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****PRESS RELEASE****

FRRC Joins Effort to Stop Voter Suppression in Florida

Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, Lebron James' 'More Than A Vote,' former NFL star Michael Vick, and Equal Ground continue working together to combat voter suppression in Florida to remove voting barriers for returning citizens, people with past felony convictions

Orlando, FL (April 12, 2021) – The [Florida Rights Restoration Coalition](#) (FRRC) is continuing its advocacy work during Second Chance Month by continuing to work with Lebron James' [More Than A Vote](#), former NFL star Michael Vick, and the community-centered organization [Equal Ground](#) in the fight against voter suppression in Florida. This collaborative campaign includes today's release of a new video produced by More Than A Vote, featuring Vick, and the continuance of a statewide 'Free The Vote' bus tour by FRRC. Both the video and the bus tour are designed to shed light on the wave of new laws in Florida and Georgia that seek to make it harder for returning citizens to engage in the electoral process.

“We combat voter suppression with aggression which means that we are going to be more aggressive in our effort to expand participation in our democracy,” said FRRC Executive Director Desmond Meade. “The FRRC Free the Vote Bus Tour across the state is our response to those who are trying to limit democracy. We are registering people to vote, signing people up for our Fines and Fees program to remove barriers to voting, and while others may try to diminish voter participation, we are going to celebrate democracy all across the state of Florida!”

In 2020, Meade helped Michael Vick exercise his constitutional right to vote in Florida for the first time since the former Atlanta Falcons quarterback lost it due to a felony conviction in 2007. That conviction resulted in a two year prison sentence which ultimately led him to become one of the most recognizable faces in the fight against returning citizen disenfranchisement. Despite successfully returning to the NFL

after his incarceration Vick did not have a clear pathway back to civic engagement prior to the 2018 passage of Amendment 4 in Florida.

In 2018, nearly two-thirds of Floridians voted in favor of restoring voting rights to 1.4 million returning citizens. Florida's legislature then passed a requirement that returning citizens pay their remaining fines and fees before re-enfranchisement. FRRC, with the support of more than 90,000 donors nationwide, helped raise more than \$27 million to pay returning citizens' fines and fees. Their dedicated efforts tore down voting barriers for more than 40,000 returning citizens in 2020. At the same time, FRRC worked with local judicial districts to help remove voting barriers for people through the courts.

Recently, the state of Georgia passed voting reforms making it harder for people to vote, including such changes as, the removal of ballot drop boxes, a ban on refreshments for voters waiting in line, and restrictions on busing to polling locations. Many advocates consider these reforms to be an attack on democracy. Florida's legislature has introduced and is pushing similar legislation that would eliminate ballot drop boxes, make vote-by-mail more bureaucratic, and more.

FRRC staunchly opposes the voter suppression tactics that are being put forth in Florida and Georgia, just as they oppose the barriers to democracy that have previously been used to disenfranchise returning citizens here in Florida. That is why the FRRC is engaged on a bus tour throughout the state to get people registered to vote, to remove voting barriers for people through the Fines and Fees Program and to celebrate democracy with local communities.

"Supporting democracy is not a political issue, it is an American issue," said Neil Volz, Deputy Director of FRRC. "We believe that the best way to respond to efforts to limit voting is to get out in the community and celebrate democracy by getting people registered to vote and getting our friends and neighbors engaged in the process."

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/>.

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