

Excellent Option: Early Voting

Florida allows for early in-person voting but leaves it to the counties to determine the number of locations and hours of operation. As posted by the State's Division of Elections:

Early voting is required in any election that contains a state or federal office race. The early voting period must start at least on the 10th day before the election and end on the 3rd day before the election. In addition, supervisors of elections have the option to offer more early voting on the 15th, 14th, 13th, 12th, 11th, or 2nd day before an election.

Supervisors of Elections must designate early voting sites no later than 30 days prior to an election.

Early voting hours must be at least eight hours but no more than 12 hours per day each site during the applicable period.

Some states do not offer early voting at all, some only one week. Florida has both a minimum and maximum number of days and hours that Early Voting may be offered as determined by each county.

Despite the limit on hours of operation, just as on Election Day, any voter in line to vote by the posted closing hour (in this county, 7 pm as on Election Day) on any Early Voting day will be allowed to vote even after 7 pm. No voter who arrives after 7 pm on any day will be allowed to vote that day unless the Governor, as once happened when Charlie Crist was in office, extended Early Voting hours due to large crowds. Not likely to happen this year for a lot of reasons.

Pinellas always has three early voting locations (the SoE offices in Clearwater, Largo, and St. Petersburg). For the general election two additional locations will be available: These are the five locations:

- ✓ **Supervisor of Elections Office: County Courthouse** - 315 Court St., Room 117, Clearwater, 33756
- ✓ *(Voter parking spots will be designated in Courthouse parking lots)*
- ✓ **Supervisor of Elections Office - Election Service Center** - 13001 Starkey Rd., Starkey Lakes Corporate Ctr, Largo, 33773
- ✓ **Supervisor of Elections Office - County Building** - 501 First Ave. N., St. Petersburg, 33701
- ✓ **The Centre of Palm Harbor** - 1500 16th St., Palm Harbor 33701
- ✓ **SPC Allstate Center** - 3200 34th St. S, St. Petersburg

The disadvantage of the small number of locations is voter inconvenience. However, **Pinellas County uses the maximum allowed number of hours, two weeks (October 19-November**

1) 7 am to 7 pm, and if the voter needs any help it is readily available. For example, voters may make changes in their registrations the same day they show up to vote and the supervisor staff can assist. In addition to official Early Voting days and hours, **voters may vote at an SoE office the Monday, the day before the election**, using the procedure described in the next section below. Voting that day is during normal business hours unless otherwise extended and announced online.

When voting on any of the 14 official days of Early Voting, voters scan their completed ballots themselves, they are allowed up to two replacement ballots if the first try has any problems, and they don't need to be concerned about the mail. Any voter may Early Vote at any SoE location (the one in Largo has the most free parking available) whether he or she requested or even received a mail ballot or not. When voting in person, a photo ID is required. A list of acceptable IDs, and a lot of other information, is available on votepinellas.com or by calling 727-464-VOTE (8683). Voters who requested mail ballots do not need to bring those ballots in if they vote before Election Day, but they have the option of turning in a completed mail ballot (in its signed envelope) at any Early Voting location, avoid any delay or crowd, and have the ballot processed as a mail ballot instead of voting in person.