August 17, 2018

RE: Early voting locations on college and university campuses

Dear Esteemed College and University Presidents,

As you know, on July 24, 2018, U.S. District Judge Mark Walker ruled in favor of allowing early voting on Florida’s public college and university campuses. This was a true victory for students, our state, and democracy itself.

As the August 28th primary is just around the corner, it is understandable that there may not be enough time to create early voting sites on campus for the primary election, but we still have time to establish such sites on campus for the November general election. The League of Women Voters of Florida respectfully asks that you work with your Supervisor of Elections to provide these sites.

Since the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, we are seeing growing numbers of students registering to vote. These students are eager to cast their ballot, many of them, no doubt, for the very first time. Many of them will be among the large populations on our college and university campuses.

Unfortunately, several students and the League found litigation was necessary to overcome an unconstitutional burden on on-campus early voting. We cannot allow other needless hurdles to rise up and deprive our campus populations from the benefits of early voting, which voters elsewhere freely enjoy. The lesson in that would be cynicism toward our public institutions and to the value of civic engagement.

We can think of no better institutions than our colleges and universities to promote positive civic engagement and enable our young people to exercise this precious constitutional right to vote. Providing early voting on campus will not only encourage better student participation in the civic process but may go a long way to ensuring that our students become lifelong voters.
As Judge Walker noted in his opinion, early voting is popular in Florida, and more than a fourth of the people who voted in 2016 were under age 30. With the busy schedules of students, we need to do everything we can to ensure that they have time to cast their ballots.

Please don’t hesitate to let us know how we can assist you in providing our students with the opportunity to vote early on your campus.

Sincerely,

Patricia Brigham
President, LWV of Florida

CC: President Wesley Kent Fuchs, University of Florida
Interim President Judge Hubert L. Grimes, Bethune-Cookman University
President John Kelly, Florida Atlantic University
President Judy Genshaft, University of South Florida
President Eduardo J. Padrón, Miami-Dade College
President Larry Robinson, Florida A&M University
President Mark B. Rosenberg, Florida International University
President David Szymanski, University of North Florida
President John Thrasher, Florida State University
President Dale Whittaker, University of Central Florida
State University System of Florida Board of Governors