



Florida S.B. 1726 Would Ban Election Polling by Public Colleges & Universities

Florida [S.B. 1726](#) would ban Florida public colleges and universities from polling on political candidates. It has passed key committees and awaits Senate floor passage.

The bill aims to reform the governance of the State University System of Florida; one provision would prohibit public colleges and universities from election polling focused on candidates, while still allowing them to do survey research on political or other issues.

Specifically, Section (3)(k) would require the 17-member State University System of Florida [Board of Governors](#) to *“adopt regulations prohibiting universities that conduct public opinion survey research from polling activities related to candidates for any federal, state, or local office. A university may conduct survey research to measure opinions and inform the public about social, political, and economic issues unrelated to candidate preference.”*

Election polling, including by a Florida public higher education institution, supports transparency, accountability and civic engagement.

- The First Amendment’s free speech protection also protects the right to conduct election polling (with research subjects’ consent), which covers such activity whether by news media, private individuals or companies, nonprofits, or private or public academic institutions. Election polling is a form of political expression and inquiry vital to the health and integrity of the American democratic process.
- Survey and opinion research helps to gauge voter sentiment and inform voters, parties and candidates. Allowing *any* entity to poll electoral candidate races ensures that no single narrative can dominate the public discourse.
- Prohibiting asking about candidate preference would make it harder to measure the level of political polarization, including via exit polling or even post-election research studies, at a time when such polarization is a big societal concern.
- Colleges and universities can conduct high-quality non-partisan research, and academic standards (and professional organizations) require transparency about their methodologies. Some polls from outside organizations (especially those associated with political parties or candidates) may not be held to the same standards.
- Florida S.B. 1726 makes no distinction between research studies funded by the state versus those funded by outside sponsors.

The Insights Association opposes Florida S.B. 1726 unless amended to remove the prohibition on electoral candidate polling by public colleges and universities.

P R O T E C T ◆ C O N N E C T ◆ I N F O R M ◆ P R O M O T E

Insights Association | 1629 K Street NW, Suite 300 Washington, DC 20006 | Phone: 202-800-2545 | www.insightsassociation.org