

A bill to be entitled

An act relating to elections; providing a short title; creating s. 97.029, F.S.; declaring the policy of the state; requiring the Attorney General or attorney of a political subdivision to petition the Supreme Court for review of any change in voting qualifications, prerequisites, standards, practices, or procedures; requiring the Supreme Court to enter a judgment within a specified timeframe; prohibiting the state or its political subdivisions from enforcing a change in voting before a judgment is entered; providing that finding of a specific intent to discriminate is not required to invalidate a change; providing for judicial relief; providing for construction; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. This act may be cited as the "Florida Voting Rights Act."

Section 2. Section 97.029, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

97.029 Judicial review of election procedures.—

(1) The Legislature declares that it is the policy of the state to protect electors against discrimination based on gender, race, age, income level, sexual orientation, language,

27 religion, or disability. The Legislature further declares that
28 any restriction on voting rights or any change in the standard,
29 practice, or procedure with respect to voting that would result
30 in denying or abridging the opportunity of a protected class to
31 vote, elect a candidate of its choice, or influence the outcome
32 of an election may not be imposed by the state or its political
33 subdivisions.

34 (2) If the state or any of its political subdivisions
35 enacts or seeks to administer any voting qualification or
36 prerequisite to voting or any standard, practice, or procedure
37 with respect to voting that is different from the qualification,
38 prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure in force or
39 effect on July 1, 2014, the Attorney General shall petition the
40 Supreme Court for a declaratory judgment within 30 days to
41 determine if such change will have the effect of denying or
42 abridging the right to vote in contravention of the rights
43 established in subsection (1). For changes to procedures limited
44 to a county or municipality, the attorney for the respective
45 political subdivision shall petition the Supreme Court.

46 (a) The Supreme Court shall allow adversary interests to
47 present their views and, within 45 days after the filing of the
48 petition, shall enter its judgment. The change in qualification,
49 prerequisite, standard, practice, or procedure may not be
50 enforced or administered until the Supreme Court has entered a
51 judgment finding compliance with this section.

52 (b) Proof of a specific intent of an official to

53 discriminate against a protected class of electors based on the
54 factors enumerated in subsection (1) is not required in order to
55 invalidate a qualification, prerequisite, standard, practice, or
56 procedure.

57 (c) Changes to election standards subject to review by the
58 Supreme Court include, but are not limited to, redistricting
59 plans, early voting, absentee voting, provisional ballots, poll
60 worker hiring and training, list maintenance, and voter
61 registration.

62 (3) An affected party, including an organization on behalf
63 of such party, may bring an action to enforce the provisions of
64 this section.

65 (4) This section does not supersede or impair any federal
66 or state law providing for expanded voting rights.

67 Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.