

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2026 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Ethics and Elections

CS/HB 91 — Candidate Qualification

by Government Operations Subcommittee and Rep. Tant and others (CS/SB 62 by Ethics and Elections Committee and Senators Arrington, Osgood, Berman, and Hooper)

CS/HB 91 provides that a competing candidate for office, or a competing political party, may have a person disqualified and thus removed from the ballot if the person falsely states in the qualifying papers that he or she:

- Has been a registered member of the political party for which the person is seeking nomination as a candidate for at least 365 consecutive days preceding the beginning of the qualifying period before the general election for which the person seeks to qualify;
- Has been registered without any party affiliation and has not been a registered member of any political party for at least 365 consecutive days preceding the beginning of the qualifying period before the general election for which the person seeks to qualify; or
- Has not legally changed his or her name through a petition pursuant to s. 68.07, F.S., during the 365-day period preceding the beginning of qualifying. A change of name in proceedings for dissolution of marriage, adoption, or marriage is not disqualifying.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 113-0

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CS/HB 461 — Volunteering at Polling Locations

by State Affairs Committee and Reps. Michael, Valdés, and others (CS/SB 564 by Education Pre-K - 12 Committee and Senator Yarborough)

The bill revises an existing prohibition against use of private funds for election-related materials by authorizing Florida high school students who are registered or preregistered to vote to volunteer to assist poll workers for the purpose of receiving community service hours to meet certain educational requirements.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 108-0

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CS/SB 572 — Ethics for Public Officers and Employees

by Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee and Senator Harrell

The bill revises the definition of the term “relative” in the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees to include current and former foster parents and foster children.

The bill provides an exception to the nepotism prohibitions for public officials under the Code of Ethics. Specifically, the bill adds an exception that does not prohibit the board, council, commission, or collegial body on which an elected official serves from appointing, employing, promoting, or advancing a relative who is an elected public official serving on the same board, council, commission, or collegial body to a leadership position.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 113-0

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CS/CS/CS/HB 905 — Foreign Influence

by State Affairs Committee; Judiciary Committee; Government Operations Subcommittee; and Rep. Persons-Mulicka and others (CS/CS/SB 1178 by Appropriations Committee; Ethics and Elections Committee; and Senators Grall and Avila)

The bill creates a “Foreign Influence Restriction and Enforcement Act” that is intended to reduce interference and influence by foreign countries of concern.

Related to public officers and employees, the bill:

- Increases the penalty for a public officer, agency employee, local government attorney, or candidate who violates restrictions on gifts if the gift received was from a designated foreign terrorist organization or foreign country of concern.
- Requires ethics training for specified public officials to include information on foreign countries of concern and their influence.

Related to cultural and educational programs, the bill:

- Prohibits the state protocol officer from encouraging a sister city or sister state affiliation with a foreign country of concern or its subdivision.
- Requires the Department of State to quarterly publish on its website specified information on all foreign consulate offices in Florida and all sister city and sister state affiliations.
- Revises provisions governing Florida linkage institutes to remove the Florida-China Institute from the list of authorized institutes, repeal the limited exemption for in-state tuition residency requirements, and prohibit a linkage institute from entering into an agreement or participate in activities with a foreign country of concern or any organization in such country.

Related to interactions with Cuba, the bill:

- Expands and creates a criminal penalty relating to the authorization for revocation of the business tax receipt of a person or entity doing business with Cuba in violation of federal law.
- Provides that if the federal government changes the diplomatic status of Cuba, the Governor may temporarily suspend the provisions of any statute or rule restricting interactions with Cuba.

The bill also:

- Expands the definition of “foreign source of concern” to also include a designated foreign terrorist organization or an agent acting on its behalf.
- Expands a prohibition against a state agency, political subdivision, or public school authorized to expend state-appropriated funds or levy ad valorem taxes participating in an agreement with or accepting a grant from a foreign country of concern to also prohibit such agreements with *a subdivision of* a foreign country of concern.

- Reclassifies criminal offenses committed for the purpose of benefiting, promoting, or furthering the interests of a foreign government, a designated foreign terrorist organization, or an agent of such government or organization.
- Prohibits a preplanned adoption agreement if the volunteer mother, intended father, or intended mother is a citizen or resident of a foreign country of concern, and prohibits a gestational surrogacy contract if any party to the contract is a citizen or resident of a foreign country of concern.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on July 1, 2026.

Vote: Senate 28-11; House 83-17

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2026 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Ethics and Elections

CS/CS/HB 991 — Elections

by State Affairs Committee; Government Operations Subcommittee; and Reps. Persons-Mulicka, Trabulsy, and others (CS/CS/SB 1334 by Appropriations Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Economic Development; Ethics and Elections Committee; and Senator Grall)

The bill enhances enforcement of statutory and constitutional requirements relating to elections and clarifies and updates election administration processes, as follows.

Related to the requirement that voters be United States citizens, effective January 1, 2027, the bill:

- Revises voter registration processes to require a check of Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) REAL ID data related to citizenship for new voter registration applicants and voters updating registrations.
- Amends voter list maintenance requirements to prescribe actions the Department of State must take when registered voters have been identified by information from other governmental entities as potentially ineligible based on their citizenship status, and requires supervisors of elections to conduct notice and voter registration removal proceedings for such persons.
- Specifies a list of documents a voter or voter registration applicant may provide as evidence of United States citizenship if identified as potentially ineligible.

The bill also requires that by July 1, 2027, a Florida driver license or identification card issued to a United States citizen include the person's citizenship status, and that the DHSMV issue a free renewal or replacement Florida driver license or identification card if a licensee or cardholder becomes a United States citizen and timely updates his or her legal status.

Related to candidate qualifications, upon becoming a law, the bill:

- Prohibits a person from qualifying if he or she does not meet political party affiliation requirements or if he or she legally changes his or her name through the general petition process during the 365 days preceding qualifying, and provides a civil cause of action for enforcement.
- Creates a civil cause of action by which a candidate's compliance with statutory and constitutional requirements may be enforced.
- Requires a candidate to provide a written oath or affirmation that he or she will meet all statutory and constitutional requirements for the office sought.
- Requires a candidate to provide a written oath or affirmation regarding any dual citizenship he or she may possess.
- Requires a candidate for federal office to make a written disclosure and written oath or affirmation regarding stock trading while in office.

Related to violations of elections laws, effective July 1, 2026, the bill:

- Creates a five-year statute of limitations for a prosecution of a felony violation of the Election Code.

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- Revises the racketeering definition’s inclusion of “a violation of the Florida Election Code relating to irregularities or fraud involving issue petition activities” to instead cite specific sections of law that establish related crimes.
- Adds to the prohibition against a foreign national making or offering to make a contribution or expenditure in connection with an election, to also prohibit a political party, political committee, electioneering communications organization, or candidate from knowingly and willfully accepting or soliciting a contribution from a foreign national in connection with an election.

Effective January 1, 2027, the bill:

- Amends the voter registration application, to require an applicant to acknowledge that it is a third degree felony to swear or affirm or otherwise submit false information on a voter registration application.
- Updates definitions relating to ballots and voting systems and clarifies the use of ballot-on-demand technology for production of early voting ballots.
- Specifies that voting must be done by paper ballot unless a voter requests to use a voter interface device.
- Removes student identifications, retirement center identifications, neighborhood association identifications, and public assistance identifications from the types of photo identifications that are acceptable for use in voting.
- Revises the time at which the Elections Canvassing Commission meets.
- Clarifies existing election returns reporting requirements.
- Deletes outdated language regarding the treatment of spoiled ballots.
- Sets the registration date for valid voter registrations and updates as the date the application was initially received once the required evidence is verified, except for changes to party affiliation which, if registration books are closed for a primary election, are effective for subsequent general election.

Upon becoming a law, the bill authorizes an office of the supervisor of elections to close for other federal, state, or locally approved holidays, in addition to legal holidays, if the supervisor’s duties do not otherwise require the office to remain open.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect on January 1, 2027.

Vote: Senate 27-12; House 77-28