

STUDENT SENATE BILL 2021-1012

TITLE: Resolution Supporting the Institution of Universal Student Voter Registration

AUTHORS: Student Body President Trevor Pope, Chomp the Vote Chairman Mateo Haydar, Member-at-Large Aaron Armando Arriaga, Senator Rocio Montero-Mask

SPONSORS: Majority Party Leader Jason Scheuer, Rules and Ethics Chairwoman Annabelle Groux, Senator Drew Pancione, Senator John Hazzard, Senator Darren Peters, Senator Spencer Bober, Senator Olivia Green, Senator Santiago Clavijo-Gomez, Judiciary Chairman Noah Fineberg, Senator Casey Mason, Senator Aaron Lazar, Senator Andrew Page, Senator Olivia Potthast, Senator Georgia Seacrest

WHEREAS, the University of Florida is committed to developing students that lead and serve the State of Florida and the nation; [1]

WHEREAS, on a national average, student voter turnout has historically struggled in comparison to that of other demographics due to young people citing barriers such as missing a deadline or lacking other information as the reason they did not register at much higher rates than older age groups [2]; and,

WHEREAS, according to research conducted by Campus Vote Project, students also cite depending on their college or university over other institutions to provide students nonpartisan opportunities to register to vote, learn about the issues and candidates on the ballot, and receive accurate information on deadlines and processes for voting absentee, by-mail, early, or on Election Day [2]; and,

WHEREAS, certain populations of students in the United States are differently-abled and, more specifically, students at the University of Florida who have documented disabilities with the Disability Resource Center, who often face immeasurable challenges to information related to voting and therefore lack equitable access to similar information; and

WHEREAS, campus civic engagement and voter registration initiatives on campus have been working to achieve Universal voter registration in recent years to combat apathy; and

WHEREAS, recent campus mobilization efforts, spearheaded by Chomp the Vote and the Bob Graham Center initiatives, expected increased overall registration rates by helping both undergraduate and graduate students to register to vote; and

WHEREAS, the University of Florida has had to modify and restructure its voter registration outreach efforts in recent months in light of the COVID-19 Pandemic; and

WHEREAS, such efforts must be supplemented by institutional reforms to strengthen campus culture surrounding voter registration in the long-term; and

WHEREAS, the Higher Education Act of 1998 has a provision that requires colleges and universities to make “a good-faith effort” to distribute voter registration forms to each student enrolled in a degree or certificate program and physically in attendance at the institution [3]; and

WHEREAS, research conducted by the National Conference of State Legislatures indicates that mandatory choice systems like this one have already led to increases in registration levels within state-level jurisdictions [4]; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of universal or active choice systems of voter registration through the class registration process has been shown at other university campuses, and the creation of additional mechanisms for voter registration has led to campuses registering above 90 percent of their eligible voter student body [5];

WHEREAS, Student voter turnout increased with the NuVotes Program between 2012 and 2016 at a rate higher than 99 percent of other colleges and universities across the country [6]; and

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the importance of promoting civic engagement on campus to its students.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the need to implement active choice voter registration mechanisms within ONE.UF and within the class registration process to provide voting-eligible students with the option to register to vote.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recommends that these efforts include information on civic engagement to invite all students to be active and engaged members of our community, regardless of their eligibility to vote.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the need for institutionalizing additional mechanisms for voter registration and voting information to develop better civic engagement amongst students.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to President W. Kent Fuchs, Provost Joseph Glover, Vice President for Information Technology Elias G. Eldayrie, Vice President for Student Affairs Dr. D'Andra Mull

[1] <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/administration/#missionstatementtext>

[2] <https://www.campusvoteproject.org/why-student-voters-matter>

[3] https://www.rit.edu/fa/grms/compliance/statutes/Voter_Registration_Provision_in_Higher_Education_Amendments_of_1998.html

[4] <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/states-and-election-reform-the-canvas-s-august-2014.aspx>

[5] <https://campuselect.org/voter-registration-2/register-students-to-vote/>

[6] <https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2017/october/innovative-student-voter-model-earns-national-recognition/>