



For immediate release

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**A dream further deferred, but a mission undeterred:
FRRC Executive Director vows to free the vote for all returning citizens after Governor
defers his Clemency appeal**

In an arbitrary ruling today, the Florida Clemency Board granted Clemency to Neil Volz , Deputy Director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition but deferred it for Desmond Meade, FRRC's Executive Director. The Governor would not say when Desmond's case would be decided. Through FRRC, Volz and Meade championed the restoration of civil rights to formerly convicted people (returning citizens). Both are disappointed that Desmond, a well-known Black leader in Florida and [Time Magazine 100 Most Influential Person in 2019](#), cannot join Neil in sitting on a jury, and Desmond can not sit for the Florida Bar, but both are resolved to fight harder not only to restore Desmond's full civil liberties, but ensure every returning citizen in the state can participate in democracy through voting. In fact, in response to this delay in the Clemency decision, Desmond is donating \$75,000 from a recent prize he won for his leadership to the fines and fees program, and encouraging others to join him in matching this, to ensure as many returning citizens as possible are eligible to vote.

In a statement, Meade said, "Every single person who has served their time should be given a clear path to full citizenship and participation in democracy, not forced to jump through hoop after hoop, or spend years waiting for their clemency hearing, while they rebuild their lives. Being denied Clemency doesn't deter me from our fight to free the vote for every returning citizen in Florida, it only strengthens my resolve. FRRC will continue to advocate for all returning citizens until we are all free — we will not accept being told our dreams are deferred."

In 2018, Florida voters passed Amendment 4 by a two-thirds majority, expanding voting rights to 1.4 million formerly convicted citizens. However, the state ignored the will of the voters and instituted a hurdle to prevent returning citizens from voting. Now, all fines and fees—some of which might not be fairly levied— must be paid before returning citizens can register or vote.

In response to these barriers, FRRC is raising money to pay the fines and fees of returning citizens so that they are able to exercise their right to vote this November. And they are not alone.



Recently FRRC announced that they had blasted past the \$20 million dollar mark with donations from 44,000 individuals from every corner of this country -- from small towns and big cities, from progressives and conservatives, from every walk of life – all helping to make sure returning citizens are eligible to vote in Florida.

Desmond believes that this massive grassroots support is because Americans share his vision for a Florida where the vote is free for all.

“The democracy that we envision is not one where any American is forced to choose between putting food on the table or voting. The ability to vote should be unencumbered and free of charge. With this effort, we are creating a more inclusive democracy that we all can be proud of.”

FRRC is making its final push and racing against the clock to raise the remaining \$5M to help pay off fees and fines by September 28, and encourages people to visit <https://wegotthevote.org/freethevote/> to make a donation.

FRRC will hold a zoom press conference today September 23 at 2:00PM to discuss the clemency decision and their plans for paying the fines and fees, as well as their engagement efforts to get returning citizens registered. Email press@floridarrc.org to get details. Please find the zoom link here: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81337706356>

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About The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition

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. For more information, visit <https://floridarrc.com/>.