**CITY OF \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, FLORIDA**

**RESOLUTION TO UPHOLD THE RIGHT TO VOTE**

**Supporting a Constitutional Amendment to Grant an Explicit Right to Vote, Establishing a Task Force on Voting, and Commencing a Call to Action**

WHEREAS, voter turnout in Florida was 64% of registered voters in the 2012 presidential election and 42.2% of registered voters in the 2010 election; and

WHEREAS, Title IX of the Florida Statutes does not permit local control of local elections, with all rules regarding voter eligibility and registration and election administration, even for purely local elections, prescribed by state law; and

WHEREAS, Florida has enacted legislation that could impact eligible voters’ ability to vote, such as restricting voter registration drives, making it more difficult for people who move to stay registered, reducing early voting, and requiring voter identification for a regular ballot; and

WHEREAS, Florida has taken executive action that makes it harder for people with felony convictions to have their suffrage rights restored; and

WHEREAS, these laws have the potential to affect access to voting for Florida’s young persons, senior citizens, and racial and ethnic minorities, and directly disenfranchise people with felony convictions; and

WHEREAS, approximately 50% of 18- to 24-year-olds in the State cast a ballot in the 2012 election; and

WHEREAS, approximately 77% of eligible nationwide voters aged 65 or older registered to vote and approximately 70% of the eligible nationwide 65+ population cast a ballot in the 2008 general election; and

WHEREAS, registered African-Americans and Hispanics in Florida were more likely than registered Whites to vote in the 2012 election; and

WHEREAS, following the enactment of House Bill 1355, the League of Women Voters and other voter registration groups discontinued their voter registration activity in Florida; and

WHEREAS, in one Florida county, voter registration organizations were responsible for registering 62.7% of newly registered voters and census data shows that Hispanic and African-American voters are twice as likely as White voters to register to vote through a voter registration drive; and

WHEREAS, the reduction of the early voting period from 14 days to 8 days and the elimination of early voting on the Sunday before Election Day, contributed to a drop in the early voting rate from 32% of all votes cast in 2008 to 29% in 2012; and

WHEREAS, although African-Americans represent 13.6% of all registered voters, African-Americans constituted over 20% of all voters who voted early in the State in 2012; and

WHEREAS, a reduced early voting period contributed to 225,000 fewer Florida voters casting early in-person ballots, resulting in longer lines at the polls on Election Day; and

WHEREAS, Florida ranked 1st among all states in having the longest wait times at the polls on Election Day in 2012; and

WHEREAS, it is estimated that more than 200,000 Florida voters gave up on voting, due to long lines on Election Day; and

WHEREAS, Florida is one of only three states that permanently disenfranchises people with felony convictions; and

WHEREAS, Florida has the highest number of disenfranchised voters due to felony convictions in the nation; and

WHEREAS, more than one in five African-American adults are disenfranchised in Florida as a result of Florida’s felony disenfranchisement law; and

WHEREAS, due to executive action, more the 87,000 persons who would have gotten their voting rights back under the prior clemency rules will not have their suffrage rights restored; and

WHEREAS, of the 199 nations that elect their public officials using democratic elections, the United States is one of only 11 nations that does not have an explicit right to vote in its constitution; and

WHEREAS, the 15th, 19th, and 26th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution provide that the right to vote shall not be denied or abridged based on race, sex, and age respectively, and the 24th Amendment prohibits poll taxes, but these amendments do not guarantee Americans an explicit right to vote; and

WHEREAS, in 2013 the Supreme Court ruled in *Shelby County v. Holder* that the coverage formula in Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) is unconstitutional, thereby invalidating the formula used to determine which states are covered by Section 5 of the VRA; and

WHEREAS, Section 4 of the VRA was an effective tool in curbing racial discrimination in elections in 1965; and continued to be a critical instrument for free, fair and accessible elections, helping block laws making it more difficult to vote for nearly a half century; and

WHEREAS, an individual right to vote is a fundamental American right, and fundamental

rights should be guaranteed to all Americans in the U.S. Constitution; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL FOR \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, FLORIDA THAT:**

SECTION 1 – RIGHT TO VOTE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

We hereby affirm that the right to vote is a fundamental citizenship right to be cherished, protected, and exercised.

We call on our members of Congress, and our representatives in the state legislature, to support an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would grant an explicit right to vote to every American citizen of voting age.

We call on members of the Florida Legislature to strengthen the right to vote stated in Section 2 of the Constitution of Florida through statute.

We urge our county to pass right to vote resolution committing support for an explicit right to vote in the U.S. Constitution.

SECTION 2 – TASK FORCE ON VOTING

We shall establish a Right to Vote Task Force to ensure that all eligible voters in our city have continued access to vote and to:

* Review all local laws and practices that may affect the right to vote in local, state and federal elections;
* Review and recommend changes at the local level to uphold voting rights and increase voter participation;
* Develop plans and take action to promote early voting and same-day registration and make recommendations to the Council on any policies or actions needed to strengthen these efforts;
* Study voter registration programs designed to register eligible high school students and support voter education programs to increase citizenship knowledge and participation in the democratic process;
* Cooperate with any local colleges seeking to uphold voting rights for their students who are eligible to vote in Florida elections;
* Review Florida election laws and regulations and recommend legislation that would strengthen the right to vote in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (municipality name), including the adoption of automatic voter registration, allowing eligible voters to opt-out of the voter registration database instead of “opt-in”; and
* Review with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Board of Elections and identify strengths and weakness of our election practices and regulations after the 2014 general election; and

SECTION 3 – CALL TO ACTION

We call on the Florida Legislature to repeal House Bill 1355, which places an undue burden on organizations that register voters.

We call on the Florida Legislature and Governor Rick Scott to reinstate early voting for at least 14 days before an election.

We call on the Florida State Board of Elections to supply additional early voting sites, providing a site for every 65,000 registered voters in each county.

We call on Governor Rick Scott to reinstate clemency rules that would allow people with felony convictions to have their voting rights restored.

We call on Congress to restore Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 by creating a new coverage formula to determine which states and local jurisdictions should have voting changes reviewed for potential discriminatory impact.

We resolve that despite the obstacles to exercising our right to vote imposed by burdensome laws, we shall make every effort to ensure residents who are eligible voters can fully participate in every election in which they are eligible to cast a vote.

We shall provide suitable copies of this resolution to the governor, our state legislative representatives, the U.S. Speaker of the House, the U.S. Senate Majority Leader, this state’s congressional delegation, the U.S. President and our city and county elected representatives.