

Voting Rights in Florida



Evaluation of Voting Rights for Floridian Citizens

“The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter.”

- President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Helpful Resources

Florida Supervisor of Elections Offices by County <http://bit.ly/2in2J5J>

Florida Department of State, Division of Election <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/> (Make sure to look at the resources on this website, including the sections on ‘data & statistics’ and ‘laws & rules’ and ‘voting systems’)

Florida Office of Economic and Demographic Research <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/area-profiles/county/index.cfm>

Additional Socioeconomic/Demographic Data -<https://datausa.io/>

Florida State Association –Supervisor of Elections (FSA-SOE) <http://bit.ly/2CY5Udu>

Academic Papers

Brian Amos, Dan Smith, Casey St. Claire (2017), “Reprecincting and Voting Behavior” <http://bit.ly/2htYUMA>

Michael Herron and Dan Smith (2012), “Souls to the Polls: Early Voting in Florida in the Shadow of House Bill 1355” <http://bit.ly/2lEPaU7>

Michael Herron and Dan Smith (2016), “Precinct resources and voter wait times” <http://bit.ly/2znILD0>

Micah Altman, Brian Amos, Michael McDonald, and Dan Smith (2015), “Revealing Preferences: Why Gerrymanders are Hard to Prove, and What to Do About It” <http://bit.ly/2lEGWLH>

William Hicks, Seth McKee, Mitchell Sellers, and Dan Smith (2015), “A Principle or a Strategy? Voter Identification Laws and Partisan Competition in the American States” <http://bit.ly/2ylA3ow>

Think Tank/Advocacy Sources

Christopher Famighetti, Douglas Keith, and Myrna Perez (2017), *Noncitizen Voting: The Missing Millions* from the Brennan Center for Justice <http://bit.ly/2z9hd3m>

Voter Rights Restoration Efforts in Florida from the Brennan Center for Justice <http://bit.ly/2fIXyxI>

Erika L. Wood, “Florida: An Outlier in Denying Voting Rights” <http://bit.ly/2iSldio>

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition <https://floridarrc.com/>

The League of Women Voters of Florida <http://www.lwvfl.org/>

Fair Elections Legal Network <http://fairelectionsnetwork.com/>

News Sources

NY Times: Culling Voter Rolls <http://nyti.ms/2AAxAat>

2018 Graham Civic Scholars Program | Voting Rights in Florida

by Courtnie Moodie

Introduction

With its last county being incorporated in 1925, the state of Florida boasts having 67 independent counties. During the course of the Spring 2018 semester, approximately 43 students hailing from the University of Florida visited and interviewed various community organizers and public officials regarding access to voting in each county within the state of Florida. The students were required to meet with at least two representatives from each county, conduct interviews with said individuals and compile a report of their findings. The formal student reports consisted of an abstract, a brief synopsis about the demographics of each county, at least three critical issues facing each county, a list of potential solutions, a conclusion reiterating the main points of the aforementioned report and a works cited page. In contrast to the formal student reports, this cumulative report will include a general introduction, background information regarding the topic and basic demographic information pertaining to the state, a brief overview pertaining to the most commonly cited critical issues faced by the state pertaining to voting rights in all Floridian counties based upon information gathered by the formal student reports, a critical issue which is unique to rural counties, a critical issues which is unique to urban counties, a few potential solutions in response to the critical issues mentioned in this report, a section pertaining to data analysis and an acknowledgments section.

Background Information

Voting rights can be defined as the right of an individual to freely choose a political candidate of their liking for municipal, state and federal offices as well as to vote in favour or

against a particular piece of legislation relating to their municipality or state.¹ The United States Constitution has approximately three amendments (the fifteenth, nineteenth and twenty-sixth amendments), which grant American citizens the right to vote. The fifteenth amendment, which was ratified in 1869, prevents the exclusion of any American citizen from being denied their right to vote based upon race, colour or creed.² This amendment essentially gave African-Americans the right to vote within the United States. The nineteenth amendment, which was ratified in 1920, prevents the exclusion of any American citizen from being denied their right to vote based upon gender.³ This amendment essentially gave women the right to vote within the United States. Lastly, the twenty-sixth amendment, which was ratified in 1971, prevents the exclusion of any American citizen from being denied their right to vote as long as the individual is eighteen years of age or older.⁴ Despite the above amendments, many American citizens are still subject to discrimination and persecution due to their desire to exercise their right to vote—specifically, within minority communities.

In particular, the African American community across the United States has been the target of a plethora of undue legislations such as literacy/reading tests, poll taxes, and grandfather clauses in an effort to suppress their voting.⁵ At the height of the Civil Rights Movement, President Lyndon B. Johnson enacted the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in order to

¹ Gerken, Heather K. "Understanding the Right to an Undiluted Vote, 114 harv." *L. REV* 1663 (2001): 1689-1716.

² Hay, Jeff, ed. *Amendment XV: Race and the Right to Vote*. Greenhaven Publishing LLC, 2009.

³ Hodes, W. William. "Women and the Constitution: Some Legal History and a New Approach to the Nineteenth Amendment." *Rutgers L. Rev.* 25 (1970): 26.

⁴ Brown, Clyde, and Gayle K. Pluta Brown. "'Moo U' and the 26th Amendment: Registering for Peace and Voting for Responsive City Government." *Peace & Change* 29, no. 1 (2004): 48-80.

⁵ Filer, John E., Lawrence W. Kenny, and Rebecca B. Morton. "Voting laws, educational policies, and minority turnout." *The Journal of Law and Economics* 34, no. 2, Part 1 (1991): 371-393.

prevent further racial discrimination during the voting process.⁶ Throughout the years opinions and political stances on voting rights have changed. Members of congress have often politicized voting rights with some viewing it as an inalienable right of American citizens while others viewing it as privilege for the civically engaged and educated citizens. More specifically, in the state of Florida voting rights have often been questioned due to numerous historical events detailing voter suppression in the state through gerrymandering, felon disenfranchisement, cybersecurity issues, and issues related to voter registration.

As of this year, Florida, has an estimated population of 20.98 million residents. Of those residents, only 13 million are registered to vote and are actually eligible to vote in the state. Data collected from the Florida Division of Elections states that there are currently 4.5 million Republicans, 4.8 million Democrats, 3.4 million Independents and nearly eighty-six thousand persons registered with minor party affiliations.⁷ Racially, the state is composed of 77.4% of non-Hispanic Whites; 25.6 % of Hispanics, 16.9% of Blacks (non-Hispanic), 2.9% of Asian and Pacific Islanders, 2.1% identify as Mixed raced and 0.5% identify as belonging to a native tribe.⁸ In Florida, minorities tend to vote in a democratic bloc exclusive of the South Floridian Cuban population who have historically voted Republican.⁹ The south-eastern portion of the state votes primarily with the Democratic Party, while most counties due North of Lake Okeechobee and often on the west coast of the peninsula tend to vote with the Republican Party. Nevertheless, Florida has been historically called a “swing state” due to the fact that its

⁶ Guinier, Lani. "The triumph of tokenism: the voting rights act and the theory of black electoral success." *Michigan Law Review* 89, no. 5 (1991): 1077-1154.

⁷ Florida Division of Elections. (2018, July 31). Voter Registration - By Party Affiliation. Retrieved August 30, 2018, from <https://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/voter-registration-monthly-reports/voter-registration-by-party-affiliation/>

⁸ US Census Bureau. (2017, July 1). U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Florida. Retrieved August 30, 2018, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/fl/PST045217>

⁹ Krogstad, Jens Manuel, and Antonio Flores. "Unlike other Latinos, about half of Cuban voters in Florida backed Trump." *Pew Research Center. Noviembre. Consultado el* (2016): 08-12.

voters do not usually vote along the registered party lines during general elections and has been one of the most decisive states in the 2000, 2012 and 2016 general elections.¹⁰ Thus, making the issue of voting rights in Florida a matter of great importance to our entire country.

Most Common State-wide Issues

Lack of Voter Education

As President John F. Kennedy once said, “The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.” A commonly cited state-wide issue was that most voters are completely unaware or misinformed regarding how the voting process works, unaware of state voting laws as it pertains to them, and completely unaware of most matters appearing on their ballots unless it directly affected them or a relative. A plethora of counties believe that the lack of voter education has had a negative impact on voter turnout during the election cycle.¹¹ A large number of Floridian voters are sceptic of the voting process, and believe that when they do vote—the vote does not actually count or that the votes will eventually be improperly counted in the end. This belief prevents many from voting, and leads many residents to deter other potential voters from voting as well. Others, exclusively the elderly and those with a low-socioeconomic background, are often intimidated by the technologically advanced voting machines that many counties have adopted throughout the years. While voters are able to receive basic assistance while voting with this type of technology, some voters may feel embarrassed to ask for assistance when necessary and are then unable to vote with full confidence. Eventually, this may lead to those voters not returning to vote in future elections. The public's general distrust of technology can also propagate the idea that such technologically

¹⁰ Beachler, Donald W., Matthew L. Bergbower, Chris Cooper, David F. Damore, Bas Van Dooren, Sean D. Foreman, Rebecca D. Gill et al. *Presidential Swing States: Why Only Ten Matter*. Lexington Books, 2015.

¹¹ Clauss, J. Access to Voting in Union and Baker Counties, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

advanced machines will leave the state and the nation vulnerable to cybersecurity threats, which also may act as another deterrent for potential voters.¹² Problems pertaining to voters being unaware of state voting laws are usually isolated to registration issues, which is another commonly cited state-wide issue that will be covered later within this report. Lastly, many eligible and potential voters are completely unaware of the most matters appearing on their ballots possibly due to a lack of civic engagement with registered voters by special interest groups and potential candidates and as well as a general disinterest in the voting process. This oftentimes can lead to voter apathy, which eventually leads to most voters deciding not to vote during the primary and general elections.

Voter Registration Issues

Most eligible voters in the state of Florida are completely unaware of the state's rigorous voter identification laws. Most counties send updates regarding voter identification laws and associated legislation by mail to their local constituents. Oftentimes, constituents do not receive those documents due to the fact that they have failed to update their mailing address with their local Supervisor of Elections office within the required time frame. For those who maintain their local mailing address, these residents are often left baffled by all the legal jargon placed within these informational packets and they usually throw them in the garbage. People are also completely unaware that there are multiple ways to register to vote, which include: completing an official voter's registration form in person and via mail, and registering online via various digital interfaces.

Additionally, most eligible voters are completely oblivious that there is a deadline for registration. The state mandates that all individuals must be registered to vote at least 29 days prior to each primary and general election. Each time an individual registers to vote, they must

¹² Edgar, S. Access to Voting in Walton County. Graham Civic Scholars. 2018.

provide their registrar with a valid government issued identification card that contains their address, picture and signature. Without their identification card, they are prevented from voting. More specifically, when a voter chooses to vote by mail the signature on their ballot must correspond with the signature on their government issued identification card.¹³ If the signatures do not match with each other, then the vote will not be counted during the election.¹⁴ This does not take into account that over time an individual's signature can change due a variety of factors including: age as natural changes to an individual's handwriting can occur as time progresses. Voters are also unaware that when they are initially told that they cannot vote although they have been previously registered prior to the current election, they are able to vote with a provisional ballot which is valid as long as the Supervisor of Elections is able to verify their voter registration data at a later date. There has also been a longstanding issue of voters being "scrubbed" or removed from active voters list due to inactivity and other frivolous reasons. This has further disenfranchised a large number of Floridians who after a period of non-voting had been removed from the voting roll without their knowledge or consent.

Issues with Current Polling Stations

Representatives from special interest groups as well as some county officials have made concerns regarding multiple issues with many of the state's current polling stations. Those comments ranged from buildings not being accessible for disabled and limited mobility voters, to locations being difficult to locate and other locations being frequently changed due to gerrymandering or a simple inability to re-secure the site for upcoming elections. A complaint has been made regarding the fact that many polling stations are not in centralized locations. As a result, many counties have resorted to utilizing both public and private buildings in an effort

¹³ Jones, M. Access to Voting in Hamilton, Madison, Suwannee and Taylor County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

¹⁴ Muniz, T. Access to Voting in Brevard County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

to have enough polling stations. While in some areas, these building are large enough to hold an adequate amount of voting technology as well as the expected number of voters—these buildings are often not suited for voters with accessibility issues. For example, one student report found that many of the polling stations in one Floridian county were not up to the American with Disability Act standards.¹⁵ An issue like this can leave counties and the state vulnerable to lawsuits if this issue is not rectified quickly.

Continually, some counties were found to have issues with polling stations being difficult to locate and far apart, especially in rural counties. Oftentimes in areas like those, where there is not a large amount of publicly owned buildings, Supervisors of Elections are at the mercy of private entities who may be willing turn their businesses and sometimes their homes into polling stations. Even then, a business owner or homeowner may be willing to utilize their facility as a polling station for one year but not for another. Ultimately, making polling station locations vastly inconsistent. One county report found that within one county, which was separated by massive land barriers, polling stations were more present in one region of the county than others. Eventually, causing voters to drive long distances to find their polling stations. Those locations were so over-populated that the average waiting time was around forty-five minutes, and many voters decided to leave rather than wait in line.¹⁶ This severely impacted the voting rate of the area, and can also deter potential voters from returning in the future. Moreover, another voting deterrent in regard polling station locations includes gerrymandering which constantly moves precinct locations in an effort to favour one political party over another.¹⁷ The aforementioned are methods in which access to voting in Florida can be limited by issues with current polling stations.

¹⁵ Lind, S. Access to Voting in Flagler County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

¹⁶ Haydar, M. Access to Voting in Monroe County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

¹⁷ Barringer, A. Access to Voting in Duval County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

Low Voter Turnout

Most voters fail to see the importance of consistently voting throughout their lifetime. This is exemplified in the fact that voting in the state of Florida tends to be higher during election years, and lower in years when there is primary election.¹⁸ This phenomenon is possibly due to a lack of voter education pertaining to issues that may affect them. Most eligible voters fail to understand that the state's primary election tends to have a far more greater effect on their daily lives than the presidential election tends to. Nonetheless, regardless of whether the year brings a general or primary election, the state faces extremely low voter turnout amongst youth and minority voters. Surveys by the public entities found that youth tend to be more distrustful of the government, and this may contribute to the reason why they do not vote frequently.¹⁹ Another occurrence that may contribute to the low youth voter turnout is that they often do not tend to update their signatures throughout their lifetimes, which makes them vulnerable to being put under verification frequently. Upon being told that their documentation was not immediately accepted or that their signature does not match, most youth voters tend to leave voting precincts rather than requesting a provisional ballot.²⁰ Others may conclude that specifically college-aged youth do not vote because oftentimes their educational institutions are not polling stations.²¹ Thus, making it inconvenient for youth to vote especially when they have an issue with transportation to polling stations that are not near their institutions. Interviewers also found that minorities within the state tend to have a limited understanding of English or a preference for the ballot to be in their native language(s), and this is often not accommodated by many counties as most ballots are in English and some

¹⁸ Taylor-Wynn, H. Access to Voting in Citrus County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

¹⁹ Faubion, J. Access to Voting in Volusia County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

²⁰ Neff, H. Access to Voting in Indian River County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

²¹ Gilchrist, N. Access to Voting in Palm Beach County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

counties only carry one machine per voting precinct that allows the ballot to be translated into other languages.¹⁷ Interviewers also found that minorities tended to leave voting precincts when there was a high waiting time²², and that they had a distrust of absentee ballots (vote-by-mail ballots) due to the belief that they would not be counted.²³ These are just a few of the ways in which a lack of accessibility to voting can lead to voter suppression.

Prevalent Rural County Issue(s)

Transportation

Specifically, in rural counties, transportation to and from polling stations has been viewed as a major issue. Rural counties often lack a public transportation system, and residents without personal vehicles are at the whim of physically walking to and from various locations or requesting a ride from another individual. This is extremely unfortunate in cases where polling stations are approximately seventeen miles apart, and requesting a ride from someone who is not within an individual's voting precinct truly puts others out of their way.²⁴ Some counties have an unofficial "Ride With Your Neighbour" program, where neighbours are recommended to travel to polling stations together when transportation is an issue.²⁵ However, in rural counties where the majority of the population lives under the poverty level—relying on one's neighbour may be extremely burdensome and it may be unlikely that one's neighbour can even afford transportation for themselves much less another person.²⁶ The attitude of many community leaders surrounding this lack of transportation is that if an individual truly wanted to vote, then they would find a way to get to their polling station during its operational hours. This particular stance on the lack of transportation in rural counties reinforces the idea that

²² Kahlon, S. Access to Voting in Sumter County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

²³ Ramon, B. Access to Voting in Okeechobee, Glades and Hendry County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

²⁴ Pitt, M. Access to Voting in Columbia County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

²⁵ Rmus, A. Access to Voting in Hardee and DeSoto County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

²⁶ Beltran, J. Access to Highlands County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

voting is a privilege and not a right of the American people as given to them in the US Constitution.

Prevalent Urban County Issue

Closed Primaries

In Florida's urban counties, the issue of concern was the state's usage of closed primaries. A closed primary is defined as a primary election in which eligible voters associated with either the Democratic or Republican parties are the only individuals allowed to vote to determine who will be the elected candidate for each political party.²⁷ Florida is one of fourteen states to uphold this practice. Based upon the states political demographic, 3.4 million individuals are registered as Independents and another 86,000 individuals are registered to minor parties.²⁸ The state bars anyone who is not associated with the Republican or Democratic parties from voting in primary elections, which leads to the disenfranchisement of over 3.4 million registered voters every election year. In addition to this, there is a growing issue associated with closed primaries and "ghost" candidates. Most voters are unaware that even in closed primaries, independents and minor-party affiliated are allowed to vote for non-partisan candidates and for county and state appointed positions where there is only one candidate running for an elected office. In the era of "ghost" candidates, some unscrupulous candidates have resorted to writing in friends, colleagues and at times their own family members as candidates to close the race so that only individuals associated with their preferred party can vote for that elected office.²⁹ Also, Floridian millennials are registering as Independents in

²⁷ Gerber, Elisabeth R., and Rebecca B. Morton. "Primary election systems and representation." *Journal of Law, Economics, & Organization* (1998): 304-324.

²⁸ DeSoi, D. Access to Voting in Escambia County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

²⁹ Hackett III, G. Access to Voting in Collier County, Florida. Graham Civic Scholars, 2018.

growing numbers. It is believed that this disenfranchisement of Independent and minor-party affiliated voters contributes to the state's overall low voter turnout and voter apathy.

Other Issues

Felon disenfranchisement

In 1883, the state of Florida passed in its constitution that convicted felons were not allowed to hold public office nor were they eligible to vote in federal, state and local municipal elections. Later this practice became known as “felon disenfranchisement”.³⁰ A felon is considered to be any individual who has been convicted and is incarcerated for a period of a year or more. Upon the completion of their sentence and probation, felons in the state of Florida must formally petition the governor to be granted clemency—which eventually leads to their voting rights being restored.³¹ A plethora of legal scholars have condemned this practice as being unconstitutional for violating the definition of population equality as described in the United States Constitution.¹¹ Research has shown in 2016 approximately six million persons living in the United States of America are considered to be convicted felons. Of the aforesaid number, approximately one third of those individuals live within the state of Florida. Henceforth, making approximately ten percent of Florida's population ineligible to vote.³² Further research from the Prison Policy Initiative found that African-Americans are more likely to be incarcerated than any other race through the Florida prison system.³³ Consequently,

³⁰ Shaw, Katherine. "Invoking the Penalty: How Florida's Felon Disenfranchisement Law Violates the Constitutional Requirement of Population Equality in Congressional Representation, and What to Do About It." *Nw. UL Rev.* 100 (2006): 1439.

³¹ Uggen, Christopher, and Jeff Manza. "Democratic contraction? Political consequences of felon disenfranchisement in the United States." *American Sociological Review* (2002): 777-803.

³² Rebecca, Lai KK, and Jasmine C. Lee. "Why 10% of Florida Adults Can't Vote: How Felony Convictions Affect Access to the Ballot." *New York Times* (2016).

³³ Prison Policy Initiative. (2015). Florida profile. Retrieved September 1, 2018, from <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/FL.html>

displaying that felon disenfranchisement disproportionately affects the minority vote in the state of Florida as well as those with a low educational background and socioeconomic status.

Based upon Florida law, whenever an individual is convicted of a felony crime, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement is legally required to send the Florida Secretary of State Division of Elections office a list with the names of recently convicted individuals. The Florida Secretary of State Division of Elections office then determines which counties the convicted individuals reside in and forward an ineligible voter list to each respective Supervisor of Elections Office. The county Supervisor of Elections office then sends a notification to the felon's address as detailed at the time of their arrest regarding their ineligibility to vote in upcoming elections.³⁴ In order to have their voting rights restored, felons must petition the Florida Commission on Offender Review for one of eight types of clemency. The types of clemency include: full pardon, pardon without firearm privileges, pardon for misdemeanor offenses, sentence commutation, remission of fines and forfeitures as well as an allowance to own and use weapons.³⁵ To date, there is no cost to apply for clemency. However, if an application for clemency of any kind has been denied then the individual cannot re-apply for clemency for a period of two years.

A student report found data, which determined that over twenty thousand Floridian citizens apply for clemency per year; however, the Florida Commission on Offender Review only meets four times per year. Ultimately, this body only reviews less than one hundred cases per year. Many county officials have openly stated the clemency process for the state should

³⁴ Florida Legislature. (2018, September 01). 98.075 Registration records maintenance activities; ineligibility determinations. Retrieved September 1, 2018, from http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0000-0099/0098/Sections/0098.075.html

³⁵ Florida Commission on Offender Review. (2014). Clemency Overview. Retrieved September 1, 2018, from <https://www.fcor.state.fl.us/clemencyOverview.shtml>

be expedited for the sake of county officials and felons, alike.³⁶ Reports have shown that under former Governor Rick Scott's administration less than two thousand individuals have been granted clemency since 2011.³⁷ One county official who believes that her county in particular was unduly affected by felon disenfranchisement has made it her duty to assist many of her local citizens in obtaining, applying and completing clemency applications as many of her constituents are unable to fill out the paperwork by themselves. In the November 2018 state primary election, currently eligible Floridian voters will decide on the matter of felon disenfranchisement. If voters choose to have voting rights restored for felons, nearly a million citizens will have their rights reinstated. Ultimately, creating a new demographic for politicians to target. While this issue was on the November 2018 ballot, only very few student conducted interviews mentioned this problem as a pertinent issue facing counties. On November 6, 2018, Floridians voted in favour of restoring voting rights for over 1.5 million felons.

Potential Solutions

The following potential solutions to the issues associated with access to voting in the state of Florida are based upon suggestions found in the Graham Civic Scholars individual student reports. The potential solutions are divided into policies that can be completed at the state and county level. A few state-level policies, which have been suggested include: proposing an amendment to the State of Florida's constitution on whether closed primaries should be continued within the state; proposing an additional amendment to the state constitution, which would require every public university and college throughout the state to be utilized as a voting precinct during primary and general elections; and continually reinforcing the state's Supreme Court Ruling against gerrymandering/redistricting.

³⁶ Levin, D. Access to Voting in Bradford County. (2018) Bob Graham Center for Public Service.

³⁷ Bates, B. Access to Voting in Gadsden and Wakulla Counties. (2018). Bob Graham Center for Public Service.

Unfortunately, Florida's Constitution Revision Commission, which essentially recommends potential amendments for the general election, only meets every twenty years. Hence, many of these solutions are not immediately viable. A few county-level policies, which have been suggested include: recruiting and training volunteers to teach civic engagement courses that encompass learning how to register to vote, learning what the voting process entails, and what will be covered in the upcoming ballot; recruiting additional volunteers to canvass throughout the county and ensure that eligible households have their voter identification information updated; utilize additional volunteers to target youth and minorities regarding voting; ensure that staff members are producing more reader friendly content regarding voter information that is easy to understand for individuals with low educational backgrounds; create contracts with private entities that own buildings, in order to use those locations as polling stations for multiple election cycles; staff should guarantee with the correct governing authorities that all polling stations are up to ADA standards; and request state funding for transportation to polling stations for precincts with low income.

Data Analysis

The 2018 Graham Civic Scholars were tasked with discovering approximately three critical issues and potential solutions to these issues pertaining to access to voting in various counties throughout the state of the Florida. All sixty-seven counties in Florida were surveyed. It should be noted that some of the counties surveyed had officials (both public and private) that reported having no critical issues, though it can be expected that if those counties did not have a 100% voting rate—then some issues are present. The list of reported critical issues that the counties includes: cybersecurity issues, lack of voter confidence, low voter turnout, voter poverty, lack of voter education, lack of early voting precincts, lack of funding for Supervisor of Elections office, felon disenfranchisement, voter registration issues, lack of transportation, closed primaries, issues occurring at polling precincts, homeless disenfranchisement,

gerrymandering/redistricting, and lack of community involvement. A margin of error should be expected in regard to the number and types of critical issues faced by each county. Due to the locality and size of some Floridian counties, a few of them were grouped together for surveying purposes. Those counties include: Washington, Holmes & Jackson Counties; Franklin, Liberty & Calhoun Counties; Wakulla, Jefferson & Gasden Counties; Franklin, Liberty, Gulf & Calhoun Counties; Hamilton, Madison, Taylor & Suwannee Counties; Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette & Levy Counties; Baker & Union Counties; Hardee & DeSoto Counties; Okeechobee, Glades & Hendry Counties. Information from counties that have been grouped together should be read cautiously as information from those reports may not be encompassing for all counties surveyed. Furthermore, it should be duly noted that the list of potential solutions is not comprehensive and have been offered by individual undergraduate students hailing from the University of Florida. Rather than to be taken at face value, these solutions should serve somewhat as discussion points to aid the conversation of how to promote access to voting within the state of Florida.

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Figure 1. Frequency of County Reported Problems in Rural Areas Table

Frequency of County Reported Problems in Rural Areas														
Problems	Walton	Washington, Holmes & Jackson	Franklin, Liberty, Gulf & Calhoun	Wakulla, Jefferson & Gasden	Hamilton, Madison, Taylor & Suwannee	Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette & Levy	Columbia	Baker & Union	Bradford	Hardee & DeSoto	Highlands	Okeechobee, Glades & Hendry	Monroe	Total
Cybersecurity	1					1								2
Lack of Voter Confidence	1													1
Low Voter Turnout	1		1							1		1	1	5
Voter Poverty		1												1
Lack of Voter Education		1	1					1				1		4
Lack of Early Voting Precincts			1						1	1				3
Lack of Funding			1								1			2
Felon Disenfranchisement				1				1					1	3
Voter Registration Issues				1	1	1	1		1		1			6
Lack of Transportation					1				1	1	1			4
Closed Primaries		1			1									2
Issues with Voting Precincts						1	1						1	3
Homeless Disenfranchisement							1							1
Gerrymandering									1					1
Lack of Community Involvement												1		1
Total	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	3	

Figure 2. Frequency of County Reported Problems in Urban Areas Table

Frequency of County Reported Problems in Urban Areas																
Countries	Cybersecurity	Lack of Voter Confidence	Low Voter Turnout	Voter Poverty	Lack of Voter Education	Lack of Early Voting Precincts	Lack of Funding	Felon Disenfranchisement	Voter Registration Issues	Lack of Transportation	Closed Primaries	Issues with Voting Precincts	Homeless Disenfranchisement	Gerrymandering	Lack of Community Involvement	Total
Escambia												1	1			2
Santa Rosa																0
Okaloosa										1		1				2
Bay																0
Leon																0
Nassau																0
Duval				1						1					1	3
Clay																0
St. Johns						1				1	1					3
Alachua						1	1		1							3
Putnam						1	1			1						3
Flagler						1		1					1			3
Marion				1			1						1			3
Volusia				1		1										2
Citrus				1									1			2
Hernando				1		1	1									3
Sumter				1											1	2
Lake																0
Orange			1			1										3
Seminole		1				1				1						3
Brevard						1							1		1	3
Osceola																0
Polk				1				1			1					3
Pasco			1						1							3
Hillsborough						1							1			2
Pinellas										1		1			1	3
Indian River				1							1	1				3
Manatee													1			1
Sarasota									1				1			2
St. Lucie							1		1							2
Martin				1					1							2
Charlotte									1	1	1					3
Lee		1							1				1			3
Palm Beach				1				1			1					3
Collier			1	1								1				3
Broward		1								1		1				3
Miami-Dade						1	1						1			3
Total	3	3	11	0	11	6	2	3	13	5	6	11	0	4	1	3

Figure 3. Frequency of County Reported Problems for the Entire State Table

Frequency of County Reported Problems for entire state			
Problems	Rural	Urban	Total
Cybersecurity	2	3	5
Lack of Voter Confidence	1	3	4
Low Voter Turnout	5	11	16
Voter Poverty	1	0	1
Lack of Voter Education	4	11	15
Lack of Early Voting Precincts	3	6	9
Lack of Funding	2	2	4
Felon Disenfranchisement	3	3	6
Voter Registration Issues	6	13	19
Lack of Transportation	4	5	9
Closed Primaries	2	6	8
Issues with Voting Precincts	3	11	14
Homeless Disenfranchisement	1	0	1
Gerrymandering	1	4	5
Lack of Community Involvement	1	1	2
Total	39	79	

Figure 4. Frequency of County Reported Problems in Rural Areas Graph

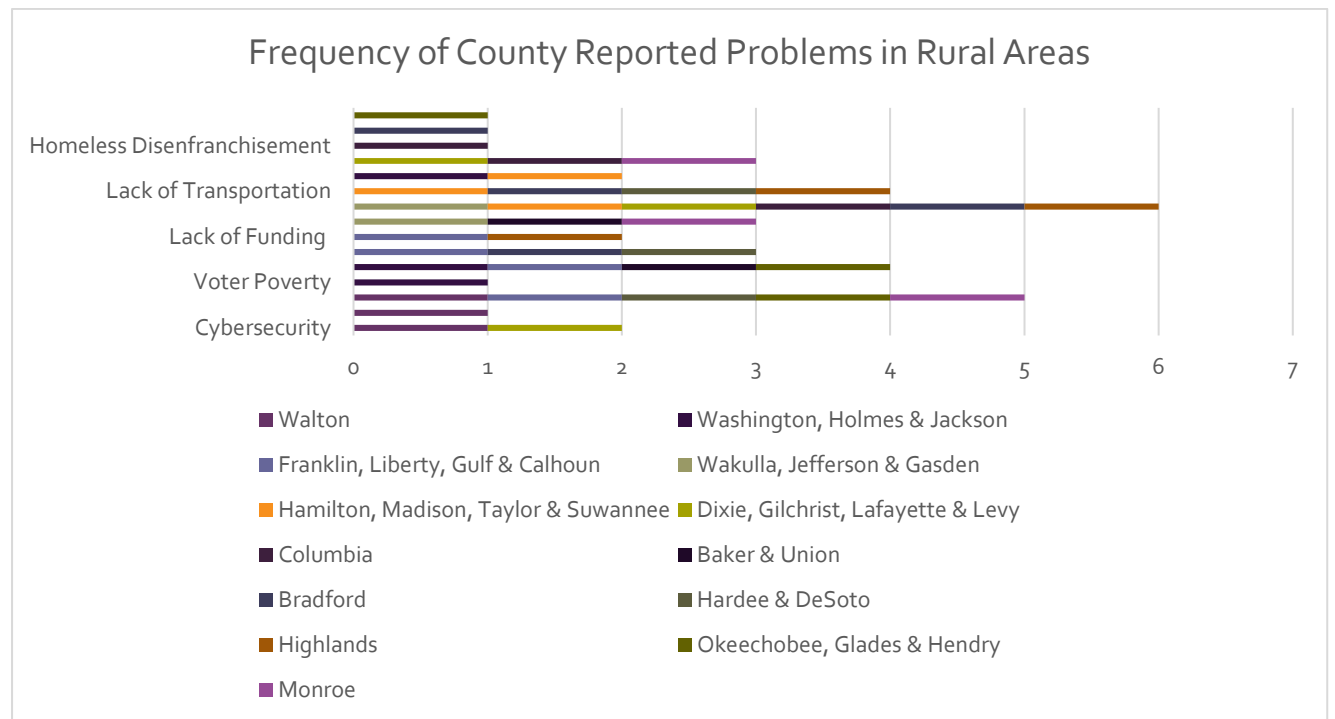


Figure 5. Frequency of County Reported Problems in Urban Areas Graph

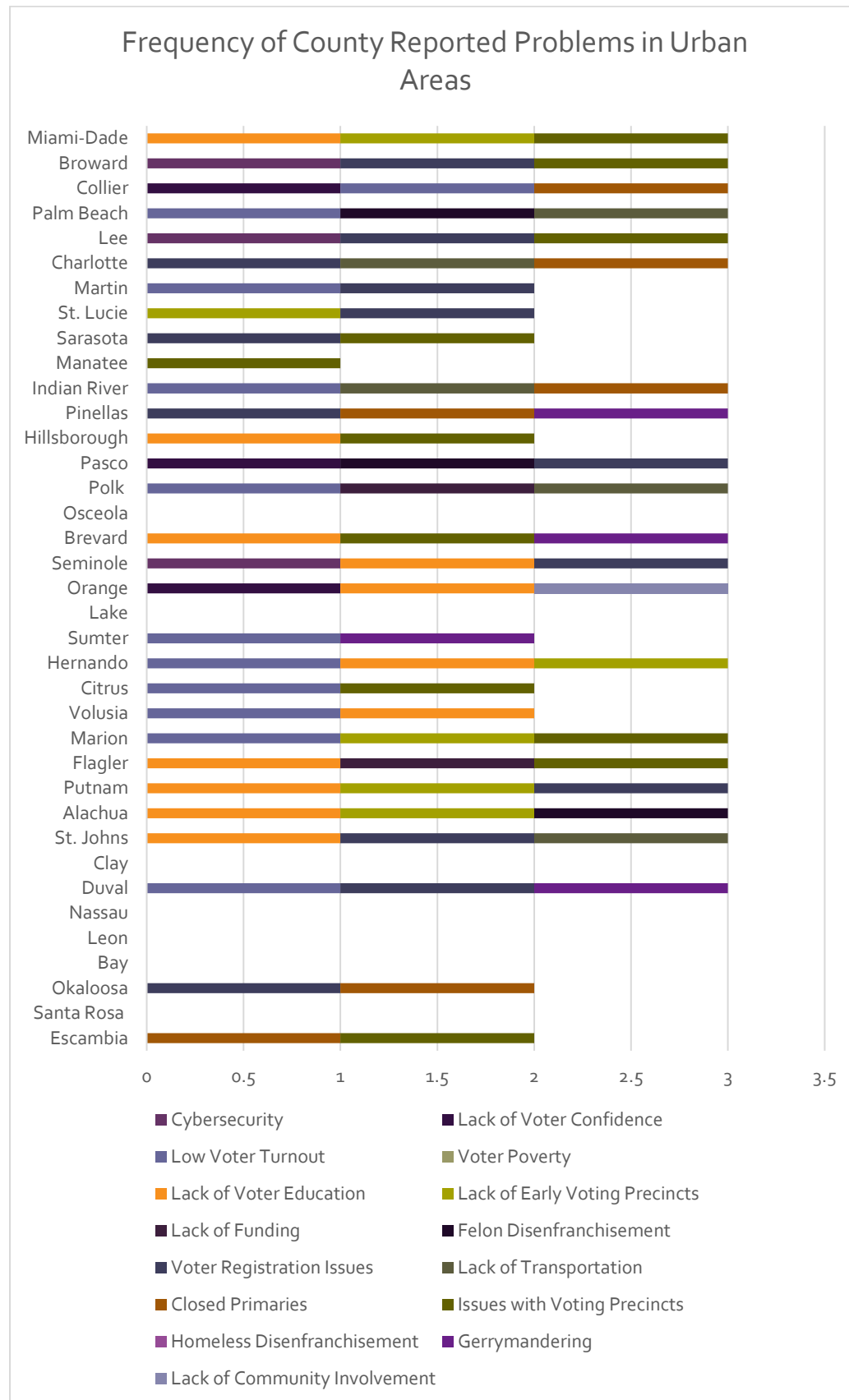
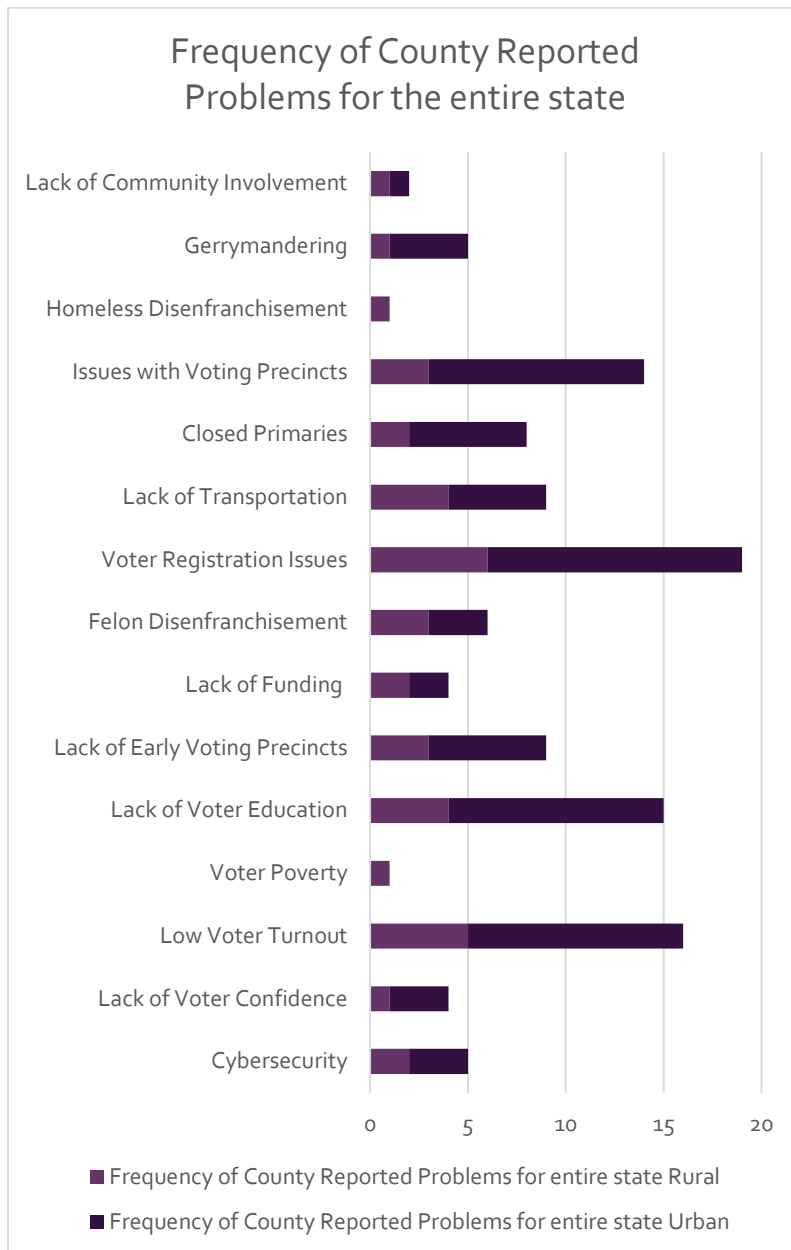


Figure 6. Frequency of County Reported Problems for the Entire State Graph



List of Surveyed Counties

List of Rural Counties in Florida

- Walton
- Washington, Holmes & Jackson
- Franklin, Liberty, Gulf and Calhoun
- Wakulla, Jefferson & Gasden
- Hamilton, Madison, Suwannee, and Taylor
- Dixie, Gilchrist, Lafayette & Levy
- Columbia
- Baker & Union
- Bradford, Hardee & DeSoto
- Highlands
- Okeechobee, Glades and Hendry
- Monroe

List of Urban Counties in Florida

- Escambia
- Santa Rosa
- Okaloosa
- Bay
- Leon
- Nassau
- Duval
- Clay
- St. Johns
- Alachua
- Putnam
- Flagler
- Marion
- Volusia
- Citrus
- Hernando
- Sumter
- Lake
- Orange
- Seminole
- Brevard
- Osceola
- Polk
- Pasco
- Hillsborough
- Pinellas
- Indian River
- Manatee

- Sarasota
- St. Lucie
- Martin
- Charlotte
- Lee
- Palm Beach
- Collier
- Broward
- Miami-Dade