

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## FINAL BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

<b>BILL #:</b> <a href="#">HB 1055</a> <b>TITLE:</b> Florida State University College of Law Election Law Center <b>SPONSOR(S):</b> Albert	<b>COMPANION BILL:</b> <a href="#">SB 892</a> (Simon) <b>LINKED BILLS:</b> None <b>RELATED BILLS:</b> None
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**FINAL HOUSE FLOOR ACTION:** 112 Y's 0 N's **GOVERNOR'S ACTION:** Pending

### SUMMARY

#### Effect of the Bill:

The bill establishes the Florida State University (FSU) Election Law Center within the FSU College of Law and specifies the requirements for the center.

#### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill will have an indeterminate fiscal impact on state government.

### JUMP TO

### [SUMMARY](#)

### [ANALYSIS](#)

### [RELEVANT INFORMATION](#)

## ANALYSIS

### EFFECT OF THE BILL:

HB 1055 passed as [SB 892](#). (Please note that bill section parentheticals do not contain hyperlinks to bill sections for Senate bills.)

### Florida State University Election Law Center

The bill establishes the [Florida State University Election Law Center](#) (Election Law Center) within the [Florida State University \(FSU\) College of Law](#). The bill codifies the Election Law Center's establishment, purpose, and authorized activities. (Section 1)

### Election Law

The bill defines [election law](#) to mean any issues relating to:

- Voting rights.
- Election administration.
- Election emergencies.
- Election integrity.
- Voter registration and voter registration databases.
- Cyber or other technical issues relating to elections.
- Federal, state, and local legal provisions governing the electoral process.
- Election contests for any federal, state, or local office.
- Matters relating to the Electoral College or the casting, counting, or validity of electoral votes.
- Federal and state campaign finance law.
- Election audits.
- Apportionment and redistricting.
- Doctrines relating to justiciability, civil procedure, and remedies in election-related cases. (Section 1)

Additionally, the bill extends the definition of election law to historical, empirical, and comparative studies of the specified topics, as well as philosophical and theoretical discussions on democracy, democratic theory, and republicanism. (Section 1)

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**DATE:** 5/7/2025

## Goals

The bill establishes that the goals of the Election Law Center are to:

- Conduct and promote rigorous, objective, nonpartisan, and evidence-based research on significant constitutional, statutory, and regulatory issues related to election law.
- Plan and host events to facilitate learning about the electoral process and election law, providing opportunities for students, scholars, legislators, judges, election administrators, attorneys, and members of the public.
- Develop and sponsor publicly accessible materials and resources that educate the public on elections and election law.
- Assist students by providing learning opportunities, practical experience, and career pathways in election law.
- Enhance the reputation of the FSU College of Law as a nationally recognized source for cutting-edge legal scholarship and technical expertise.
- Serve as a nonpartisan resource to address election law inquiries from federal, state, and local election officials, the Legislature, and legislative staff.
- Bolster understanding of the electoral process and promote public confidence in Florida's electoral system.
- Develop objective, evidence-based analysis, best practices, and potential reforms to election statutes, regulations, and other policies governing elections to:
  - Enable electoral systems to effectively manage natural disasters and other emergencies that could disrupt elections.
  - Promote public confidence in the electoral process.
  - Ensure that all qualified United States citizens in Florida have a reasonable, adequate, and safe opportunity to exercise their right to vote.
  - Minimize the risks of mistakes, fraud, violations, accidents, or other irregularities that could impact elections. (Section 1)

## Authorized Activities

The bill authorizes the Election Law Center to undertake a range of activities to fulfill its mission of advancing election law research, education, and policy development. The bill authorizes the Election Law Center to:

- Hire necessary faculty and staff to support the center's operations and develop and teach courses related to election law.
- Hold events such as workshops, symposia, roundtables, interviews, public discussions, lectures, and conferences.
- Conduct, aid, and sponsor research on election law and publish or make publicly available articles, reports, analyses, databases, or websites relating to election law issues.
- Provide training and continuing education for members of the federal and state judiciaries and judicial organizations, attorneys, Department of State (DOS) personnel, supervisors of elections (supervisors) and their employees, and other election administrators.
- Provide formal and informal assistance to the Legislature and governmental entities or officials at the federal, state, and county levels on matters related to elections and election law. This assistance may include research, reports, public comments, testimony, or briefs.
- Award scholarships and research assistantships to outstanding students interested in election law and sponsor fellowships to fund qualified students to work with the center or at local, state, or federal offices and nonpartisan entities engaged in election law matters.
- Partner with other centers, programs, institutes, and associations as appropriate to promote the center's goals. (Section 1)

## Data Sharing and Confidentiality

The bill encourages the DOS, supervisors, the State Library, and the State Archives to cooperate with the Election Law Center by sharing electronic copies of information or data in their possession, custody, or control upon request of the faculty director of the Election Law Center. (Section 1)

The bill requires the Election Law Center and its employees to be subject to, and to store such information or data consistent with, confidentiality and security requirements that are comparable to those that apply to the DOS, supervisors, and their employees. (Section 1)

## Funding

The bill provides that the Election Law Center will be funded through appropriations as provided in the General Appropriations Act, charitable donations and grants, and other university funds. (Section 1)

## Leadership and Governance

The bill requires the dean of the FSU College of Law to appoint a faculty director to lead the Election Law Center who is a tenured member of the faculty of the law school. The bill requires the faculty director to hire an executive director to conduct the Election Law Center's day-to-day operations. The bill requires the faculty director, in consultation with the executive director, to:

- Establish programs that promote the Election Law Center's goals.
- Develop the budget and disburse the funds appropriated, donated, or provided to the center.
- Hire employees for the center.
- Oversee the center's research, education, and training programs, events, and work product. (Section 1)

## Academic Freedom and Intellectual Diversity Protections

The bill requires the Election Law Center's research, work, activities, filings, speakers, events, and operations be subject to academic freedom protections. The bill prohibits the Election Law Center or any of its full-time faculty or staff from being compelled to conduct, consult on, or otherwise assist any research or initiatives by any outside federal, state, or local official or agency or private person or entity. The bill further requires the Election Law Center to promote [intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity](#), which is the exposure of students, faculty, and staff to, and the encouragement of their exploration of, a variety of ideological and political perspectives. (Section 1)

## **Effective Date**

Subject to Governor's veto powers, the effective date of this bill is July 1, 2025. (Section 2)

## **FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:**

### STATE GOVERNMENT:

The Election Law Center may incur costs to implement the bill's requirements. Funding for the Election Law Center may be specifically provided in the General Appropriations Act, and the center may accept charitable donations, grants, and other university funds.

## **RELEVANT INFORMATION**

### **SUBJECT OVERVIEW:**

#### [Election Law](#)

Election law covers a wide array of topics, including political spending, voting rights, ballot propositions, redistricting, gerrymandering, and campaign finance. Useful secondary materials include legal resources as well as interdisciplinary sources in the areas of political science, history, and public policy.<sup>1</sup> Federal statutes, such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, regulate key aspects of election law, while state laws dictate voter eligibility, ballot access, and election procedures.<sup>2</sup>

At the state level, current law addresses voter registration, election administration, campaign finance, and recount procedures.<sup>3</sup> The Division of Elections within the Department of State (DOS) provides guidance and oversight for elections, while county supervisors of elections administer elections locally.<sup>4</sup> Legal challenges related to election law arise in state and federal courts, particularly concerning issues of voter access, redistricting, and campaign finance regulations.

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<sup>1</sup> University of California, Irvine School of Law, [Election Law Research Guide](#) (last visited May 2, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> 52 U.S.C. § 10301–10508 (Voting Rights Act of 1965); 52 U.S.C. § 20501–20511 (National Voter Registration Act of 1993).

<sup>3</sup> See Ch. 97–106, F.S.

<sup>4</sup> DOS, Division of Elections, [About Us](#) (last visited May 2, 2025).

## [Florida State University College of Law](#)

Florida State University (FSU) College of Law, located in Tallahassee, Florida, is a nationally recognized public law school. The college offers a range of legal education programs, including specialized courses in constitutional law, administrative law, and public policy. The college leverages its proximity to the Florida Capitol to provide students with access to state government institutions and legal practitioners.<sup>5</sup>

## [Florida State University Election Law Center](#)

The FSU Election Law Center (Election Law Center), housed within the FSU College of Law, provides nonpartisan research, training, and policy analysis on election law.<sup>6</sup> The Election Law Center collaborates with election officials, legislators, and scholars to improve election administration, voting rights, and election integrity.<sup>7</sup> It also offers student scholarships, externships, and research fellowships to support careers in election law.<sup>8</sup>

The Election Law Center is led by a faculty director and an executive director, who oversee its academic, research, and outreach initiatives.<sup>9</sup> The center hosts conferences, lectures, and training sessions, including the Election Law Conference and the Distinguished Lecture in Election Law.<sup>10</sup>

## **Funding**

In general, FSU receives state funds from the Florida Legislature for its operational support and special projects. The FSU Election Law Program was appropriated \$1 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-2024 General Appropriations Act through a special project request.<sup>11</sup> Currently, for FY 2025-2026, there is an appropriation request for the Election Law Center in the amount of \$1.9 million in nonrecurring funds for the purpose of supporting the program's administrative and operational costs.<sup>12</sup>

The FSU College of Law also accepts charitable gifts and grants for funding its programs.<sup>13</sup>

## [Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity](#)

Intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity is the exposure of students, faculty, and staff to, and the encouragement of their exploration of, a variety of ideological and political perspectives.<sup>14</sup> State universities are prohibited from shielding students, faculty, or staff from ideas or opinions they may find uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive.<sup>15</sup>

The Board of Governors of the State University System must conduct an annual assessment of intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity at each state university, using an objective, nonpartisan, and statistically valid survey. This survey measures the extent to which competing ideas and perspectives are presented and whether members of the university community feel free to express their beliefs and viewpoints.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> FSU, [College of Law](#) (last visited May 2, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> FSU College of Law, [Election Law Center](#) (last May 2, 2025).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> FSU College of Law, [Election Law Center Welcomes Executive Director](#) (last visited May 2, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> FSU College of Law, [2024 Distinguished Lecture in Election Law](#) (last visited May 2, 2025).

<sup>11</sup> [Ch. 2023-239, L.O.F.](#) See also Florida State University News, [State budget provides critical support as Florida State University looks to advance strategic goals](#) (last visited May 2, 2025).

<sup>12</sup> Florida House of Representatives, [Appropriation Project Request: FSU College of Law - Election Law Center](#) (May 2, 2025).

<sup>13</sup> FSU College of Law, [Ways to Give](#) (last visited May 2, 2025).

<sup>14</sup> S. [1001.706\(13\)\(a\)1, F.S.](#)

<sup>15</sup> S. [1001.706\(13\)\(a\)2, F.S.](#)

<sup>16</sup> S. [1001.706\(13\)\(b\), F.S.](#)