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Governor DeSantis Issues Emergency Executive Order to Ensure Ballot Access for Voters in Counties Severely Impacted by Hurricane Ian

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Two weeks ago, Hurricane Ian made landfall as a powerful Category 4 storm on Florida's southwestern coast, destroying many homes and businesses and dislocating tens of thousands of Floridians. At the request of the Supervisors of Elections in Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties, and at the recommendation of Secretary of State Cord Byrd, the Governor signed Executive Order 22-234, which will help ensure adequate access to Florida's 2022 General Election ballot for the voters of Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties.

The Governor's Executive Order includes provisions authorizing the Supervisors of Elections in Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties to:

- Extend the number of days for early voting and designate additional early voting locations. The early voting period may begin as early as Monday, October 24, 2022, and can extend through Election Day, November 8, 2022.
- Allow voters in Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties to request by phone that their vote-by-mail (VBM) ballot be mailed to an address other

than their address of record. Voters must still provide an appropriate form of identification in the same manner as absent uniform service and overseas voters.

- Designate and provide notice of the locations for secure ballot intake stations and relocate and consolidate polling locations as necessary.
- Increase the pool of eligible poll workers who may serve within Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties by making eligible any poll workers previously trained for the 2020 election cycle and thereafter and by encouraging state employees to serve as poll workers in these counties.

Governor DeSantis also directed all state agencies to render aid and assistance as needed by the Supervisors of Elections in Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties.

Secretary Byrd and the Department of State assessed the need for these provisions based on extensive outreach to Florida's Supervisors of Elections:

- Secretary Byrd and the Division of Elections leadership conducted continuous outreach and assessed the needs and readiness of counties in or around Hurricane Ian's path, including: Charlotte, Citrus, Collier, DeSoto, Dixie, Flagler, Gilchrist, Hardee, Hernando, Highlands, Hillsborough, Lafayette, Lake, Lee, Levy, Manatee, Orange, Osceola, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Putnam, Sarasota, Seminole, St. Johns, Taylor, and Volusia counties. Secretary Byrd also personally visited the hardest hit areas, including Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Lee, Hardee, and Sarasota counties to meet with their Supervisors of Elections in-person.
- Furthermore, Secretary Byrd participated in discussions with the Florida Supervisors of Elections (FSE). The FSE is a nonprofit association representing the Supervisors of Elections from all of Florida's 67 counties.
- Lastly, since Hurricane Ian made landfall, numerous Supervisors of Elections have publicly addressed their readiness, and thankfully most have very publicly stated that Ian's impacts will not interfere with their duties. This is a testament to the resiliency of Florida's elections system.

Based on the collective feedback of the Supervisors of Elections across the state and at the written requests of the Supervisors of Elections in Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties, Secretary Byrd recommended that the Governor take the actions outlined in Executive Order 22-234.

“In the wake of Hurricane Ian, the Florida Department of State has worked with Florida’s Supervisors of Elections and Governor DeSantis to ensure that the 2022 General Election is administered as efficiently and securely as possible across the state and in the counties that received the heaviest damage,” **said Secretary Byrd**. “Florida will continue to lead the way in elections administration in 2022, and I am grateful for and confident that our local elections officials will have all of the resources and support they need to run another successful election.”

Obstacles reported by the Supervisors of Elections in Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties include, but are not limited to, damage to polling locations and early voting sites, extended utility and telecommunications service disruptions, poll worker unavailability, and displaced voters.

Fortunately, supervisors have not reported any damage to voting machines, and all election-related equipment, including ballots, are secure. Additionally, the Supervisors of Elections in Charlotte, Lee, and Sarasota counties will be required to notify the Department of State and the public of the actions they take under Executive Order 22-234, the full text of which can be read [here](#).

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