Following the presidential election “hanging chads” debacle of 2000 and other issues in 2018, Florida leaders made significant improvements to election procedures. Changes included simplifying the ballot design, updating equipment, and pre-processing mail ballots to get timely election results.¹ This resulted in an effective and transparent 2020 election with no major problems reported.²

Before the 2021 state legislative session began, Governor Ron DeSantis (R-FL) urged state lawmakers to prioritize legislation that would strengthen election integrity protections, including outlawing ballot harvesting and mass mailing of unsolicited ballots. At a February 2021 press conference he stated, “The result of 2020 from an administrative perspective was that Florida had the most transparent and efficient election anywhere in the country. Other states took days, weeks, and even months to count their votes.”³ But the Sunshine State “can’t rest on (its) laurels.”⁴

On May 6, 2021 Governor DeSantis signed SB 90 into law. The bill improves Florida elections through the following methods:⁵

**Encouraging voter registration while improving the accuracy of the rolls.**
- Adds cybersecurity and other protective measures to ensure the online voter-registration system is operational during periods of peak usage and secure against malware and other types of attacks.
- Extends the deadline for third-party groups running voter-registration drives; they now have 14 days to return completed registrations instead of 48 hours.
- The last four digits of the voter’s Social Security number, Florida driver’s license number, or Florida identification card number must be submitted with a registration application or when requesting changes to existing registration.
- The supervisor of elections must update voter-registration records when voters change the residence address on their driver’s license or identification card.

**Expanding ways voters can return their ballots while preventing ballot harvesting.**
- Requires a driver license number, identification card number, or last four digits of a Social Security number to request a vote-by-mail ballot.
- Requires voters to request an absentee ballot for each election instead of automatically mailing ballots, unless voters have a disability or an overseas address.
- Prohibits mass mailing of ballots.
- Expands the list of people that can pick up vote-by-mail ballots for an elector to include grandchildren.
- Standardizes drop box locations so they must be located someplace geographically central that all voters can access, such as early voting sites, and adds safeguards such as in-person monitoring and restricting use to early voting hours.
- Drop box locations need to be finalized 30 days before an election.
- Addresses ballot harvesting by making it a misdemeanor for anyone to distribute, order, request, collect, deliver, or possess more than two vote-by-mail ballots but provides an exemption for supervised voting at nursing home facilities.
• **Expanding voting ease and access, standardizing processes, and increasing transparency.**

  - Promotes uniformity of election operations funding between counties by prohibiting outside money from being used to pay for election-related expenses.
  - Prohibits actions “with the intent to influence or effect of influencing a voter” within the already-established 150-foot no-solicitation zone but clarifies that supervisor office employees and volunteers can provide nonpartisan assistance such as distributing water.
  - Counties can begin canvassing returned mail-in ballots as soon as tabulation equipment has been tested, giving counties the option of having more days to process ballots but ensuring they cannot release results until polls close.
  - Ensures party affiliation is not disclosed during signature-match verification process of vote-by-mail ballots.
  - Guarantees access for election observers to monitor the duplication of ballots and expands the ability for candidates and other party officials to inspect ballot materials.
  - Improves access to real-time voter turnout data by requiring each supervisor of election to release voter turnout and vote-by-mail counting data every hour on Election Day and transmit that data to the state supervisor of election for uploading on a state-wide dashboard.
  - Bolsters legal standing of the Florida Legislature in challenges to state election law.

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5 https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2021/90/BillText/er/PDF