



### Limitation on the Term of Office of School Board Members

[HJR 229](#) and [SJR 274](#) are identical resolutions proposing amendments to Article IX, Section 4 of the Florida Constitution. The proposals would limit terms for school board members by prohibiting incumbent members who have held the office for the preceding eight years from appearing on a ballot for reelection to that office and to specify that the amendment only applies to terms of office beginning on or after November 3, 2020.

#### ***Points to Consider:***

- Typically, term limits are intended to encourage more competitive races and/or to reduce the power of incumbency. However, a review of school board election results (see table below) shows that school board races already are competitive and that incumbency has little power.
  - Most school board races (an average of 66%) are truly competitive. This is because, unlike most other elections in Florida, school board elections are non-partisan. As a result, school board races do not attract phantom or write-in candidates that only give the appearance of competition. Instead, school board races attract authentic, active, and viable candidates with a sincere intent to compete for the office.
  - A substantial number of all school board races (an average of 40%) result in the election of a new school board member. This serves as evidence that the power of incumbency is significantly reduced in competitive and non-partisan local elections.
  - This data shows that imposing term limits on school board members is not necessary. Voters are already using the ballot box to impose natural terms limits on school board members that has resulted in a healthy balance of members with fresh, new perspectives and members with time-tested experience on our school boards.

### SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION DATA

YEAR	SEATS UP FOR ELECTION	QUALIFIED CANDIDATES	COMPETITIVE RACES	INCUMBENTS RE-ELECTED	NEW MEMBERS ELECTED
2010	210	463	143 - 68%	126	84 - 40%
2012	159	357	102 - 64%	97	62 - 39%
2014	210	444	144 - 69%	132	78 - 37%
2016	162	347	106 - 65%	87	75 - 46%
2018	212	450	132 - 62%	135	77 - 36%

- Given the depth and breadth of the federal, state, and local laws, rules, policies, and accountability requirements applicable to public schools, it is important to retain experienced school board members to preserve “institutional memory” and ensure consistent and equal educational opportunities for students.

- Imposing term limits on school board members on a statewide basis overlooks the diversity of the state and usurps local control and authority. The decision to impose term limits on locally elected officials should be made at the local level with the approval of local voters as has been the case for a small number of local elected officials, including the members of one school board (Duval).

**General Background Information:**

- All school board elections are non-partisan.
- There is a total of 358 school board members who are elected in staggered 4-year terms of office.
- In 41 school districts, school board members are elected by a district-wide vote of electors (at-large election). In 21 school districts, school board members are elected by a vote of the electors within their residence area (single member district election). In 5 school districts, school board members are elected by a combination of single member district election and at-large election. (**NOTE:** Pursuant to a local referendum approved by Manatee voters in 2018, Manatee school board elections will convert from at-large elections to single member district elections.)
- Of the 67 school districts, 58 school boards have 5 members, 6 school boards have 7 members (Duval, Hillsborough, Lee, Pinellas, Palm Beach, Polk), 1 school board has 8 members (Orange), and 2 school boards have 9 members (Broward, Miami-Dade).