

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WERE ELECTED MAYOR?

Enter our contest,
and you could win a
\$1,000 (first place),
\$500 (second place), or
\$250 (third place)
gift card.

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

- You must be a sixth, seventh, or eighth grader in Florida to enter.
- Your full name must be printed at the top of your essay.
- The essay must be typed or legibly printed (no cursive).
- No more than one page long.
- No more than 250 words.
- The use of AI and ChatGPT software or similar programs is strictly prohibited.
- A completed entry form must be included with your essay.
- Deadline to mail or submit online: **January 31, 2026.**
- Mail to: **Florida League of Mayors**
Post Office Box 1757
Tallahassee, FL 32302.
- Submit online at floridamayors.org.

Begin your essay with, "If I were elected Mayor ...". Describe how you would make a difference as Mayor AND how Home Rule helps make your city a great place to live.

Home Rule means that city officials live and work closest to residents, so they should get to decide how to govern their city. **To learn more, see the resources on page 3.**

Winners will also receive
a resolution from their
Mayor at a hometown
council/commission
meeting.



*Sponsored by the Florida
League of Mayors and
Florida League of Cities.*

Questions? Contact
flm@flcities.com
or 850.222.9684

DEADLINE: JANUARY 31, 2026

ESSAY CONTEST ENTRY FORM

A completed entry form must be included with the essay.

Student's Name (First and Last Name): _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian: _____

Parent's Phone #: _____ Parent's Email: _____

School Name: _____ School District (County): _____
(if applicable)

School Address: _____

School City: _____ Zip Code: _____

Teacher's Name: _____ Grade Level: _____

School Phone #: _____ Teacher's Email: _____

In signing this, I certify that the essay is my own original work and I have not used any AI or ChatGPT software to write my essay. I agree to comply with all contest rules.

Signature of Student: _____

Word Count: _____ (no more than 250 words)

The completed entry form and essay must be submitted online at floridamayors.org or postmarked by **January 31, 2026**, and sent to:

Florida League of Mayors
Post Office Box 1757
Tallahassee, FL 32302

First-, second-, and third-place essays will be recognized by the Florida League of Cities' Quality Cities magazine and on the Florida League of Mayors' website.

Judging criteria includes creativity, clarity, sincerity and thought, and appropriate grammar, spelling, and essay construction.

Winners will be announced in April on floridamayors.org.

Questions? Please contact flm@flcities.com or 850.222.9684. Essays will become the property of the Florida League of Mayors and will not be returned.

For helpful resources, see page 3. For more information about the Florida League of Mayors, visit floridamayors.org. For more information about the Florida League of Cities, visit flcities.com.



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WHAT IS HOME RULE IN FLORIDA?

Florida has 411 municipalities (also called cities, towns and villages) that provide a wide range of services every day to millions of Floridians and visitors. You can see, touch, and taste these services. Turn on a faucet and water pours out. Put garbage cans and recycling bins at a curb, and they are picked up. Flush a toilet, and the contents go somewhere to be treated. When a fire starts, firetrucks with trained firefighters show up to battle the blaze. Parks give residents fun places to play sports and use for recreational activities. These are just some of the many services provided by your city government.

In the United States, each state has a constitution to establish its government. The state constitution also outlines how local governments can set up. In Florida, local governments are municipalities, counties, school districts, and special districts.

Imagine making the laws for these services. In a city, those laws are made by a Mayor and City Council. Going back to the state's constitution for a minute, in some states the authority – the power – given to the local government is very limited, and in some states it is broader. Florida is one of the broad power states. A city can decide for itself. We call that power "Home Rule" because the decision is made at "home."

Another way to think about this power is that local voices are making local choices.

How about a few examples:

If your city leaders believe one-way streets help with traffic flow downtown, they will adopt laws

to make their streets one way downtown. Another city might not have the same belief, and that is just fine. It is a local decision being made locally.

Another town might have strong opinions about parks and recreation programs for senior citizens, but another village chooses to emphasize parks and recreation programs for teens. The decision is *based upon their own populations and their needs*. It is wonderful to be able to make a choice based on the uniqueness of your city!

When local leaders can make local decisions based on their local needs, then the services are truly reflective of that city. And, that is why Home Rule was put into the Florida Constitution by voters in 1968 – because the people believed it should exist as authority for local governments at that time, and people today still support this principle.

As you look around at city government, you can see many examples of local decisions that were made by your local leaders to meet your community's local needs. That is Home Rule in action.

STUDENT/TEACHER RESOURCE

City Government 101 video

bit.ly/flcities101

More Home Rule resources:

flcities.com/civics-education