

CITY COUNCIL RESEARCH DIVISION LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY



JEFFREY R. CLEMENTS
Chief of Research
(904) 255-5137

117 West Duval Street
City Hall, Suite 425
Jacksonville, FL 32202
FAX (904) 255-5229

Bill Type and Number: Ordinance 2023-614

Introducer/Sponsor(s): Council President at the request of the Supervisor of Elections

Date of Introduction: September 12, 2023

Committee(s) of Reference: NCSPHS, R

Date of Analysis: September 14, 2023

Type of Action: Approving revision of voting precinct boundaries and precinct numbers

Bill Summary: The bill approves changes to voting precinct boundaries and precinct numbering necessitated by the settlement of a lawsuit alleging a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the United States Constitution by the Supervisor of Elections with regard to the distribution of precincts among City Council districts. The bill implements the terms of the settlement agreement by reducing the number of precincts citywide and equalizing the number of precincts among the 14 districts.

Background Information: The City Council, as the governing body for the county, is required by state law to approve changes to voting precincts and polling places recommended by the Supervisor of Elections. In late June of 2023 the Supervisor of Elections was sued by several city residents alleging a violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution because the number of voting precincts in the 14 council districts, all of which had relatively equal populations as of the adoption of the new redistricting plan earlier in the year (based on 2020 Census data), ranged from a high of 18 precincts in one district to a low of 9 in another. The suit alleged that districts with fewer precincts disadvantage the voters in those precincts due to longer travel distances, reduced accessibility and longer wait times to vote compared to voters in districts with more precincts.

To avoid prolonged litigation over the precincts in the face of an impending presidential election year, the Supervisor of Elections and Office of General Counsel negotiated a settlement agreement with the plaintiffs. Under the terms of the settlement, the SOE has proposed to reduce the number of precincts overall from 186 to 161 and to redraw the precincts so that the number ranges from a low of 10 in one district (District 4) to a high of 12 in 8 districts, thereby equalizing access for all voters citywide. The process of redrawing the precincts caused 86 boundary changes and 67 changes in precinct numbering. There are 29 voting location changes being approved.

Policy Impact Area: Voting precinct and polling place changes

Fiscal Impact: None; the number of voters to be served remains the same, so some precincts will require more poll workers and more tabulator machines to serve the volume, reallocating existing resources to fewer locations.

Analyst: Clements