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## **FRRC Celebrates Holiday Season with \$327,000 Payment of Fines and Fees for Florida Returning Citizens**

**ORLANDO, FL - December 21, 2020** With the holiday season in full swing, Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) paid \$327,000 to clear the fines and fees of 181 returning citizens (people with past felony convictions).

Hundreds of thousands of returning citizens in Florida still owe fines and fees associated with their past case. These financial obligations create barriers to voting, accessing opportunities, getting driver's licenses, and more. In many cases, people have to choose between paying their fines and fees or putting food on the table. To mitigate this burden, FRRC is filling in the gap to keep people from making that impossible decision.

"This was a huge burden lifted from me," said Clarence Colbert of St. Lucie, who had his fines and fees paid. "Every time I was late or missed a payment, I would get a letter threatening to suspend my driver's license. It feels good not to have to worry about that. I'm truly grateful and appreciative."

Estimates show that returning citizens owe more than a billion dollars to the state of Florida. By paying the fines and fees of returning citizens, FRRC is not just freeing the vote, they are also infusing much-needed revenue into Florida justice systems and governments, whose budgets have been decimated by COVID-19.

"This effort is a continuation of the work we have been doing for years. Paying the fines and fees of returning citizens serves the dual purpose of removing barriers to voting and enriching our democracy, while also providing much-needed money and resources to the state of Florida," said Desmond Meade, Executive Director of FRRC. "It is a win-win. We are not only helping returning citizens and the community, but protecting taxpayers."

Along with this latest payment, FRRC has paid the fines and fees of over 42,000 returning citizens in the state of Florida, totaling over \$27 million to sixty-three counties in the state. In 2018 FRRC led a historic victory with the successful passage of Amendment 4, a citizen initiative which restored voting rights to over 1.4 million Floridians with past felony convictions. Amendment 4 represented the single largest expansion of voting rights in the United States in half a century and brought an end to 150 years of a Jim Crow-era law in Florida.



**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/](https://floridarrc.com/).

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