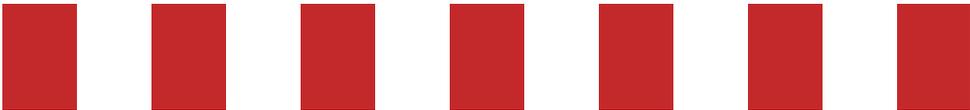




VOTE SMART COLLIER COUNTY



**A Nonpartisan Guide
for Collier County Voters**



SANDY PARKER

Founder and Publisher of Sparker's Soapbox



*“The future of this republic is in the hands
of the American voter.”*
Dwight D. Eisenhower
1949

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Sandy Parker



Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented herein; however, Sparker's Soapbox assumes no responsibility for any errors or omissions or for changes that may occur after publication.

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Introduction

“Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees; and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.”

Henry Clay

1829

Most of us came to Collier County from somewhere else—and quickly discovered that some things are different from how they were “back home.” Even longtime residents may not fully understand how our local and state governments—and the elections that shape them—work.

Those differences become most apparent when it’s time to vote. For example, one important difference is Florida’s closed primary system, in which only registered party members can vote in their party’s primary elections. Another difference is that we are frequently asked to vote on amendments to the Florida Constitution.

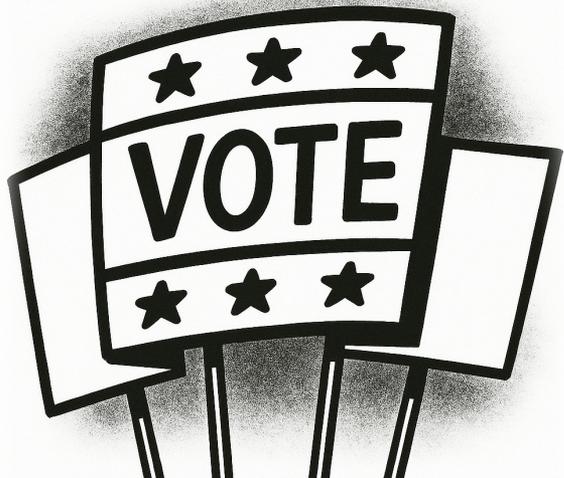
A Collier County general election ballot could include more than 45 local, state, and federal offices to be filled, though the exact number depends on your residence address.

In this nonpartisan, fact-based guide, you’ll learn about the government bodies that represent you and how Florida’s elections work. You’ll also find step-by-step instructions for finding your local, state, and federal representatives and voting districts, as well as website addresses for government offices and local news sources.

Here in Collier County, in the state capital in Tallahassee, and in Washington, D.C., the people we elect make choices that shape our daily life. They determine how our neighborhoods grow, the quality

of our schools, the safety of our communities, and the care of our environment. They also decide the taxes we pay and how that money will be spent.

Your vote is your opportunity to influence who makes those decisions—locally, statewide, and nationally.



The Big Picture

*“The most important political office is that of
the private citizen.”*

Louis D. Brandeis
1903

In county government, we vote for one of five members of the Collier Board of County Commissioners and five county constitutional officers. We also vote for five members of the School Board and five members of the Collier Mosquito Control District Board of Commissioners. Most of us also elect a fire district Board of Commissioners. Those who live in one of the county's three municipalities elect their municipal leaders as well.

In state government, we vote for the Governor/Lieutenant Governor and the three Cabinet members: the Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Agriculture. We also elect one member of the Florida Senate and one member of the Florida House of Representatives. In addition, we choose justices and judges of the Florida court system.

And like voters in all states, we vote for the President/Vice President, two members of the U.S. Senate, and one member of the U.S. House of Representatives.



Voting Districts

To find your local, state, and federal voting districts:

- ★ Go to www.colliervotes.gov.
- ★ Click [Check My Voter Info](#).
- ★ Enter your first name, last name, and date of birth.
- ★ Acknowledge the legal statement.
- ★ Complete the security check.
- ★ Click [Submit](#).

Once your information is matched to the voter registration database, click [View Office Holders](#) to see your districts and representatives.

In the following pages, you will learn more about how we elect our representatives in each of these governing bodies.



Our Local Government

*“Whenever the people are well informed, they
can be trusted with their own government.”*

Thomas Jefferson

1789

Collier County Government

Collier County government is made up of a five-member Board of County Commissioners and five independently elected constitutional officers.

Board of County Commissioners

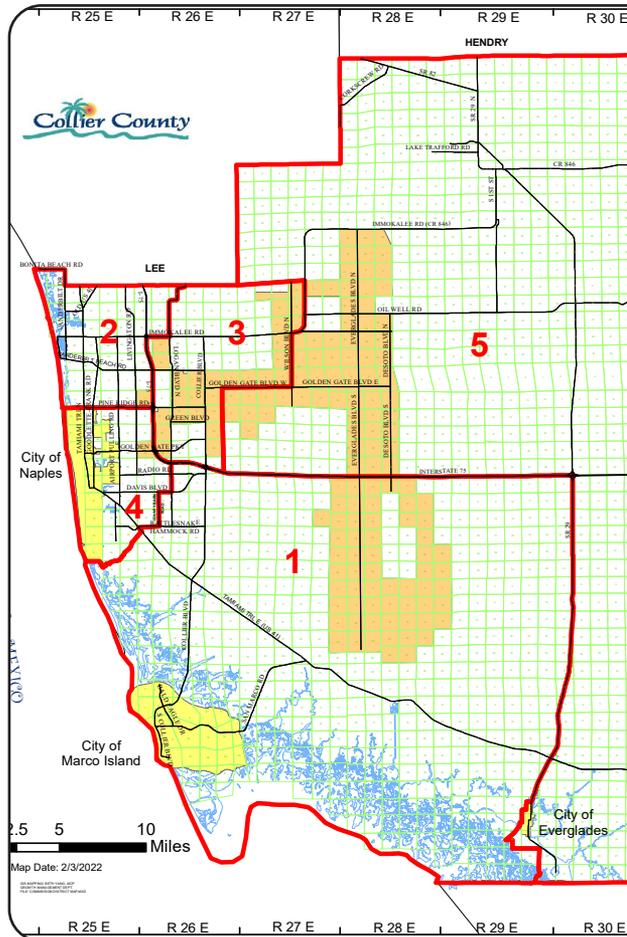
The Board of County Commissioners is the governing body of Collier County government, with both legislative and executive authority. It adopts the county budget and sets property tax rates; approves land-use changes; funds roads, parks, and utilities; and oversees county services not run by the constitutional officers. Through these decisions, the Board shapes the community's growth and quality of life.

A County Manager appointed by the Board carries out its policies and directs the daily operations of county departments that report to the Board.

Commissioners are elected from five districts, which are redrawn every ten years after the census to keep populations roughly equal. Commissioners are elected by the residents of their district in partisan elections to staggered four-year

terms: Districts 1, 3, and 5 are elected in presidential-election years, while Districts 2 and 4 are on the ballot in midterm years. Commissioners may serve up to three consecutive terms.

To find your county commission district, see page 8.



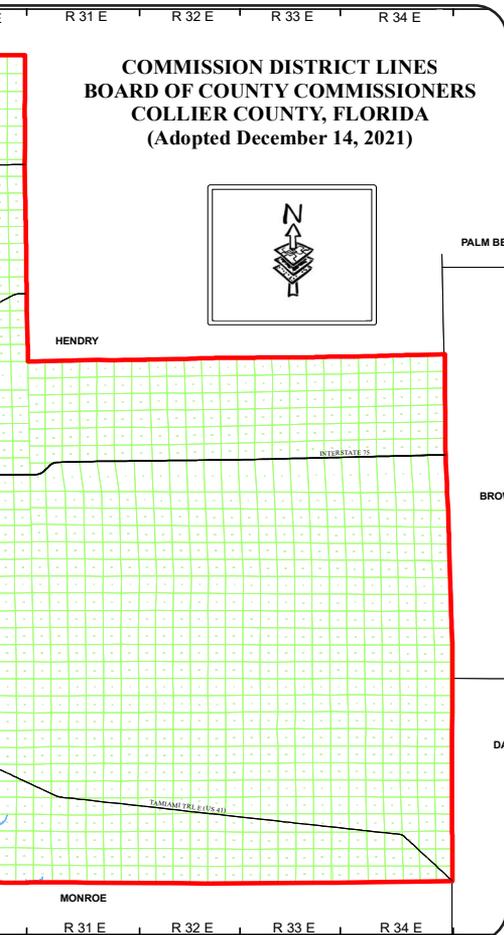
Constitutional Officers

The five constitutional officers lead their own departments, operating with executive authority over their specific functions. They are not under the control of the Board of County Commissioners.

The five constitutional officers are:

- ★ **Sheriff:** Acts as the county's chief law enforcement officer and manages the jail.
- ★ **Tax Collector:** Collects property taxes and other state and local fees.
- ★ **Property Appraiser:** Determines the value of all property in the county for tax purposes.
- ★ **Supervisor of Elections:** Oversees all local, state, and federal elections in the county.
- ★ **Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller:** Functions as clerk of the court, manages county records, and serves as the county's independent auditor.

They are elected on a partisan ballot by voters countywide to four-year terms in presidential years. There are no term limits.



Collier County School Board

The Collier County School District, which covers the entire county, is governed by a five-member School Board. Members are elected by all voters countywide; however, they are required by law to live in the district they represent. They serve staggered four-year terms and may serve no more than eight consecutive years in office.

The School Board sets District policy, adopts the budget and millage for schools, approves curriculum materials such as the textbooks used in Collier



classrooms, and appoints and oversees the District Superintendent, who is responsible for the daily operations of the District.

Collier Mosquito Control District

Most of Collier County, apart from state and federally owned parklands, is within the Collier Mosquito Control District. Voters who live in the District elect five commissioners in nonpartisan elections to the Board of Commissioners. Board members serve staggered four-year terms and may serve no more than 12 consecutive years in office.

The Board sets high-level policy, approves the District's budget and



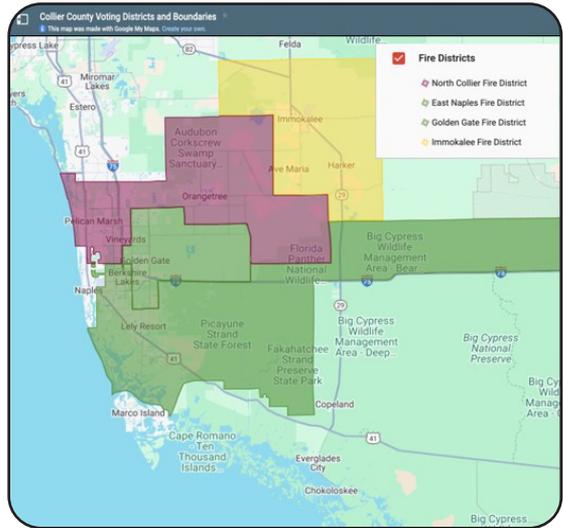
millage, and appoints the District's Executive Director, who directs the daily operations of the entire District.

Fire Districts

Unincorporated Collier County is divided into three independent fire and rescue districts.

The three districts are:

- ★ **North Collier Fire Control and Rescue District**
- ★ **Greater Naples Fire Rescue District** (formerly the East Naples and Golden Gate Fire Districts)
- ★ **Immokalee Fire Control District**



Unincorporated Collier County Fire District boundaries

Voters in each district elect a Board of Commissioners in nonpartisan elections. Board members serve staggered four-year terms and may serve no more than 12 consecutive years in office.

The boards levy taxes within their boundaries and oversee fire protection and emergency medical services—for example, funding new fire stations or upgrading ambulance fleets.

Fire and rescue services for the cities of Naples and Marco Island are provided by city fire-rescue departments overseen by their city managers. Everglades City receives its fire and rescue services from the Greater Naples Fire Rescue District.

To find your fire district, see page 8.



Municipal Government

About 10 percent of Collier County residents live in one of three municipalities: Naples, Marco Island, and Everglades City. Those who do not live in a municipality live in Unincorporated Collier County.

Having a “Naples, FL” mailing address does not necessarily mean you live in the City of Naples. In fact, many neighborhoods located miles outside the City carry a Naples address.

While the County delivers services countywide, municipalities provide services within their boundaries, such as police, fire and rescue (except Everglades City, as noted above), parks and recreation, and zoning. They also enact ordinances that govern local matters.

Each municipality is governed by a city council made up of members elected by city residents in nonpartisan elections to serve staggered four-year terms.

Each city’s charter defines its structure:

- ★ **In Naples**, a mayor and six council members are elected at large to a maximum of two consecutive terms. The Council appoints a City Manager to carry out its policies and manage daily operations.
- ★ **In Marco Island**, seven council members are elected at large to a maximum of two consecutive terms; there is no mayor. The Council appoints a City Manager to oversee administration and operations.
- ★ **In Everglades City**, a mayor and five council members are elected at large. There are no term limits, and the mayor directly oversees the city’s administration.

Our State Government

“Liberty cannot be preserved without a general knowledge among the people, who have a right . . . and a desire to know.”

John Adams

1765

Executive Branch

The executive branch of our state government uses a “plural executive” structure in which executive power is divided among:

- ★ **Governor:** As the chief executive of the state, serves as the head of the executive branch and commander-in-chief of the Florida National Guard.
- ★ **Attorney General:** Acts as the state’s chief legal officer.
- ★ **Chief Financial Officer:** Oversees the state’s finances, fights insurance fraud, investigates consumer abuse, and serves as the state’s Fire Marshal.
- ★ **Commissioner of Agriculture:** Heads the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

The Governor and Lieutenant Governor run together as a ticket, while the three Cabinet members are independently elected. All are chosen on a partisan ballot in statewide midterm elections and serve four-year terms with a two-term limit.

Legislative Branch

The state’s legislative power rests with the Florida Legislature, which comprises a 40-member Senate and a 120-member House of Representatives.

Senators and representatives are elected in districts, which are reapportioned every ten years following the census so that districts within each chamber have roughly equal populations.

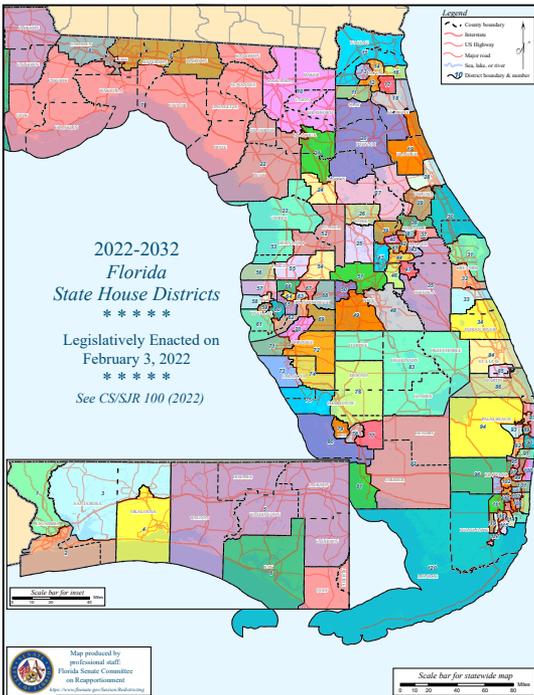
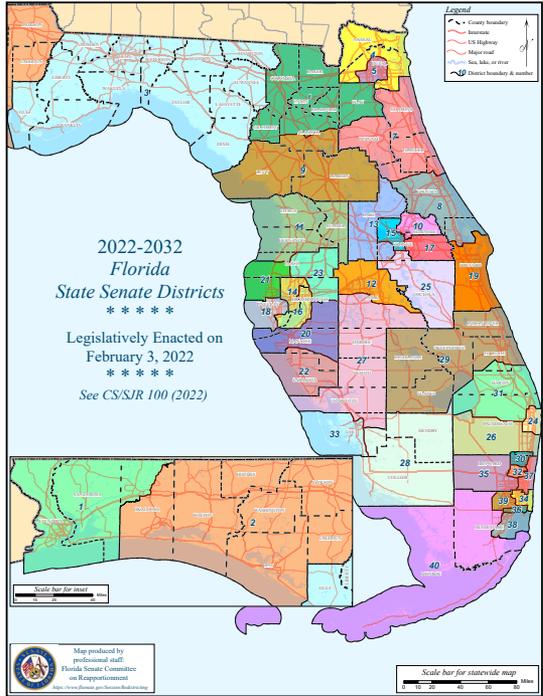
Voters elect one senator and one representative based on where they live.



Florida Senate

Florida senators serve four-year terms with a two-term limit. Senate elections are staggered, with 20 senators elected in presidential election years and 20 in the midterms. However, in the first election after redistricting, all 40 seats are on the ballot to ensure that each senator represents an equal number of constituents. After that, the staggered cycle resumes.

All Collier voters live in District 28.



Florida House

Florida representatives serve two-year terms with a four-term limit. Elections are held for all House seats every two years.

About 14 percent of Collier voters live in District 80, 51 percent in District 81, and 35 percent in District 82.

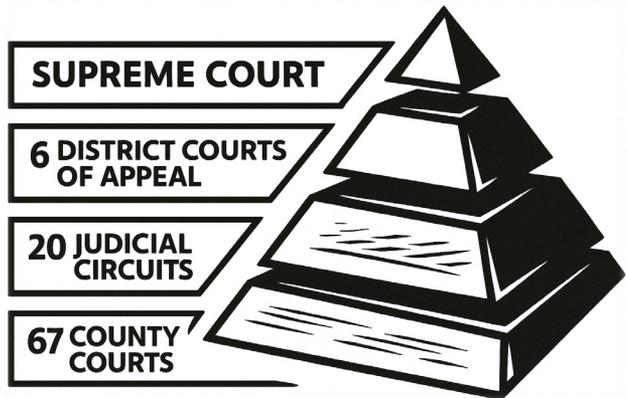
To find your House district, see page 8.

Judicial Branch

The judicial branch of Florida government comprises a system of state courts made up of a Supreme Court, six District Courts of Appeal, 20 circuit courts, and 67 county courts.

Justices and judges serve for six-year terms, with no term limits, although they face mandatory retirement at age 75.

Florida has two kinds of judicial elections: Supreme Court justices and appeals court judges are appointed by the governor and then face a yes-or-no merit retention election at the end of each term, while circuit and county court judges are elected in nonpartisan races which may include multiple candidates on the ballot.

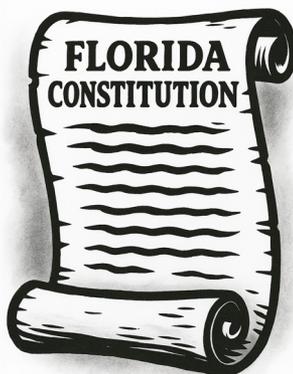


Amending the Constitution

Florida has more ways to amend its Constitution than any other state. The most common methods are:

- ★ **Legislative Joint Resolution**, which is placed on the ballot by a three-fifths vote of each legislative chamber.
- ★ **Citizens' Initiative**, which reaches the ballot with signatures equal to eight percent of the votes cast in the state in the most recent presidential election—880,062 based on the 2024 vote. In addition to the statewide total, signatures must also come from across the state to meet a geographic distribution requirement.

Most amendments require at least 60 percent of the vote to pass. A two-thirds vote is required for any new constitutionally imposed state taxes or fees.



Our Federal Government

*“The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs
the security of all.”*

John F. Kennedy

1963

Executive Branch

The President and Vice President, as a ticket, are elected on a partisan ballot in nationwide elections in November of even-numbered years divisible by four.

Their term of office is four years, with a two-term limit.

population, as determined every ten years by the U.S. Census. Florida currently holds 28 seats. Representatives are elected by voters in their districts to two-year terms; there are no term limits.

About one percent of Collier County voters live in Congressional District 18, 44 percent in District 19, and 55 percent in District 26.

To find your U.S. House district, see page 8.

Legislative Branch

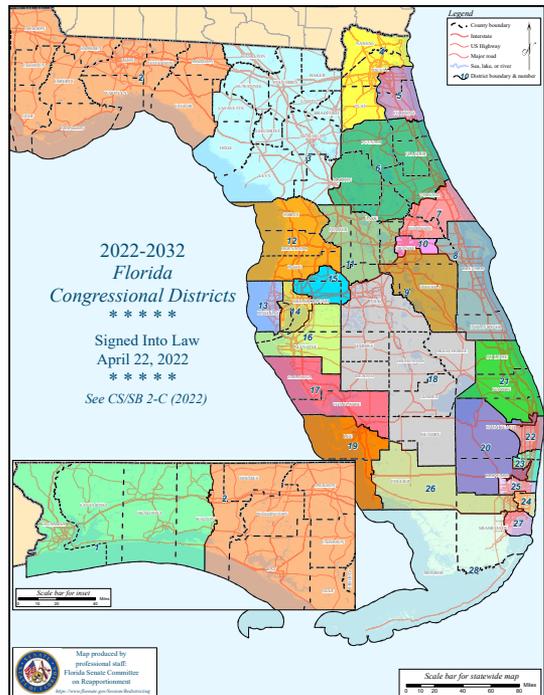
The legislative branch of the federal government is headed by the U.S. Congress, made up of a 100-member Senate and a 435-member House of Representatives.

U.S. Senate

Each state is represented in the U.S. Senate by two senators who are elected in partisan elections by voters statewide. They serve six-year terms with no term limits. Senate elections are staggered so that roughly one-third of the 100 seats are up for election every two years.

U.S. House

In the U.S. House, each state is allocated a number of representatives based on its



How Our Elections Work

*“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express
their choice are prepared to choose wisely.”*

Franklin D. Roosevelt

1938

Voting in Primary Elections

In Florida, the rules for who may vote in primary elections depend on whether the race is partisan or nonpartisan. In partisan races, candidates represent political parties, while in nonpartisan races, candidates run without party affiliation.

For partisan races, because Florida is a closed primary state, you must be registered with a party at least 29 days before Election Day to vote in that party's primary.

All registered voters, regardless of their party registration, may vote in nonpartisan contests.



Eligibility and How to Register

To register and be eligible to vote in Florida, you must be a U.S. citizen, a legal resident of Florida and of the county in which you register, and at least 18 years old. You may pre-register to vote at age 16.

In addition, you must not have been adjudicated mentally incapacitated with respect to voting in Florida or any other state unless your voting rights have been restored. Florida's rules for voting after a felony conviction are complex. For up-to-date information, see the Resources section of this Guide.

You must be registered to vote at least 29 days before an election.

To register, you must provide your Florida driver's license number, Florida ID card number, or the last four digits of your Social Security number.

Timing of Elections

Primary elections are held on the Tuesday that is 11 weeks prior to the general election. The general election is held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in every even-numbered year.

Florida's presidential preference primary is held on the third Tuesday in March of each presidential election year.

Elections for the Naples City Council are held in even-numbered years, but the date varies. In years that are a multiple of four, elections are held on the same day as the Florida presidential preference primary. In other even-numbered years, they are held on the first Tuesday in February.

Elections for Marco Island City Council are held on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November of even-numbered years. In Everglades City, they are held in odd-numbered years on the fourth Tuesday in November.



Three Ways to Vote

There are three ways to vote in Florida: by mail, early, or on Election Day.

You must present a valid photo ID that includes your signature at the polls. If your photo ID does not have a signature, you must provide a second form of identification that does.

For more information, consult the Collier County Supervisor of Elections or the Florida Division of Elections.

Election Security

Voter registration applications are processed through the Florida Department of State to verify that the applicant meets eligibility requirements. Collier County's voter registration database is updated routinely, and any change to a voter's record leaves an audit trail that is recorded and backed up daily.

All voting is by paper ballot, leaving a paper trail of every vote cast. A public manual audit is conducted after each election where ballots are counted by hand in randomly selected precincts and races to ensure that the machine count is equivalent to the hand-counted results.

Florida law requires recounts in very close races. If the margin is one-half of one percent or less, a machine recount is ordered. If that machine recount shows the margin is one-quarter of one percent or less, a manual recount is then required.

Election officials must keep ballots, like other election materials, for at least 22 months following the election.



Be a More Informed Collier Voter

*"The fact that a man is to vote
forces him to think."*

John Jay Chapman

1900

Knowing who you elect and how local elections work is the first step in being an informed voter.

Equally important is making sure your voter registration is current—including your party affiliation, which determines whether you can vote in Florida’s closed primaries. You can handle that and take care of any other voting or election-related matters through the Collier County Supervisor of Elections.

Finally, being ready to vote means following local news and government decisions year-round, not just at election time. That way, you’ll be better prepared to understand the issues and the choices on your ballot when Election Day arrives.

See the Resources section of this Guide for a list of suggested local sources.

Conclusion

Collier County is growing rapidly, welcoming new residents from across the country and around the world. With that growth come big choices—how we develop our community, how we protect the environment, how we ensure public safety, and how we sustain our quality of life.

Voting is both a right and a privilege. By casting your ballot as an informed voter, you strengthen our democracy and help shape the future of Collier County.



Resources

Elections

- ★ Collier County Supervisor of Elections (www.colliervotes.gov)
- ★ Florida Division of Elections (dos.fl.gov/elections)
- ★ Felon Voting Rights
(dos.fl.gov/elections/for-voters/voter-registration/felon-voting-rights)

Collier County Government

- ★ Collier County Government (www.collier.gov)
- ★ Collier County Sheriff (www.colliersheriff.org)
- ★ Collier County Tax Collector (www.colliertaxcollector.com)
- ★ Collier County Property Appraiser (www.collierappraiser.com)
- ★ Collier County Supervisor of Elections (www.colliervotes.gov)
- ★ Collier County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
(www.collierclerk.com)

Municipalities

- ★ City of Naples (www.naplesgov.com)
- ★ City of Marco Island (www.cityofmarcoisland.com)
- ★ City of Everglades City (www.cityofeverglades.org)

School District & Special Districts

- ★ Collier County Public Schools/School Board (www.collierschools.com)
- ★ Collier Mosquito Control District (www.cmcd.org)
- ★ Greater Naples Fire Rescue District (www.greaternaplesfire.org)
- ★ North Collier Fire Control & Rescue District (www.northcollierfire.com)
- ★ Immokalee Fire Control District (www.immfire.com)

State Government

- ★ Governor (www.flgov.com)
- ★ Attorney General (www.myfloridalegal.com)
- ★ Chief Financial Officer (www.myfloridacfo.com)
- ★ Commissioner of Agriculture (www.fdacs.gov)
- ★ Florida Senate (www.flsenate.gov)
- ★ Florida House of Representatives (www.flhouse.gov)
- ★ Florida Courts (www.flcourts.gov)

Federal Government

- ★ U.S. President (www.whitehouse.gov)
- ★ U.S. Senate (www.senate.gov)
- ★ U.S. House of Representatives (www.house.gov)

Local Newspapers

- ★ Naples Daily News — the newspaper of record for Collier County and the City of Naples (www.naplesnews.com)
- ★ The Naples Press — a weekly, community-focused newspaper serving Naples and Collier County, offering coverage on business, real estate, arts, and local news (www.naplespress.com)
- ★ Coastal Breeze News — a weekly community newspaper serving Marco Island, Goodland, Isles of Capri, East Naples, and Everglades City (www.coastalbreezenews.com)
- ★ The Mullet Rapper — a bi-monthly local publication for Everglades City and surrounding areas (www.visitevergladescity.com/the-mullet-rapper)
- ★ Ave Maria Sun — a quarterly community newspaper serving Ave Maria (www.avemariasun.com)

Local Broadcast Affiliates

- ★ ABC–WZVN-TV (Gulf Coast ABC) (www.gulfcoastnewsnow.com)
- ★ CBS–WINK-TV (WINK News) (www.winknews.com)
- ★ FOX–WFTX-TV (Fox 4) (www.fox4now.com)
- ★ NBC–WBBH-TV (Gulf Coast NBC) (www.gulfcoastnewsnow.com)
- ★ PBS–WGCU (WPBS Public Media) (www.wgcu.org)

About the Author



Sandy Parker, the founder and publisher of Sparker's Soapbox, frequently speaks about government and elections to community groups, senior living communities, and adult education programs across Collier County. She is a member of the League of Women Voters and the Greater Naples Chamber of Commerce.

In recognition of her work to educate and inform voters, she received the Outstanding Community Partner Award by the League of Women Voters of Collier County in 2024, the Distinguished Leadership Award by Greater Naples Leadership in 2022, the Annual Civic Award by the Collier County Chapter of Americans United for the Separation of

Church and State in 2019, and the Celebrating Women of Achievement Award by the American Association of University Women Greater Naples Branch in 2011.

Before moving to Florida over twenty years ago, Sandy had successful careers in public accounting and corporate finance with several Fortune 500 companies, retiring as vice president and treasurer of The Dun & Bradstreet Corporation.

She received a BA with highest honors and honors in American Studies from Douglass College of Rutgers University and an MBA from the Wharton School.

About Sparker's Soapbox

Sparker's Soapbox is a nonpartisan civic information resource for Collier County voters. The Sparker's Soapbox platform includes Sparker's Digest, a weekly newsletter about state and local government; Sparker's Primers, introductory guides to Florida and Collier civics; and Sparker's Research, in-depth looks at candidates and ballot issues.

Learn more at www.sparkers-soapbox.com.

My Voter Registration and Voting Districts

Name & address

Party affiliation

Precinct and voting location

County Commission district

Municipality or Unincorporated Collier County

Fire district

Florida House district

Florida Senate district

U.S. Congressional district

To find all this information and more, see page 8.

Key Dates

The following are the key dates for registration and voting for the 2026 federal, state, and local election cycles.

Naples City Council Election

- ★ Deadline to register to vote: January 5, 2026
- ★ Deadline to request that ballot be mailed: January 22, 2026
- ★ Election Day: February 3, 2026

Federal, State, and Local Primary Elections

- ★ Deadline to register to vote or change party affiliation: July 20, 2026
- ★ Deadline to request that ballot be mailed: August 6, 2026
- ★ Mandatory early voting period: August 8–15, 2026 (Contact Supervisor of Elections for optional days of early voting)
- ★ Election Day: August 18, 2026

Federal, State, Local, and Marco Island City Council General Elections

- ★ Deadline to register to vote: October 5, 2026
- ★ Deadline to request that ballot be mailed: October 22, 2026
- ★ Mandatory early voting period: October 24–31, 2026 (Contact Supervisor of Elections for optional days of early voting)
- ★ Election Day: November 3, 2026

For the most current information about registration deadlines, early voting, vote-by-mail, and Election Day polling places, always check the official websites of the Florida Division of Elections and the Collier County Supervisor of Elections before you vote. Election laws and dates can change.



*“Bad officials are elected by good citizens
who do not vote.”*

George Jean Nathan

1920



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