



25 January 2016

The Honorable Thad Altman
The Florida Senate
Room 314, Senate Office Building
404 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Re: SB 702 Exemption/Voter Registration Records

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Dear Senator Altman:

We are writing to express our concerns regarding your bill, SB 702, expanding the public record exemption for certain information contained in voter registration and voter application records. As currently drafted, SB 702 would exempt the legal residential address, date of birth, telephone number and email address of a voter registration applicant or voter.

While we understand the rationale for the proposed exemption, much of the information the bill purports to protect in a voter record is currently available from a variety of publicly accessible sources. Of specific concern is the exemption for a voter or voter applicants address and date of birth – if I know a voter's name, for example, such information is readily and easily accessible. There is insufficient justification for providing a statutory exemption for information easily obtained from publicly available sources. Additionally, researchers and statisticians in compiling information about voters and specific elections commonly use this information, and to close access to important historical information is contrary to the public interest.

To further the purpose of this legislation while also preserving public interest, we suggest amending SB 702 to narrow the proposed exemption. (Please see the attached document, Proposed Amendment to SB 702). We appreciate your attention to our concerns, Senator Altman. If you have any questions or if we can provide you with any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Petersen, President

Cc: The Honorable Andy Gardiner, President, Florida Senate
Jon Kaney, General Counsel, First Amendment Foundation
Sam Morley, General Counsel, Florida Press Association