

Subject: South St. Petersburg Voters Deserve an Accessible Early Voting Site

Dear Pinellas Supervisor of Elections Julie Marcus,

We write to urge your office to add an early voting site in South St. Petersburg. Voters in South St. Petersburg continue to face limited access due to the lack of an early voting site. Currently, the only early voting site serving South Pinellas County for the 2026 primary elections is located downtown at the Supervisor of Elections Office. A second early voting site in Gulfport will only open during the general election. For many voters in this area, the lack of other early voting sites raises both logistical and historical concerns that warrant thoughtful consideration.

This limited access to early voting is especially troubling because the neighborhoods in the South St. Petersburg area are densely populated. In fact, they have a higher population density than most of the county – often exceeding 1,000 people per square mile, which is well above the county average. In addition, we have grave concerns about Black voters' access to the early voting site in Gulfport, which was known as a [sundown town](#) where Black people were at risk of racial violence – especially after dark – in the not-so distant past; there should be no doubt that some Black residents still remember this history. Black voters' reluctance to vote in Gulfport is supported by [data showing](#) that voters in Child's Park, just east of Gulfport, often travel farther to vote and choose to vote early downtown, despite Gulfport being the closer location.

Local leaders previously raised concerns about early voting sites, but were denied the opportunity to speak with you directly. As a consequence, alternative site proposals were not meaningfully explored with you. We now have an opportunity to correct that oversight, which is even more urgent given recent changes to Florida's vote-by-mail requirements that make early voting even more important, especially for Black voters.

We commend your office's focus on supporting vote-by-mail opportunities, but the new Florida law now requires voters to re-enroll in vote-by-mail after each general election and to comply with new ID requirements. While the number of citizens voting by mail in Pinellas has remained fairly consistent, the state saw 1.8 million fewer mail ballots cast between 2020 and 2024.¹ Across the state, that significant decrease in mail ballots could worsen during this election cycle. At the same time, community surveys indicate low confidence in vote-by-mail among Black voters in particular. All of this makes accessible, in-person early voting even more critical for the political participation of South St Petersburg's Black eligible voters.

Data underscores the racial disparities in voter turnout. In the 2024 general election, Pinellas ranked 60th out of 67 Florida counties for the lowest Black voter turnout.² Likewise, the participation gap between Black and White voters in Pinellas County was 20 percentage points, which is larger than the participation gap in other Florida counties of equal or greater population, causing Pinellas County to rank 51st out of 67 counties.³ Given the significance of the racial gap in voter turnout in Pinellas County, it is especially problematic that none of the few early voting sites planned for 2026 are in predominantly Black neighborhoods.

For all these reasons, we urge you to expand early voting access by establishing at least one early voting location in a [predominantly Black neighborhood](#) of South St. Petersburg -- preferably within Child's Park or the 33711 and 33712 zip codes -- ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. We also ask that you, as Supervisor of Elections, engage directly with the Black community in South St. Petersburg and work collaboratively with these constituents to identify and approve trusted and accessible locations.

¹ Source: [Florida Department of State](#).

² All Voting is Local analysis of TargetSmart data including active & inactive voters.

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Ensuring equitable access to early voting strengthens public confidence in our elections and demonstrates a shared commitment to fairness and civic participation. If achieving these goals requires adding sites in other parts of the county, you have our full support.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our request. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and to work collaboratively toward a solution that serves all voters in Pinellas County.

Sincerely,

Sam Coodley FL Campaign Manager All Voting is Local	Cliff Albright: Cofounder/Executive Director Black Voters Matter Fund	Jin Hee Lee Director of Strategic Initiatives Legal Defense Fund
Jonathan Webber Florida Policy Director Southern Poverty Law Center	Abdelilah Skhir Senior Policy Strategist ACLU of Florida	A.Nikki Gaskin-Capehart President & CEO Pinellas County Urban League
Donald Hart, Sr. President NAACP Florida State Conference	Brother John Muhammad President Child's Park Neighborhood Association	Corey Givens Jr. Councilmember, District 7 City of Saint Petersburg
Latorra Bowles Executive Director The Deuces Live, Inc.	Bishop Eddie Solomon Pastor Dominion Worship Center Located in South St. Petersburg	Effie Solomon-Ward Executive Director Dominion Helping Hand Ministry Inc St Petersburg.
Historic Bethel AME Church Rev. Markus-Derek White, Pastor St. Petersburg, Florida	James E Jackson Jr., President Eta Rho Chapter Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.	Frank B Brunson VREM Chairman Eta Rho Chapter Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
J.A. Jones Editor The Weekly Challenger News	Derek Cooper Political Action Committee Chair, St. Petersburg NAACP #5130	Jackie Azis President League of Women Voters of the St. Petersburg Area
Franklin Alves President Council of Neighborhood Associations	Jennifer DiGiacinto President Maximo Moorings Neighborhood Association (MMNA)	Isabelle Rios President Methodist Town Neighborhood Association
Britteny Lewis President St. Petersburg Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc	Charles Montana Polemarch/President St. Petersburg Alumni Chapter Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.	John Powers Legal Director Advancement Project
Marlene Shaw Councilmember Gulfport	April Thanos Past City Councilor - Gulfport	Amy Keith Executive Director Common Cause Florida

Genesis Robinson Executive Director Equal Ground Education Fund	Trei Johnson Anchor/Reporter The Gabber	Mark Ferrulo Executive Director Progress Florida Education Institute
Rev. Ben Atherton-Zeman Minister Unitarian Universalist Church of St. Petersburg	Pat Gerard Co-Chair Pinellas National Organization for Women	Dr. Charlie Colquitt President Minority Health Coalition of Pinellas. Inc.
Tanya Landry President League of Women Voters of North Pinellas County	Teresa Potter & Diana Pecha Co-Presidents League of Women Voters of Hillsborough & Pasco Counties	Roger Caldwell Executive Director Black Voters Empowerment Coalition
Gianny Hunt President Magnified Voices Inc.	Cassandra Brown Cofounder, Executive Director All About the Ballots	Adam Abutaa Organizing Manager Emgage Florida
Jon Harris Maurer Public Policy Director Equality Florida	Michelle Kanter Cohen Policy Director Fair Elections Center	Chanae Jackson Organizing Director Florida For All
Teresa Guzman Pagan Director of Expanding Democracy Florida Rising Together	Laura Munoz Civic Engagement Director Florida Student Power	Brendan Cushing Managing Director Generation Vote
Laudi Campo Florida State Director Hispanic Federation	Ashley Tjhung Director of Policy and Political Affairs Stand Up America	Larry Hannan Communications & Policy Director State Voices Florida
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