and the US House of Representatives. See further explanation next page.

The following pages summarize the terms and conditions for all elected offices. Space is provided to write in **your own district numbers** for each office.

Supervisor of Elections (Nonpartisan)

I. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

FEDERAL EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Elections for president and vice president of the United States are held every four years in even years, divisible by four.

Terms and Conditions for President & Vice President	The nation is the district
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election is Partisan.• Term is four years.• Election in November; term begins Jan. 20th the next year.• Term limit: two terms.	

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The United States Senate consists of 100 senators, two from each of the fifty states. Both Senators represent the entire state.

The US House of Representatives has 435 members. Each member represents only a small piece of the state. Florida has 25 representatives in Washington, four of whom represent Palm Beach County.

Every ten years House districts are redrawn to contain as closely as possible the same number of voters. The districts are identified by number. Your House District appears on your Voter Identification Card as "US Congress".

Terms and Conditions for US Legislators	
US Senate	The state is the district
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Term is six years. Terms are staggered so that only one US Senator is elected in any given year.• Election in November; term begins in January.• Term limit: None.	
US Congress (US Representative)	My District is _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Term is two years.• Election in November; term begins in January.• Term limit: None.	

II. STATE GOVERNMENT

The State of Florida is governed by a Constitution patterned after the U.S. government with executive, legislative and judicial branches. It is a voluminous document with many amendments.

Proposed amendments to the constitution may appear on the ballot. Amendments can be proposed by citizens petition initiative, a joint resolution of the Legislature, a Constitutional Convention or Constitution Revision Commission.

THE STATE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The executive branch includes a Governor, a Lieutenant Governor and three cabinet members: Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Agriculture.

Their constitutional duties include:

- **GOVERNOR**
The Governor approves or vetoes acts passed by the Legislature, prepares a budget for submission to the Legislature, recommends measures of public interest, appoints the heads of various agencies and departments and supervises their activities.
- **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR**
The Lieutenant Governor succeeds the Governor in case of death or inability to fulfill duties of the office. The Governor may also assign responsibilities to the Lieutenant Governor.
- **ATTORNEY GENERAL**
The Attorney General oversees the Department of Legal Affairs. Responsibilities include defending most appeals from criminal convictions in lower courts, enforcing antitrust and consumer protection laws and prosecuting criminal racketeering.
- **CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**
The Chief Financial Officer pays state bills and supervises the state fire marshal's office, settles and approves accounts against the state and keeps all state funds and securities.
- **COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE**
The Commissioner heads the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, which safeguards the public and supports Florida's agricultural economy through inspection and testing programs and controlling unfair and deceptive business practices.

- **State Executive Branch Elections are held statewide every four years between presidential election years.**

Terms and Conditions for Executive Officers	The State is the District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Election is partisan. • Term is four years. • Election in November; term begins in January. • Term limit: two terms. 	

THE STATE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

The Florida State Legislature is made up of two houses: the Senate of 40 members and the House of Representatives of 120 members. All are elected by voters from the districts they represent.

Palm Beach County has six senators and 11 representatives whose districts are totally or partially within the county.

The legislators set statewide policies and enact laws. They have the power to levy taxes and appropriate funds.

See your Voter Identification Card for the districts in which you live so you can identify the Senator and Representative for whom you will vote.

Terms and Conditions for State Legislators	
Florida State Senate	My District is _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term is four years. Terms are staggered. • Odd numbered districts vote in presidential election years; Even numbered districts vote in alternate even years. • Election in November; term begins the next day. • Term limit: two terms. 	
Florida House of Representatives	My District is _____
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term is two years. • Election in November; term begins the next day. • Term limit: four terms. 	
Note: The state legislature meets for the regular session in Tallahassee for sixty consecutive days beginning on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March.	

III. JUDICIAL BRANCH: STATE AND COUNTY

The judicial system of Florida and Palm Beach County consists of the Florida Supreme Court, the Appellate Courts, and Circuit and County Trial courts.

SUPREME COURT JUSTICES (7) AND APPEALS COURT JUDGES (61)

Justices and Appellate Judges are appointed by the Governor from a list recommended by a Judicial Nominating Committee. Appointments last six years, after which the names are placed on the ballot for merit retention. Voters vote “yes” or “no” to retain individuals on the bench, based on their performance. There are five District Courts of Appeal in the state. Palm Beach is within the 4th District which also includes Broward, Martin, St. Lucie, Okeechobee, and Indian River counties.

TRIAL COURT JUDGES

Circuit Court Judges and County Court Judges are elected by the voters in nonpartisan elections.

Most criminal and civil cases originate at the Circuit Court level. Palm Beach County is the 15th Judicial Circuit.

The County Court has jurisdiction over designated misdemeanor cases, small claims, ordinance violations, certain traffic infractions and civil cases up to \$15,000. The Circuit Court handles cases over \$15,000.

Terms and Conditions for Judges	The County is the District
Supreme Court Justices and Appellate Judges	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Term is six years.• Vote on merit retention on Primary Day.• Term begins in January.• Term limit: none.	
Circuit Court and County Court Judges	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election is nonpartisan.• Term is six years.• Election on Primary Day; runoff in Nov. if necessary.• Term begins in January.• Term limit: none.	

IV. COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Palm Beach County has adopted a charter to govern its affairs. It is a concise document approved in 1984.

More than 1,000,000 people now live in the county, about half in 37 incorporated municipalities covering an area of 186 square miles. The other half reside in the unincorporated area which covers 2,392 square miles. West Palm Beach is the county seat.

THE COUNTY COMMISSION

The county is governed by a Board of County Commissioners. There are seven commissioners, each representing one of seven districts. The commissioners establish policies and enact laws related to the unincorporated areas and may enact specific county wide ordinances outlined in the charter.

Commissioners specific duties are to:

- Provide for fire protection and disaster relief
- Oversee construction of county buildings, roads and bridges
- Enforce programs for pollution, flood control, and beach erosion
- Initiate community redevelopment and enforce building codes
- Prepare and enforce the Comprehensive Land Use Plan for unincorporated areas
- Support cultural and recreational facilities

If municipal and county ordinances are in conflict, the municipal ordinances take precedence. For example, sign restrictions in Boca Raton take precedence over less strict rules in the county.

The Commissioners appoint a County Administrator to carry out executive functions.

Terms and Conditions for Commissioners

My District is _____

- Election is partisan.
- Commissioners must live in the district they represent and are elected only by voters in their own districts.
- Term is four years.
- Election in November; term begins two weeks later.
- Term limit: two terms.

Districts 1, 3, 5, & 7 vote in presidential election years.

Districts 2, 4, & 6 vote in alternate even years.

COUNTY CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

The Florida Constitution mandates local elections of seven county officers. Hence the term "Constitutional Officers." All counties in Florida have the same positions. These officers are independent of the County Commission, which has no jurisdiction over them.

The duties of the seven Constitutional Officers are:

- **Clerk of the Circuit Court (Partisan)**
This office oversees the courts and county funds. The Clerk of the Circuit Court keeps the court's records and seal, serves as clerk of the Board of County Commissioners and as auditor, recorder and custodian of all county funds.
- **Public Defender (Partisan)**
This office provides legal services to those charged with a criminal offense who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. It handles appeals in the Fourth District Court of Appeals.
- **Property Appraiser (Nonpartisan)** This office determines the value of all real estate and other property for the purpose of taxation. The assessment roll developed by this office is used by all taxing units.
- **Sheriff (Nonpartisan)**
This office provides protection to the unincorporated areas as well as some municipalities. Additionally, the sheriff is responsible for the care, custody and control of incarcerated persons in the county.
- **State Attorney (Partisan)**
This office investigates and prosecutes all violations of criminal law occurring within the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit (the county). The State Attorney also represents the State in all matters occurring within the circuit.

- **Supervisor of Elections (Nonpartisan)**
This office registers voters, maintains voter rolls, conducts elections, recruits and trains all poll workers, reports financial disclosures, reports campaign financing, and handles all candidates' filings.
- **Tax Collector (Partisan)**
This office collects property taxes for every governing body in the county, certain Florida sales taxes and the Tourist Development Tax; titles and registers motor vehicles and boats; issues occupational and hunting/fishing licenses.

Election is every four years coinciding with the Presidential Election.

Terms and Conditions for Constitutional Officers	The County is the District
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some offices are partisan, some are nonpartisan. • Term is four years. • Nonpartisan elections on Primary Day. • Partisan elections in November. • Term begins in January. • Term limit: none. 	

V. MUNICIPALITIES

The 37 incorporated municipalities are governed by local charters that give them considerable independence in managing their own affairs. These municipalities usually hold annual elections in the spring to choose local officials and resolve local issues. Boynton Beach is an exception: its election is in November.

At these elections voters choose a City Council or Commission which passes laws and ordinances that apply to the municipality. Call your City Clerk's office for specific information about your municipality.

Voters in unincorporated areas of Palm Beach County do not vote in municipal elections.

VI. PALM BEACH COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

In Florida, each county constitutes a separate school district.

In Palm Beach County, voters elect a seven member School Board which is the policy making authority. All funding is allocated by the state legislature; state statutes control many of the functions of the school system.

Municipalities have no authority over the administration and policies of the schools that are geographically within their boundaries. Similarly the County Commission has no authority over the school system.

The School Board appoints the Superintendent of Schools, who is the chief executive officer of the school system.

**There are seven School Board districts.
See your Voter ID card for the number of your district.**

<p>Terms and Conditions for School Board My District is ____ Election is nonpartisan. Board members must live in the district they represent and are elected only by voters in their own district. Term is four years; elections are staggered. Election on Primary Day; runoff in November, if necessary. Term begins two weeks after deciding election. Term limit: none.</p>
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**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of SOUTH PALM BEACH
COUNTY**

P.O. Box 757, Delray Beach, FL 33447

561-276-4898

Website www.lwvpsc.org

e-mail: info@lwvpsc.org

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all citizens, women and men, of voting age who are interested in good government. General meetings are open to the public. Information on membership, meetings, voting or other information is available through the above contacts.

Supervisor of Elections Offices

Hours: Monday-Friday 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

Main Office

240 S. Military Trail
West Palm Beach, FL 33415
561-656-6200
or toll free: 1-866-868-3321
Website: www.pbcelections.org.

South County Administration Bldg.
345 S. Congress Ave., Room 103
Delray Beach, FL 33445
561-276-1226

Northeast County Complex
3188 PGA Blvd., Room 2401
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410
561-624-6555

Glades Office Building
2976 State Road #15
Belle Glade, FL 33430
561-996-4800

Political Parties

The major political parties, Republican and Democrat, have active organizations in Palm Beach County. Participation in both parties is open to the public.

Phones: **Republicans: 561-686-1616** **Democrats: 561- 833-8936**

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of South Palm Beach County