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FRRC's Fines-and-Fees Program Provides **Relief to a Returning Citizen**

ORLANDO, FL — August 21, 2026 — During Florida's August primary, the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) deployed 154 trained poll monitors across the state to help voters navigate questions and barriers at the polls.

One of those Floridians was a returning citizen from South Florida named Larry.

Larry was sent a voter registration card earlier this year. When he went to vote early, he was verbally informed at the polling location that he still owed fines and fees connected to a decades-old prior case and that those obligations affected his eligibility. Wells left with a provisional ballot.

"When I got my voter registration card this year, I thought everything was okay. Then I went to vote and was told I still owed money from an old case." Larry said. "I live on a fixed income; there was no way I could've paid those fines and fees. I was ready to throw in the towel and not vote anymore."

After learning about Larry's experience, the organization committed to paying those obligations so Larry could overcome the barrier preventing him

from engaging in our democracy. Now, he will be able to vote in the November election.

For FRRC, Larry's experience reflects what rights restoration looks like in practice: helping returning citizens navigate a complex legal system that can cause confusion and uncertainty.

"Larry's story is deeply personal, but the confusion he experienced is not unique," said Raven Lightsey, Interim Executive Director of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition. "When someone receives a voter registration card and then learns at the polling place that an unresolved obligation remains, there is clearly more work to do. Returning citizens who are trying to follow the law deserve a clear and reliable way to understand where they stand."

FRRC believes strengthening Florida's advisory opinion process is an important part of providing that clarity. The organization plans to continue to work with the state to improve the process so returning citizens can receive clearer, more timely answers about their voting eligibility before Election Day.

"We have been working diligently with the state to refine the Advisory Opinion process and are focused on advocating for them to have the necessary resources to strengthen their current process for returning citizens so we can provide clarity and eliminate unnecessary confusion," Lightsey said. "People should not have to become experts in the inner workings of multiple state agencies to understand whether they can vote. Until then, FRRC will continue working case by case to help returning citizens find a path forward."

For Larry, that support meant having someone help turn despair into a solution.

"If it wasn't for Pastor Rhonda Thomas connecting me with FRRC, I wouldn't be voting," Larry said. "Voting means everything to me. It means my voice is being heard. I've always said, if you don't vote, don't complain. You have a voice, and your voice should be heard. I'm so happy my voice still gets to be heard."

FRRC's work will continue through November's general election and beyond, helping returning citizens understand their eligibility, address outstanding fines and fees, access legal assistance, and navigate the process of restoring their rights.

If you are a returning citizen with questions about your voting eligibility, outstanding fines and fees, or restoring your rights, contact the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition at floridarrc.com. FRRC is here to help.

About the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition

FRRC is a grassroots, membership organization run primarily by Returning Citizens (Formerly Convicted Persons) who are dedicated to ending the disenfranchisement and discrimination against people with convictions by 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/>.

For interview requests or to talk with a local FRRC member, contact Gabby Saunders at gabby@floridarrc.org or at the phone number 407-497-3835.