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Contact: Taylor Hopkins, (407) 675-6412, press@floridarrc.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Voting Rights Bus Tour Makes its Way to Pinellas and Hillsborough Counties

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition drops by the Trop to make case for early voting among returning citizens; Mayor Rick Kriseman joins them to encourage voting

Pinellas/Hillsborough Counties (October 15, 2020) — The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) is traveling the state of Florida to mobilize returning citizens, people with past felony convictions, to the polls for early voting. Thursday, October 15 they are stopping by the Trop, home of the Rays, and starting October 19, a drive-through ballot drop site for Pinellas County.

The #freethevote bus will be at 1 Tropicana Drive, Lot Seven outside of Gate 1 at 2pm ET.

October 19 kicks off early voting in Florida. Returning citizens, their families and other voters can cast their ballots at any designated county location. They can pick the time best for them and skip the lines.

“This election will be the first time many returning citizens will have the opportunity to cast their vote,” said Desmond Meade, executive director of FRRC. “In counties across Florida, elections for local, state and federal officials — as well as important ballot measures — are often decided by just a couple of hundred votes. Returning citizens have been waiting for this moment. We are bringing our voice and life experiences to vote on issues and representatives that impact our everyday lives.”

In 2018, more than two-thirds of Floridians voted in favor of restoring voting rights to 1.4 million returning citizens. Florida’s legislators, however, amended the law, adding a requirement that returning citizens pay their remaining fines and fees before re-enfranchisement.

St. Petersburg Mayor Rick Kriseman said, “Much work remains to ensure justice and fairness prevail in Florida. Voting, while still elusive to too many of our fellow citizens, is how we can best effect change and accomplish such work. I applaud those helping to increase accessibility and turnout and strengthen our democracy.”

FRRC, with the support of more than 86,000 donors nationwide, helped raise more than \$27 million to pay returning citizens’ fines and fees. They removed the voting obstacle for tens of thousands of returning citizens and plan to continue this work well past the 2020 election. This includes paying \$1.5M in fines and fees on October 5 in Hillsborough County, making upwards of 1,000 returning citizens eligible to vote.

FRRC’s current charge is to help ensure and encourage registered returning citizens and their families to vote early, having their ballots casted and counted by November 3. They will lead [#freethevote marches](#) statewide on October 24, urging returning citizens to use their voice and voting power.



“There are people trying to keep returning citizens from the polls, but we won’t be intimidated. We’ve stood up to much more in our lifetimes,” Meade says. “Early voting begins on Oct. 19 and FRRC’s Free the Vote events are on Oct. 24. We will encourage every returning citizen to make sure their voices are heard. We can make decisions on the ballot that create a future we can look forward to.”

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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/>.