



PRESS RELEASE

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**Florida Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
Announces Report:
Election Emergencies and the Right to Vote in Florida**

The Florida Advisory Committee (Committee) to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Commission) has released a [report](#) following a series of public meetings and written testimony regarding voting rights during times of natural disaster or other public emergency in Florida. The Committee examined how state emergency management procedures affect eligible citizens' ability to vote, regardless of race, color, or national origin.

The report finds that hurricanes, pandemics, and infrastructure failures can create serious barriers to voting, particularly for seniors, voters with disabilities, and people displaced from their homes. It notes that Florida election officials have repeatedly administered elections under difficult conditions and that recent responses to emergencies have been professional and nonpartisan. At the same time, the Committee concludes that Florida relies heavily on ad hoc executive orders and emergency litigation and that clearer statutory guidance and planning would make the system more stable, predictable, and better able to maintain public confidence in close or contentious elections.

In their report, the Committee reviews federal and Florida laws governing election emergencies, litigation over past election emergencies, Florida executive orders addressing election emergencies, and recent Florida bills. The report also relies on testimony from individuals with firsthand experience managing election-related crises, including the Chair of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, the CEO for Programs at the Election Center, Florida's Secretary of State, the Duval County Deputy Supervisor of Elections, and the Executive Director of the North Carolina State Board of Elections, along with written submissions from advocacy and community groups.

Based on this record, the Committee developed seven findings and ten recommendations. These include calls for clearer emergency planning and training for election officials, improved communication with voters when election rules change during an emergency, dedicated backup equipment and contingency plans for damaged voting infrastructure, and statutory "redlines" that identify which emergency measures are permitted and which are not, in order to protect both access to the ballot and public confidence in election results. These recommendations outline steps for Florida's Secretary of State, Governor, legislature, and local election officials to consider as they prepare for future elections that may be disrupted by natural disasters or other crises.

Chair Nadine Smith said, "We heard from people who have run elections under enormous pressure. Their experience shows that Florida can manage crises well, but it needs clearer statutory guidance so officials aren't left improvising in the middle of an emergency."

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, established by the 1957 Civil Rights Act, is the only independent, bipartisan federal entity charged with advising the President and the Congress on civil rights and reporting annually on federal civil rights enforcement. Its 56 advisory committees offer broad perspectives on civil rights concerns in their jurisdictions. For more information, please visit www.usccr.gov.