

2024 Polk County Supervisor of Elections

Questions were given to all candidates on May 18, 2024. All candidates were asked to respond no later than June 1, 2024. This document was produced June 14, 2024.

1. What is your background?

Melony Bell



I was born and raised in Fort Meade. My husband of 43 years, Robbie, and I have raised two amazing daughters and now I am blessed to watch my granddaughters grow up right here in Polk County. I have been involved in public service for many years. I have served the citizens of Polk County as a City Commissioner and Mayor of Fort Meade, a County Commissioner, and most recently as State Representative for House District 49. My love for service and for our community runs deep and I look forward to taking all my experience, not only as an elected official, but as a wife, mother and grandmother, to the Polk County Supervisor of Elections Office.

Lori Edwards



I have had the honor of serving as Polk County Supervisor of Elections since 2000. Before that I represented eastern Polk County in the Florida House of Representatives. Originally from Sarasota, I've lived in Polk County for 42 years. During that time I've had the opportunity to work with a wide array of groups and organizations. Currently I'm a member of most Chambers of Commerce and Winter Haven Rotary.

2. Why are you running for this position now?

Melony Bell



I have always had a passion for elections, and I feel that after serving in Tallahassee for six years it is time for me to come home and use all my experiences in the legislature to best serve the citizens of Polk County. Your vote is the most sacred thing you can offer your government. I believe the best way to serve my community is by ensuring that your vote and your right to vote is fair, safe, and secure.

Lori Edwards



Running the Supervisor of Elections office is a challenging responsibility that takes knowledge, commitment, and daily hard work. I'm honored that Polk's voters have demonstrated trust in our office, and I still have a lot of energy and enthusiasm for this job. I'm patriotic and have a great passion for preserving our democracy.

3. Why should citizens vote for you specifically instead of your opponent?

Melony Bell



As I come back from Tallahassee, I have a fresh perspective to offer the people of Polk County, and it is time for me to put that perspective to work. As your Supervisor of Elections, I'll utilize my fresh perspective by seeking out innovative solutions and approaching challenges with creativity and open-mindedness. I look forward to using all my experience to serve the people of Polk County right here at home.

Lori Edwards



Experience and Education. As Supervisor of Elections for more than 20 years I have long studied state and federal election laws. I've had the opportunity to learn best practices for election integrity, security and accuracy. I've attained national certification (Certified Election Registration Administrator) from the Election Center in Association with Auburn University and maintain a state certification for Supervisors of Elections.

4. What do you believe are the most important (not necessarily urgent) challenges/priorities facing Polk County and the Polk County Supervisor of Elections regarding our election process in 2024 and beyond?

Melony Bell



I think an issue that has impacted the nation collectively is a growing lack of trust in our institutions. I want to fight to bring back that trust. As your Supervisor of Elections, I will ensure that you can trust the job that I do. Without trust in our elections our very foundation as a country is in jeopardy.

Lori Edwards



The biggest issue related to election administration is maintaining confidence in the integrity of our elections. I will address this by continuing to conduct fair and secure elections in a transparent manner. I will continue to build partnerships and invite community members to observe and participate in our elections. As more people observe and learn how our elections are run we will continue to see trust and confidence grow.

5. PolkElections.com is a great resource for citizens. What are the rules regarding how actively the Polk Supervisor of Elections goes into the community to try to register specific groups of voters? (How does the office ensure that citizens are registered fairly? What is the oversight?)

Melony Bell



As your Supervisor of Elections, I will be focused on educating Polk County about our right to vote. I have always said that if we can get education right, we can get the world right and that applies to our elections as well. It is important to have a well-educated constituency and as your Supervisor of Elections it will be my focus to educate the citizens of Polk County about their sacred right to vote. When I am your Supervisor of Elections, I will ensure that voters throughout all of Polk County are provided with the opportunity to register to vote.

Lori Edwards



We have a very active outreach and community education program, visiting more than 200 events every year. The overriding rule is to ensure fairness. This is accomplished by mapping our visits to ensure that we visit all geographic areas of the county and working to expand our community contacts. Additionally, we visit all Polk high schools every year to offer young people the opportunity to learn about elections and offering them the opportunity to register to vote.

6. Some national commentators (both conservative and liberal) have suggested that voting systems can be hacked or will be hacked in November. How will you as the leader of the office ensure that elections in Polk are free and fair, and how much influence does the Polk Supervisor of Elections have in setting Florida policies and procedures?

Melony Bell



To start, I will ensure that we follow the rules and laws set by the legislature and by the Supreme Court of the State of Florida. As your Supervisor of Elections, I will ensure that we have an independent auditing process in place. Furthermore, I will make sure all voter rolls are cleaned up in a timely manner, per Florida Statute. I will pay close attention to proposed changes to our election laws and ensure that these measures strive for fair and free elections.

Lori Edwards



In addition to using only election tabulation equipment that has been rigorously tested and certified by the Florida Department of State, we employ multiple layers of physical security and chain of custody procedures. Each voting machine is tested for accuracy each election before being deployed. A manual recount audit is performed after each election on randomly selected precincts. All ballots are accounted for by balancing votes cast against Polk voters who signed the register or certificate envelope. Florida law and rules promulgated by the Florida Division of Elections provide the framework and we add and customize procedures to ensure election integrity.

7. Where can people go to get more information about you and/or your campaign?

Melony Bell



Facebook: [Melony Bell For Polk County Supervisor of Elections](#)

Website: <https://votemelonybell.com>

Lori Edwards



Our website is LoriEdwardsCampaign.com Additionally, I am always happy to hear from voters via email at Lori@LoriEdwardsCampaign.com.