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FRRC Celebrates Historic Win for FL Returning Citizens with U.S. District Court Ruling

Orlando, FL (May 24, 2020) —Today, the [Florida Rights Restoration Coalition](#) led a celebration across the state of Florida and the nation after a federal judge ruled in favor of Florida's returning citizen community in a far-reaching ruling that creates a pathway to voting for hundreds of thousands of Florida citizens. The case was the nation's first fully virtual civil rights trial.

U.S. District Judge Robert Hinkle ruled that SB 7066, a state law requiring returning citizens to pay all restitution, fines and fees before they are eligible to vote, is unconstitutional. The case was granted class certification, so the ruling applies to hundreds of thousands of returning citizens across the state who still owe fines and fees and are unable to pay— namely hundreds of thousands who can now get immediate relief from the court and register to vote.

"This court decision adds another remarkable chapter in our fight as returning citizens to participate in our democracy," said Desmond Meade, Executive Director of the FRRC. "We will remain vigilant in our commitment to place people over politics, and ensure that all returning citizens, no matter how they may vote, have an opportunity to possess what we believe to be the most endearing sign of citizenship, the right to vote."

"As the leaders of Amendment 4, we are looking forward to utilizing this court ruling to expand on our registration efforts to create a more inclusive democracy, make voting exciting again, and to coalesce the voices of returning citizens to create a more just and equitable justice system.

While we understand that this litigation may continue through an appeal process, we remain cautiously optimistic that this movement will prevail," Meade added. "It is our desire and hope that the state and governor fully embrace this ruling and immediately take the necessary steps to create a more inclusive democracy. After all, isn't that what a state and governor are supposed to do? Shouldn't they want as many citizens as possible participating in our democracy? We have been committed to operating under the color of law, and I hope that the Governor and the state will commit to doing so too, as we most certainly will."



During the November 2018 election, over 64 percent of Floridians approved the passage of Amendment 4, restoring the ability to vote to potentially 1.4 million returning citizens across the state. During the subsequent implementation of the amendment, the Florida legislature passed SB7066, which defined the completion of a sentence as having paid all fines, fees, and restitution, or “legal financial obligations.”

FRRC encourages returning citizens in Florida who have questions about their eligibility to call its hotline at 1-877-MY-VOTE-0 or visit floridarrc.com. Those who owe fines and fees can text “FINES” to 82623 to learn more about FRRC’s Fines and Fees Program.

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FRRC is a grassroots, membership organization run by Returning Citizens (Formerly Convicted Persons) who are dedicated to ending the disenfranchisement and discrimination against people with convictions and creating a more comprehensive and humane reentry system that will enhance successful reentry, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety.