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Contact: Heather Cabral, heather@westendstrategy.com, 202-550-6880;

Shanae Bass, sbass@demos.org

TODAY - Florida's Returning Citizen Leaders File Amicus Brief With Court to Ensure Full Protection of Amendment 4

Leaders with Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, Dēmos, and Forward Justice continue their efforts to engage, empower and protect returning citizens and their right to vote.

ORLANDO - Today, the [Florida Rights Restoration Coalition](#) (FRRRC) [filed a proposed amicus curiae brief](#) with the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Florida in *Jones v. DeSantis*. This brief allows the state's leading returning citizen (formerly convicted person) organization to provide important and neutral input into the court case surrounding [SB 7066](#), the law passed to clarify Florida's Amendment 4, the amendment that lifted the state's lifetime ban on voting for people with past felony convictions.

The Sentence Modification and "Four Corners" provisions created by SB 7066 will help returning citizens regain their right to vote, and therefore FRRRC wants to see them protected.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit claim that SB 7066 violates the U.S. Constitution and have asked the court to enjoin, or temporarily put on hold, the statute's requirements concerning the payment of restitution, fines, and fees. In the proposed brief filed today, FRRRC through its attorneys at Dēmos and Forward Justice are asking the court to protect the parts of the law allowing for sentence modification and "four corners" provisions, which are important pathways for returning citizens to complete their sentence and be eligible to vote - pathways won through hard fought legislative advocacy.

FRRRC also responds to the federal court's recent question about the implications of the plaintiffs' claims for Amendment 4 itself. FRRRC argues that under no circumstances should the court strike down Amendment 4 and restore the lifetime ban that predated the Amendment's approval by a supermajority of Florida voters.

Desmond Meade, executive director of Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRRC) and author of Amendment 4 said, "Until today, there were no returning citizen-led organizations involved in the lawsuit surrounding SB 7066. FRRRC works to empower returning citizens across our state and that means making sure they feel both heard and protected in the court case. Any serious discussion or debate about the rights of formerly convicted people should involve formerly convicted people. We've been doing this work for more than a decade, and felt it was important to be a neutral party in this lawsuit to make sure the needs of the returning citizen community are known and respected in this crucial process. We're committed to putting people over politics and will continue to fight to ensure that those directly impacted are heard. We

cannot call ourselves a true democracy unless each and every day we work to make it more robust, inclusive and just.”

Thousands of voters could be disenfranchised if SB 7066’s allowances for sentence modification and “four corners” provisions are blocked, even for just a few months. By the time any hold might be lifted, it could be too late for potential returning citizen voters to resolve their financial obligations and vote, especially concerning this year’s state and local elections.

Chiraag Bains, director of legal strategies at Dēmos, which represents FRRRC in this case, said: “Directly impacted communities need to be at the center of the movement for a just and inclusive democracy. The sentence modification provisions FRRRC secured in SB 7066 are valid and must be preserved, and Amendment 4 must stand for the sake of Florida’s democracy. We’re proud to help FRRRC provide this critical perspective to the court.”

Daryl Atkinson, co-director of Forward Justice, which represents FRRRC in this case, said: “From the beginning of the campaign on Amendment 4 FRRRC has been committed to expanding this nation’s most precious franchise, the right to vote, to returning citizens. Forward Justice is proud to represent FRRRC in this legal action as they continue to fight for more inclusive democracy.”

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