



Press Release: October 19, 2020

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## In Miami, FRRC Rallies Returning Citizens to Polls on First Day of Early Voting

*Hosts Press Conference, tells Second Chance Voters, People with Past Felony Convictions, to Stand Strong in Face of Attempts to Keep Them From Polls*

Miami, Florida – Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) Free the Vote bus makes its way to Miami, Florida on October 19, the first day of early voting in Florida. This is part of a statewide bus tour to get all registered returning citizens, people with past felony convictions, to vote this election.

Much is on the ballot affecting the second chance voters including where they can live, how much they get paid, what opportunities are open to them and how fair the criminal justice system is. There are tens of thousands of returning citizens who are registered to vote this election and elections are ALWAYS close in Florida.

FRRC is **meeting returning citizens at 1pm at Joseph Caleb Center on 5400 NW 22nd Avenue, Miami, FL 33142, to remind them how easy it is to vote early and why they should vote.** They will also lead [#freethevote marches](#) statewide on October 24, including in Miami at the Caleb Center, urging returning citizens to use their voice and voting power.

“Returning citizens who vote have the power to make a huge impact on our communities and our future,” said Desmond Meade, executive director of FRRC. “Issues that impact our lives and the lives of our families are on the ballot. It is time that people with our life experiences are heard and represented in our government. Issues like reforming the criminal justice system and allowing people to reenter the community post-conviction are too important to stay silent about.”

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. After the state moved to weaken the impact of Amendment 4, FRRC worked hard this election year to ensure as many returning citizens as possible are eligible to vote if they want to. 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.

In the latest round of efforts to intimidate returning citizens and question their right to the polls, the director of the Division of Elections sent a note with confusing guidance to supervisors of elections suggesting “*Additionally, please remember that if you receive information about a*



*registered voter who is ineligible from a source other than the Department of State, you should act on it as authorized under subsection (6) of section 98.075, Fla. Stat.”*

In a letter, FRRC urged the director of the Division of Elections to clarify their guidance, as, if left as is, it could disenfranchise people who are legitimately eligible to vote. They pointed out multiple inaccurate or misleading parts of the guidance.

One, if there is confusion about if the registered voter can vote or not, the state law explicitly says the “tie goes to the voter.” This means that unless there is irrefutable evidence that a person cannot vote, if it is up for dispute, then the voter may vote. Second, there are tens of thousands of voters who sought and received clemency, restoring their voting rights. They DO NOT have to pay any outstanding fees and fines as part of this. Therefore, even if records show them owing anything, they have received their full voting rights back. This group of voters should not be conflated with returning citizens who received their voting rights back via Amendment 4. Third, in order to review what, if anything, a returning citizen owes, this needs to be done by qualified legal counsel. Last, if an election supervisor challenges a returning citizen and prevents them from voting, and the person appeals, the county will have to bear this litigation cost if that person is indigent. Many returning citizens are in this category. This could be a costly mistake for supervisors if they erroneously prevent legitimate voters from voting.

Desmond Meade is relentless in fighting for his and others’ rights, “There are plenty of people trying to keep us from the polls, but we are stronger than those democracy deniers and will turn out in large numbers because it is our constitutional right and this is our time. Let’s send a loud and clear message that there is a growing power block of returning citizens, we have priorities we want addressed and we are using our vote as our voice.”

FRRC has promised to help any returning citizen challenged at the polls, offering legal counsel and providing poll workers to make sure no eligible voter is turned away. Anyone needing help can call 877-MY-VOTE-0.

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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/>.