A woman with voluminous, curly brown hair and large hoop earrings is looking intently at a document she is holding. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be an American flag. The overall tone is professional and focused.

Access to Voting Information in Spanish – Seminole County

Presentation by Deborah Poulalion,
candidate for Seminole County Supervisor
of Elections, 2024

About This Presentation

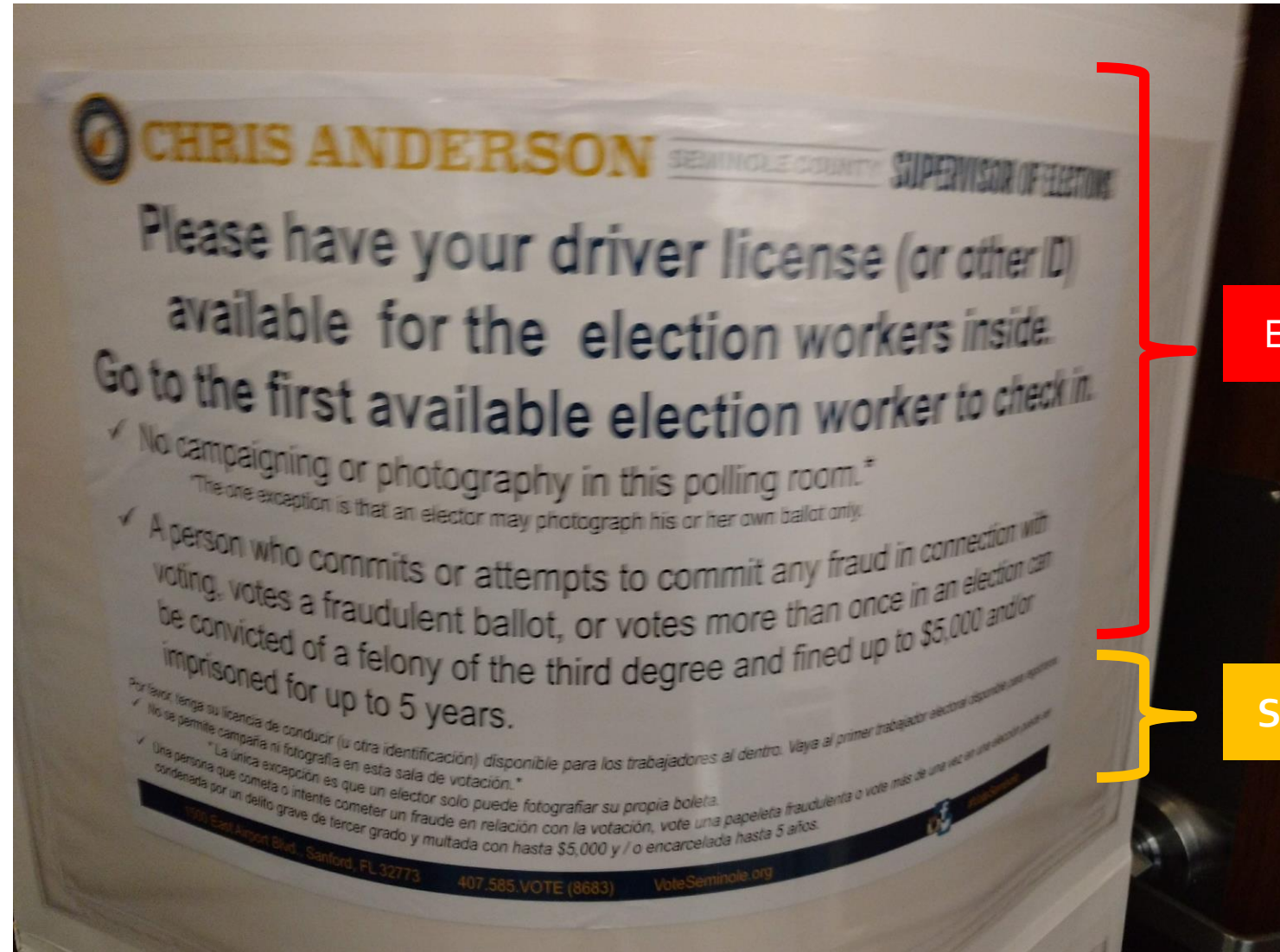
- 1.** This presentation was developed by Deborah Poulalion in response to poor access to Spanish language voting information in Seminole County.
- 2.** She presented it to the Supervisor of Elections office on April 25, 2022, along with Spanish-speaking advocates.
- 3.** Some corrections have been made, but many are still not done.
- 4.** This presentation lists the changes requested and actions taken thus far.

Examples of Spanish Being More Difficult to Access

1. Signs at polling places
2. Automated phone system
3. Mail ballot request
4. Voter guide
5. Website (some improvement)
6. Bilingual poll worker badges
(badges finally provided Nov. 2022)



Signs at polling places use very small text for Spanish compared to English.



English

Spanish

Simple solution: Make the Spanish and English text the same size.

Orange County Example

CLOSED PRIMARY & UNIVERSAL PRIMARY

Florida is a Closed Primary State, this means that during Primary Elections, only voters who are registered members of political parties may vote for respective party candidates for an office in a Primary Election. However, there are times when all registered voters can vote in a Primary Election:

Non-Partisan Races- When there are races for Non-Partisan offices or local referendum questions on the Primary ballot.

Universal Primary Races- When all the candidates for an office have the same party affiliation and the winner of the Primary Election will not face any opposition in the General Election, then all registered voters can vote for any of the candidates for that office in the Primary Election.

Article VI, Section 5(b), Florida Const., Fla. Stat., s.101.021, F.S.

PRIMARIAS CERRADAS Y PRIMARIA UNIVERSAL

Florida es un Estado de Primarias Cerradas, esto significa que durante las Elecciones Primarias, solo los votantes registrados como miembros de un partido pueden votar por los respectivos candidatos de ese partido en una Elección Primaria. Sin embargo, hay ocasiones en las que todos los votantes registrados pueden votar en la Elección Primaria:

Contiendas No-Partidistas- Cuando hay contiendas por puestos No-Partidistas o preguntas del referendo local en la papeleta Primaria.

Primaria Universal- Cuando todos los candidatos para un puesto tienen la misma afiliación política y el ganador de la Elección Primaria no enfrenta oposición en la Elección General, todos los votantes registrados pueden votar por esa contienda en la Elección Primaria.

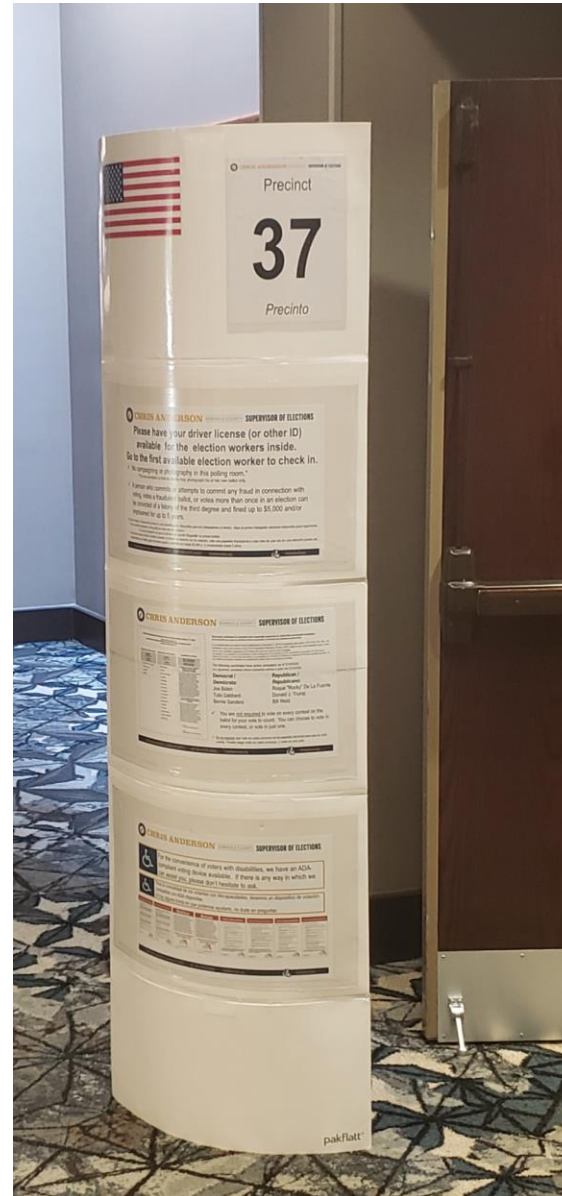
Article VI, Section 5(b), Florida Const., Fla. Stat., s.101.021, F.S.

English

Spanish

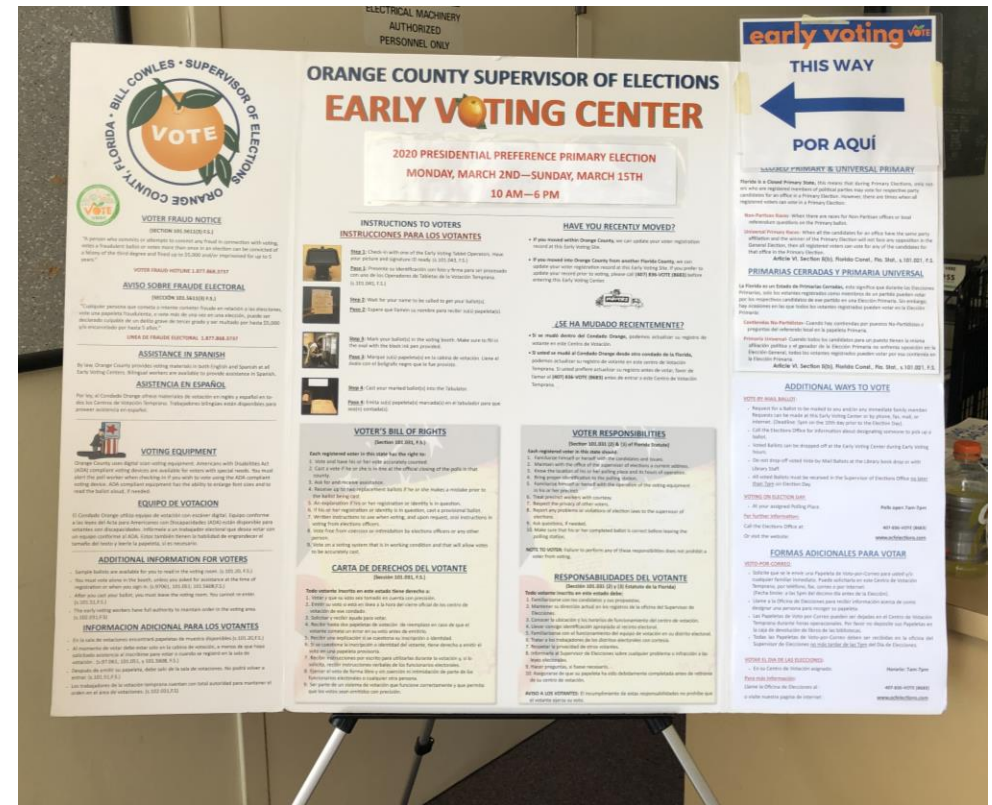
Seminole County polling place signs have text so close to the ground that no one can't read it (esp. the small Spanish print).

Seminole County



Orange County Polling Place

Instructions are at eye level and the Spanish text is the same size as the English.



The “voter hotline” gives callers 30 seconds of introduction in English before the Spanish option is given.

**Seminole County Voter Hotline:
407-585-8683**



The “voter hotline” has 6 options in English but only 2 options in Spanish

Seminole County Voter Hotline: 407-585-8683

Spanish Options

1. Visit the website
2. Dial 1 to speak to the office.

Dialing “1” usually sends callers to the main number and rarely does a Spanish-speaking person answer.

The after hours message is in English, not Spanish.



English options

1. Access voter record
2. Request a mail ballot
3. Info about elections, early voting, polling locations
4. Other
5. Repeat options
6. Speak to a member of the team



Mail ballots can be requested with automated phone prompts in English but not in Spanish.



Seminole County Voter Hotline: 407-585-8683



The Voter Guide uses much larger text for English than Spanish. A Spanish speaker is likely to assume the guide is English only.



**CHRIS
ANDERSON**



2022

**SEMINOLE COUNTY
VOTER GUIDE**

VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION
GUIDE TO ELECTED OFFICIALS
MAIL BALLOT REQUEST

*Guía del votante
Solicitud de inscripción de votante
Guía de funcionarios electos
Solicitud de votación por correo*

2022
**SEMINOLE COUNTY
VOTER GUIDE**

VOTER REGISTRATION APPLICATION
GUIDE TO ELECTED OFFICIALS
MAIL BALLOT REQUEST

*Guía del votante
Solicitud de inscripción de votante
Guía de funcionarios electos
Solicitud de votación por correo*

Spanish Translation
Tiny Font



The easy solution is to make separate English and Spanish voter guides (Lake County)



Guía del votante
Condado de Lake



¡Regístrese y vote!

Supervisor de Elecciones del Condado de Lake
1898 E. Burleigh Blvd., Tavares, FL 32778
TEL: 352-343-9734 • FAX: 352-343-3605
LakeVotes.gov



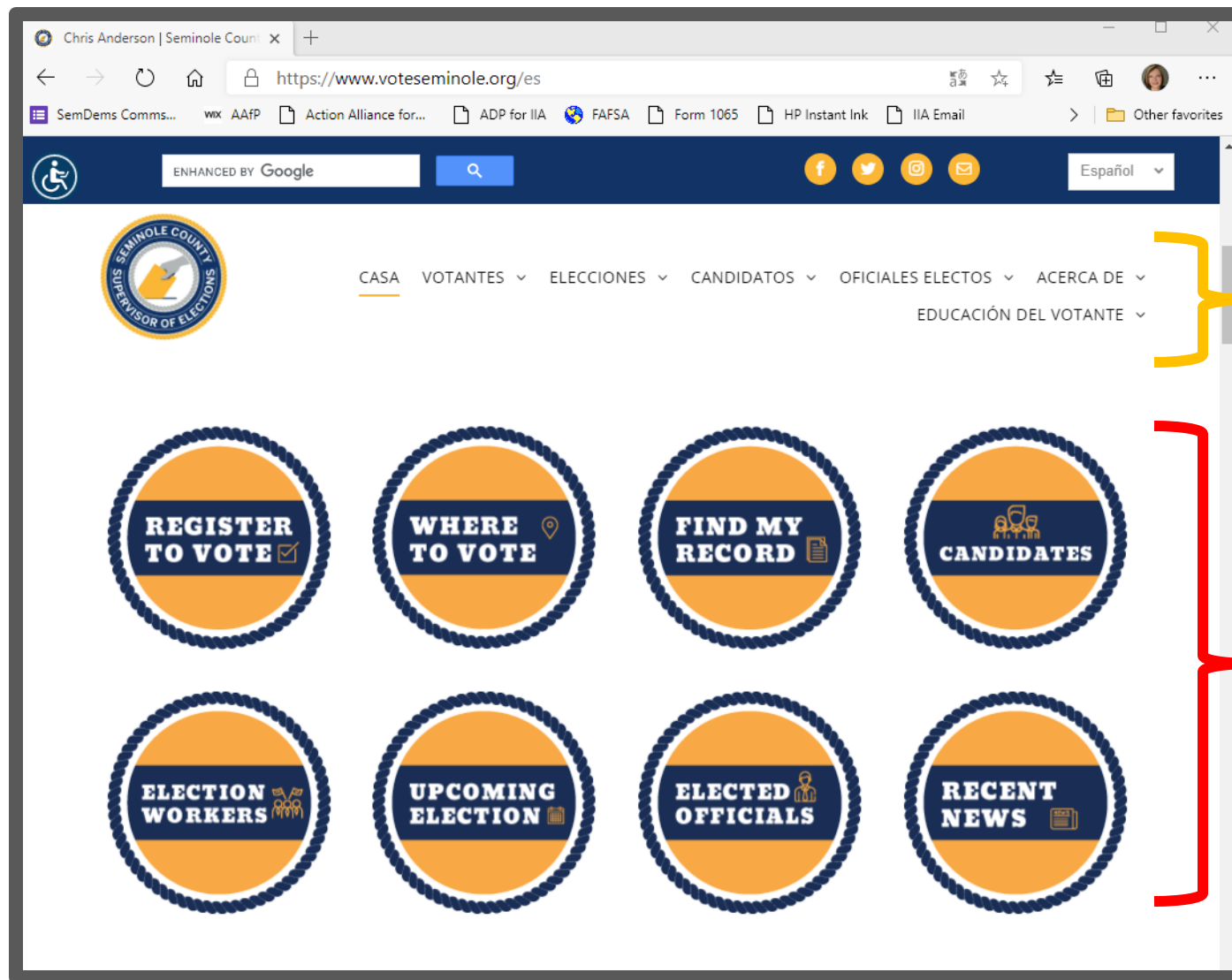
Voter Guide
Lake County



Register & Vote!

Lake County Supervisor of Elections
1898 E. Burleigh Blvd., Tavares, FL 32778
PH: 352-343-9734 • FAX: 352-343-3605
LakeVotes.gov

On the Spanish version of the website, for years the navigation buttons were in English.



Spanish

English



The buttons are now in Spanish, but other text is still in English or poorly translated.



CHRIS ANDERSON
SEMINOLE COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

Asegurando que su elección cuente

ACTIVE REGISTERED VOTERS	REP 117,204	DEM 114,490	NPA 106,462	OTROS 6,985	TOTAL 345,141
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Still in English

NOTICIAS VOTE SEMINOLE

Sunshine State Voting - Geneva Elementary School

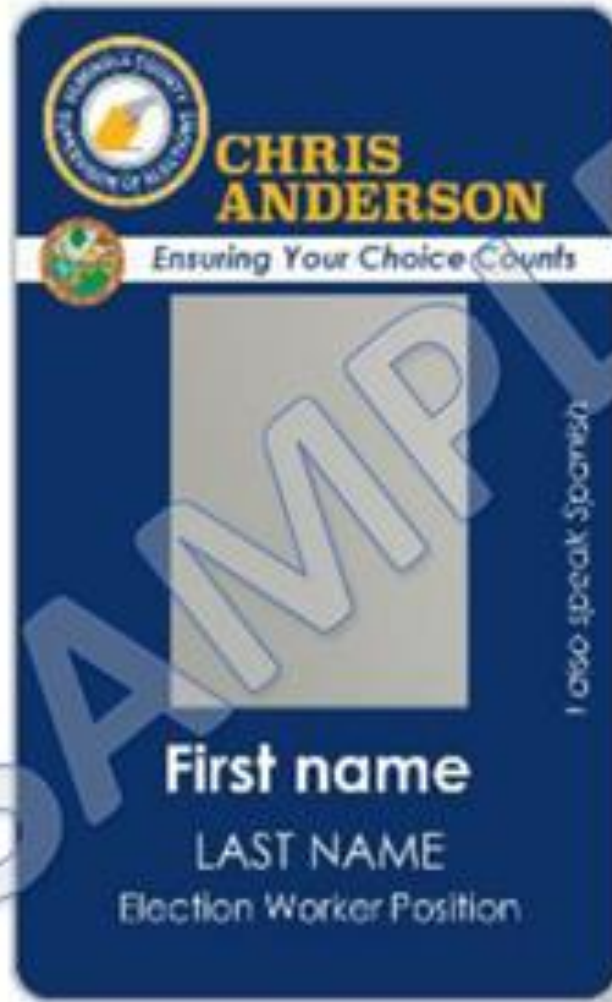
March 10, 2023 Today, the Seminole County Supervisor of Elections Office visited Geneva Elementary School to conduct the Florida

[Continue Reading](#)

INFORMACIÓN DEL VOTANTE



For years, the badge that identified bilingual poll workers was written entirely **IN ENGLISH**.



For years the badge said, "I also speak Spanish" – **IN ENGLISH**.

The polling places finally started using buttons that say "Se Habla Espanol" in Nov. 2022.

The Florida Polling Place Procedures Manual says bilingual poll workers must wear identification in the required language.

Summary of Action Steps

- 1.** Create polling place signs with Spanish equally as visible as English.
- 2.** Put the Spanish option at the beginning of the automated phone system and provide the same options as for English.
- 3.** Provide clear Spanish translations on the mail ballot request form.
- 4.** Provide clear Spanish translations on the cover and inside of the Seminole County Voter Guide.
- 5.** Make sure all information on the website is in Spanish as well as English.
- 6.** Continue to provide clear badges for bilingual poll workers.

Additional Background Information

Legal requirements and history of requests for change in
Seminole County

In 2016, Spanish was designated as a minority language in Seminole County.

Nearly 16% of Seminole voters are Hispanic – almost 55,000 people.



Vote Here

Vote Aquí

Access Required for Designated Minority Languages

“Any registration or voting notices, forms, instructions, assistance, or other materials or information relating to the electoral process” shall be provided in the minority language.

– The Voting Rights Act,
Section 203



Relevant Best Practices

1 - Budget for Spanish access

2 - Make translations “visible, accessible, and available”

3 - Use bilingual poll worker badges

4 - Provide website in minority language

-- From Florida Required or Recommended Best Practices for Language Access, DE Reference Guide 0004, updated 07/2020

Table 2: Required or Recommended Best Practices

To ensure compliance if required or anticipated, consider the following, including but not limited to:

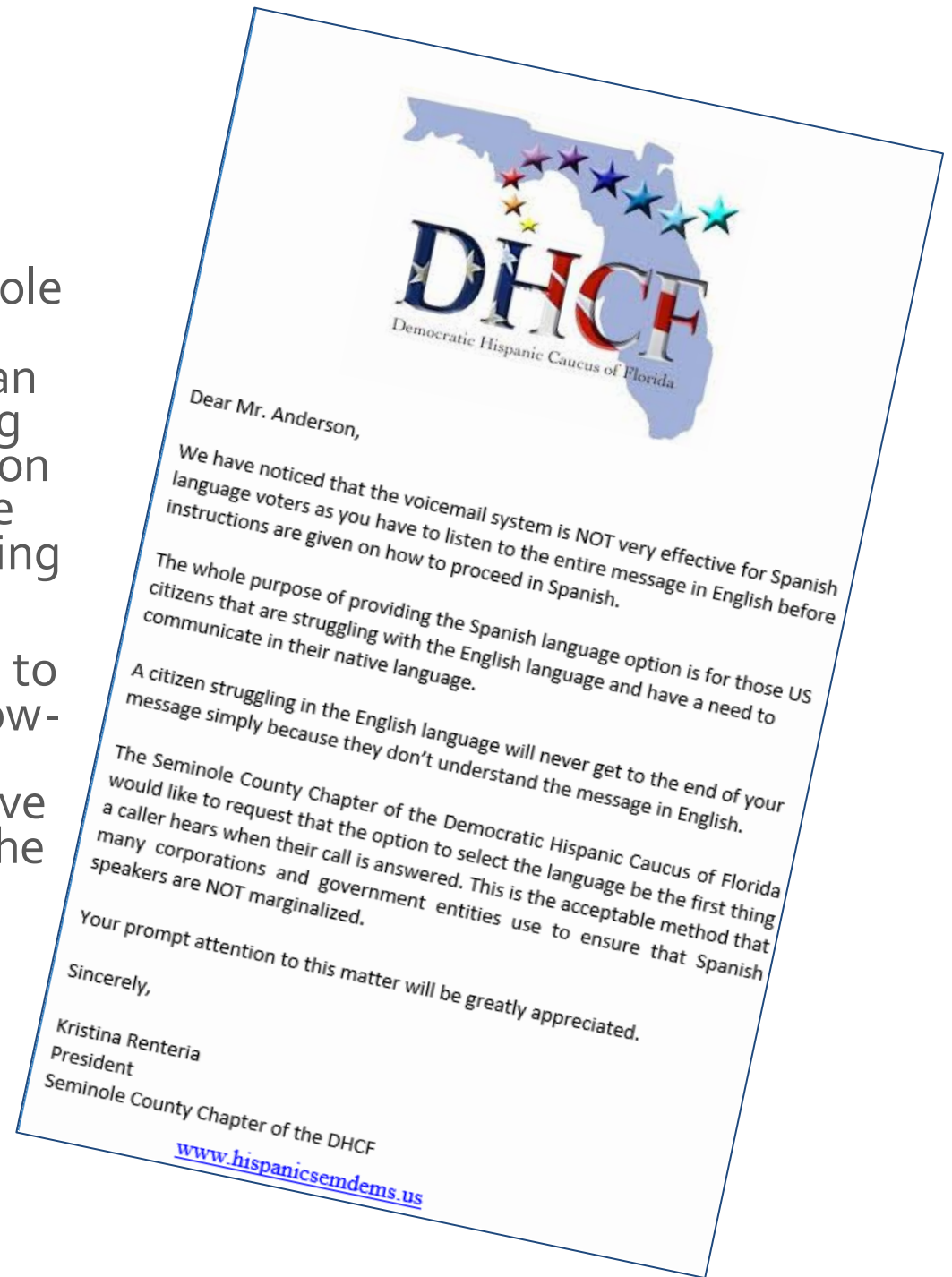
- Review of the U.S. Department of Justice’s online guidance on practical steps to achieving compliance at: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/about-language-minority-voting-rights> and published guidelines <https://www.justice.gov/crt/about-language-minority-voting-rights#langguide> - [28 C.F.R. Part 55](#)
 - Review rules for additional requirements in Florida including [Rule 1S-2.032](#), eff. 04/23/2020 regarding uniform ballots and language assistance, and [Rule 1S-2.034](#), eff. 4/23/2020 regarding polling place procedures for language assistance.
 - Conducting outreach to minority groups regarding appropriate timing, adequacy of materials/assistance and targeting to needs of communities.
- 1 Budgeting for existing requirements or building in contingency for annual expenses associated with minority language materials and assistance.
 - Recruiting/hiring/training bilingual election personnel and/or professional interpreter services (e.g., poll workers who can read, write or speak the minority language, and/or designate a language coordinator).
 - Providing for professional translational services and effective availability/distribution of translated materials.
 - Coordinating/partnering with other government agencies for translation phone services.
 - 2 Implementing early voting and Election Day practices (e.g., make translated materials –visible, accessible and available)
 - Allowing limited-English proficient voter to bring someone to polls to assist with language translation
 - 3 Publicizing minority language assistance at, have poll workers wear bilingual identity badges, etc.
 - Incorporating clauses in agreements/contracts/purchase orders for bilingual requirements for election services or products, if applicable.
 - 4 Making website materials/information available in the designated minority language.

2020 – Spanish- Speaking Advocate Calls for Change to Phone System

May 5, 2020

Kristina Renteria (then President of the Seminole County Democratic Hispanic Caucus) sent an email to the SOE asking for the Spanish option on the phone system to be provided at the beginning of the message.

No response was given to this request or her follow-up email. The phone system still does not give the Spanish option in the beginning

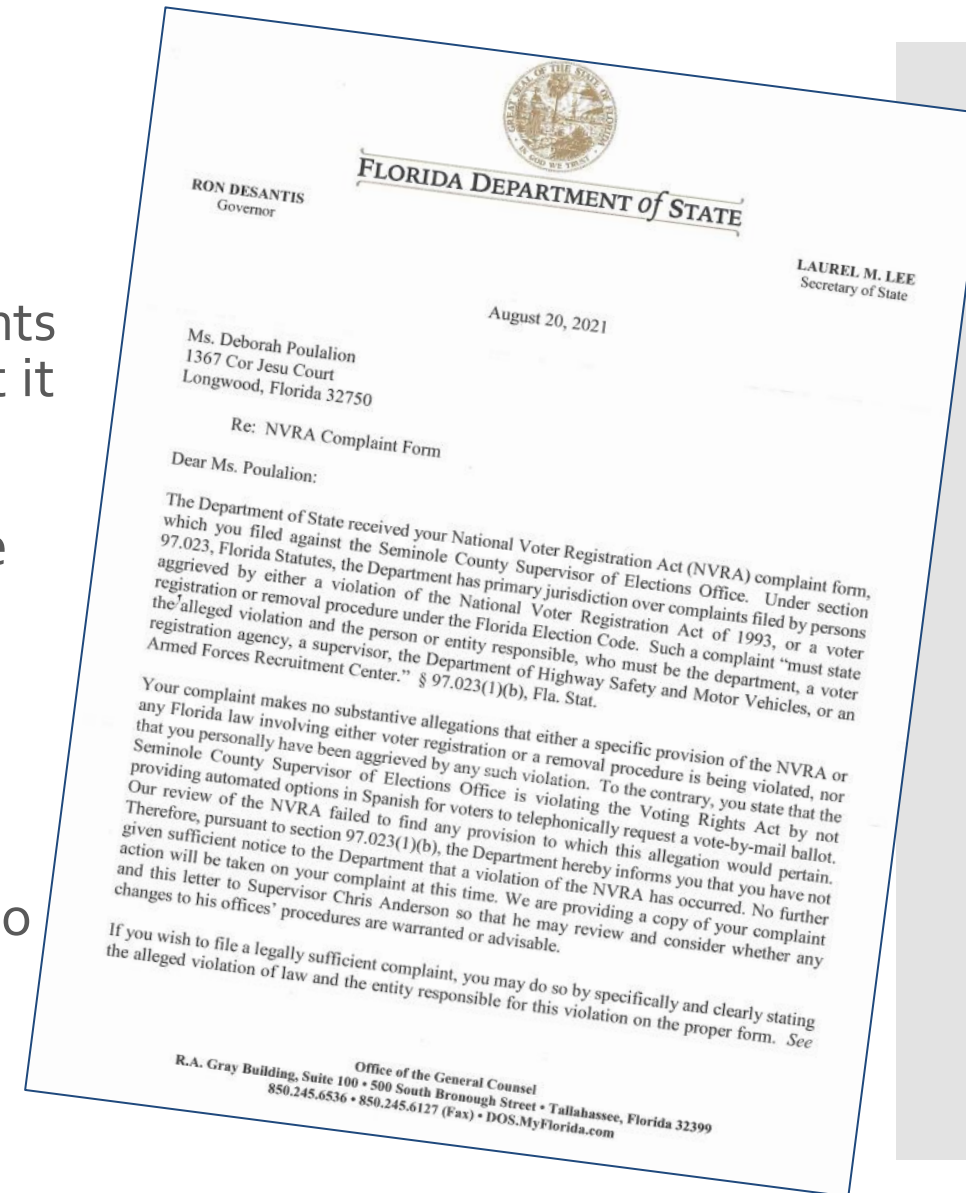


2021 – Poulalion Submits NVRA Complaint Form

July 19, 2021

Deborah Poulalion (Seminole County Voting Rights Advocate) submitted a National Voting Rights Act Complaint Form, stating that it was a violation to facilitate mail ballots requests by phone in English but not provide the same service in Spanish.

The Dept of State rejected the complaint but stated that the complaint was provided to SOE Chris Anderson for review to “consider whether any changes to his offices’ procedures are warranted or advisable.” No changes were made.



April 25, 2022- Poulalion and Spanish- Speaking Advocates Meet with SOE

April 25, 2022

Spanish-speaking advocates and Deborah Poulalion met with the supervisor of elections to discuss the changes needed for Spanish access.

During the meeting, 6 areas of concern were discussed, and written documentation was provided. The SOE's lawyer, Phil Kaprow, attended the meeting along with the SOE and stated several times that the SOE was there to "listen" and not to agree to any action.

The SOE agreed to have a follow-up meeting with the group and to potentially work with other Hispanic groups as well.

May 18, 2022

A Spanish-speaking advocate made repeated attempts to schedule a follow-up meeting with the SOE, as was agreed in the April meeting.

She was told that the SOE's schedule was extremely full so it was not possible to schedule any appointment currently.

She was told to call back the week of June 6 (nearly 7 weeks after the first meeting) to possibly schedule an appointment at a later time.

May 31, 2022-
Orlando
Sentinel
Editorial by
Spanish-
Speaking
Activist

GUEST COLUMNIST

Seminole Hispanic voters need equal voting services

For three years now, the Seminole County Supervisor of Elections has failed the Hispanic community by not giving equal access to voting information in Spanish and has not given any indication he will make the changes needed before the Aug. 23 primary elections.

If Chris Anderson continues to ignore citizen requests to remove the language barriers created by his office, Spanish-speaking voters will once again face unnecessary obstacles when casting their ballots.

In 2016 Spanish was designated as a minority language in Seminole County. This means that the Supervisor of Elections (SOE) office must comply with the "Language Assistance for Voting" rule of the Voting Rights Act and provide Spanish-speaking voters with full access to voting information in their native language. Anderson is aware of these facts, yet chooses not to provide Spanish speakers full access to voting services.

All Anderson needs to do is make some simple changes: 1) Provide visible badges for bilingual workers that read "Hablo Español." 2) Display polling place signs with Spanish wording as equally visible as English. 3) Offer clear Spanish translations on the Mail Ballot Request form. 4) Fully translate the Supervisor of Elections website into Spanish. 5) Move the Spanish option to the beginning of the automated phone answering system and offer the same service choices as for English. 6) Create two separate voter guides in English and Spanish to make the Spanish translation readable.

As of today, Hispanics make up nearly 16 percent of the Seminole County voting bloc. That is more than 50,000 ballots.

While we wait for Seminole County to take the needs of Hispanic voters seriously, other counties in Central Florida have implemented their Spanish services to be in compliance with the Voting Rights



Emily
Bellairs-Romero

Act. Additionally, the Lake County Supervisor of Elections provides its Spanish community equal access to voting information on their website and voter guide without being mandated by law.

To say that the proposed changes cannot be guaranteed for the August election is a reflection of poor leadership.

If there is a will, there is a way.

When he was first appointed to the office, Anderson wasted no time in plastering his name on polling place signs, pens, flags, office doors, street signs, hand sanitizer bottles, and even government-issued vehicles. All at taxpayers' expense.

Unlike the \$17 million new elections headquarters Anderson is advocating for, the services to Spanish-speakers would not make a dent in the SOE's budget. ("Elections chief frustrated by Seminole's slow progress on new headquarters," May 11).

Local Hispanic leaders have given him recommendations and offered to donate their time and expertise to remove the language barriers that still burden Spanish voters.

The Seminole County commissioners have been notified of the voting services disparities, yet have chosen not to get involved. Consequently Anderson is free to disregard the urgency of this situation.

What is the holdup?

As Seminole County gets into full election mode, Anderson will have a calendar full of political hobnobs that do not serve voters in any way, and he will once again fail the Hispanic community he swore to equally serve.

There is absolutely nothing preventing him from fulfilling his duties as an elected official. No more excuses, por favor.

Emily Bellairs-Romero is the president of the Seminole County Chapter of the Democratic Hispanic Caucus of Florida.

A Call to Action

1. Write to the Seminole Supervisor of Elections office at elections@voteseminole.org

And copy the county commissioners via their assistants:

Jay Zembower (dschafer@seminolecountyfl.gov)

Bob Dallari (kyoung@seminolecountyfl.gov)

Amy Lockhart (alockhart@seminolecountyfl.gov)

Lee Constantine (bflores@seminolecountyfl.gov)

Andria Herr (bmccracken@seminolecountyfl.gov)

2. Contact the Supervisor of Elections at [407.585.8683](tel:407.585.8683) or elections@voteseminole.gov
3. Send letters or guest editorials to the *Orlando Sentinel* @ insight@orlandosentinel.com



Sample Letter

Send email to: Elections@voteseminole.com; dschafer@seminolecountyfl.gov; kyoung@seminolecountyfl.gov; alockhart@seminolecountyfl.gov; bflores@seminolecountyfl.gov; bmccracken@seminolecountyfl.gov

Subject Line: Access to Voting Information in Spanish

Dear Mr. Anderson and Seminole County Commissioners,

As a member of the Hispanic community, it is extremely important to me that those who speak Spanish in Seminole County are provided with the same access to information about voting in Spanish as those who speak English.

1. Provide clear and visible badges for bilingual poll worker.
2. Create polling place signs with Spanish equally as visible as English.
3. Translate the large buttons on the Spanish home page from English to Spanish.
4. Make sure the Spanish option is at the beginning of the automated phone system (not after 30 seconds of English).
5. Provide clear Spanish translation on the mail ballot request form.
6. Provide clear Spanish translation on the cover and inside of the Seminole County Voter Guide, which is one of your primary tools for voter registration and voter education.

I urge you to work with Hispanic community groups to make access to information about voting in Spanish as accessible as possible, not to hide it.

Sincerely,