

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 17, 2011

Thomas Perez
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-001

Dear Assistant Attorney General Perez:

We are writing to express our concerns with a bill (HB 1355) recently passed by the Florida State Legislature. Voting is the foundation of our democracy, and as Members of Congress representing Florida, we find the proposed changes to state election law under this bill to seriously undermine the basic voting rights of Floridians.

If HB 1355 is signed into law, Floridians will simply find it more difficult to exercise their fundamental voting rights. By establishing new barriers to voters who have moved between counties, this bill will force legitimate voters to cast provisional ballots, a provision that will be especially burdensome for college students. In addition, shortening the window for early voting from 14 to only 6 days will pose challenges to working Floridians and elderly voters and will only increase lines at the polls on Election Day.

Finally, HB 1355 institutes unprecedented restrictions on third party, volunteer-driven voter registration efforts. These provisions will without question have a chilling effect on voter registration in Florida, our nation's fourth largest state. The role of government should never be to curtail the registration of newly eligible voters or hinder Americans from exercising the most fundamental democratic right afforded by our Constitution.

We urge you to use the authority granted to the Department of Justice by the Voting Rights Act to review the impact of HB 1355 on the five Florida counties currently protected under Section 5 preclearance requirements. We are confident that any honest examination of this legislation will determine that it is in clear violation of the Voting Rights Act.

We thank you for considering our views on this urgent matter and for your work protecting the civil rights of all Americans. We would be happy to discuss this matter in more detail and look forward to continuing this dialogue.

Sincerely,



Theodore E. Deutch
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Bill Nelson
U.S. SENATE



Alcee L. Hastings
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



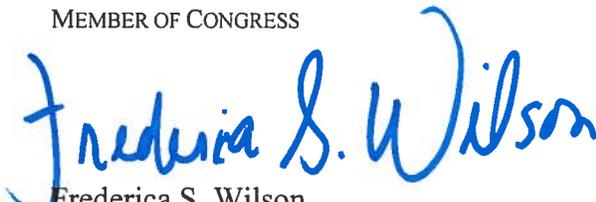
Debbie Wasserman Schultz
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Corrine Brown
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Kathy Castor
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Frederica S. Wilson
MEMBER OF CONGRESS