



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF FLORIDA

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Federal Judge Halts Florida's Restrictive Voting Law

League of Women Voters of Florida, Rock the Vote, and Florida PIRG Filed Lawsuit to Block Florida Voter Registration Restrictions

Tallahassee, FL - Civic groups scored a clear victory today, as a federal judge [blocked enforcement](#) of key provisions of Florida's controversial election law, which places onerous restrictions on community-based voter registration drives.

The League of Women Voters of Florida, Rock the Vote, and the Florida Public Interest Research Group Education Fund (PIRG) [filed a lawsuit](#) in December challenging the restrictions. Today, after considering the evidence submitted by the parties and hearing arguments earlier this spring, a federal court preliminarily blocked enforcement of most of the law, finding that Plaintiffs are likely to win on their claims that the law violates the U.S. Constitution and federal law.

"Together speech and voting are constitutional rights of special significance; they are the rights most protective of all others, joined in this respect by the ability to vindicate one's rights in a federal court. ... [W]hen a plaintiff loses an opportunity to register a voter, the opportunity is gone forever," **U.S. Judge Robert L. Hinkle** [wrote in his opinion](#) **blocking most of the Florida law**. "And allowing responsible organizations to conduct voter-registration drives-thus making it easier for citizens to register and vote-promotes democracy."

"Today's ruling is a clear victory for Florida voters," said **Lee Rowland, counsel for the Brennan Center's Democracy Program, one of the attorneys who argued the case for the plaintiffs**. "The Florida legislature has tried repeatedly to stifle access to voter registration opportunities. By halting onerous provisions of the law, the court has stood up for voters and for civic groups across the state helping Floridians register to vote."

"For over 72 years, League volunteers have faithfully and successfully helped to register eligible Florida voters," explained **Deirdre Macnab, President of the League of Women Voters of Florida**. "We are hopeful that this ruling will enable us to continue this important work. Florida's anti-voter law creates impassable roadblocks for our volunteers, who are simply trying to bring fellow citizens into our democratic process. We are grateful the court recognized that the Constitution does not tolerate these types of barriers to civic participation and voter registration."

"As the nation's largest young voter organization, we've dedicated more than two decades to educating and empowering young people to participate in our nation's democracy," stated **Heather Smith**,

President of Rock the Vote. "Rock the Vote has encouraged hundreds of thousands of young Florida residents to have a voice in their community and country. Today's ruling is a victory for them, and for our democracy. We will quickly assess whether this ruling will allow us to restart our critical voter registration work on the ground in Florida."

"Our representative democracy relies on an engaged citizenry, yet voter turnout in Florida remains far too low," added **Brad Ashwell of the Florida Public Interest Research Education Fund.** "That's why we work to sign up thousands of first time voters across the state each election cycle. We are pleased the court froze the majority of this law, so we can continue to fulfill this mission."

"We are pleased that our clients and civic groups all across the State of Florida demonstrated the intimidation and threat of punishment created by this unconstitutional law," said **Robert Atkins, a partner at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP representing the plaintiffs.**

"This is a resounding victory for the Constitution and Florida citizens against a clear attempt to suppress political participation," added **Howard Simon of the ACLU of Florida.**

This decision comes after the Department of Justice, in a separate lawsuit, [opposed](#) Florida's law restricting voter registration and early voting. Read more about that lawsuit [here](#).

The Florida law is just one in a wave of restrictive voting measures that passed in 2011. Together, these laws could make it harder for millions of eligible Americans to vote this November, according to the Brennan Center's report [Voting Law Changes in 2012](#).

The attorneys representing the civic groups are with the Brennan Center for Justice, the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Florida, and leading pro bono law firms Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP and Florida-based Coffey Burlington. Lee Rowland of the Brennan Center, and Farrah Berse and Zachary Dietert of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP argued the case before the federal district court.

[Click here](#) for more background information on this lawsuit.

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