



Voting and Civil Rights Groups Condemn Arrests of Floridians Captured on Video

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 21, 2022

CONTACT

Legal Defense Fund: Ella Wiley, media@naacpldf.org, 925-819-0555

Brennan Center: Kendall Karson, karsonk@brennan.law.nyu.edu, 646-925-8746

ACLU of Florida: media@aclufl.org, 786-363-2737

ACLU National: Inga Sarda-Sorensen, isarda-sorensen@aclu.org, 347-514-3984

TAMPA, Fla. - Police body camera footage obtained earlier this week by the *Tampa Bay Times/Miami Herald* shows the arrests of Floridians with past felony convictions for voting in the 2020 presidential election while allegedly ineligible. It is incredibly unlikely that any of those arrested were aware that they were ineligible to vote. This morning, Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Milton Hirsch dismissed one of the cases brought by the Office of Statewide Prosecution.

The Legal Defense Fund (LDF), Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and ACLU of Florida – organizations that advocated for the passage of Amendment 4, which ended permanent felony disenfranchisement for most Floridians with past convictions, and litigated in federal court to try to prevent the Florida Legislature from dramatically curtailing that amendment – issued the following statement:

“We are horrified by the ongoing arrests and prosecutions of Floridians with past felony convictions for what appear to be honest mistakes about their eligibility. The state has created this problem by making their voting eligibility deeply confusing and refusing to provide any meaningful guidance to those looking to determine whether they can vote.

“We forewarned the courts and the public that Florida would exploit its flawed and inadequate system for determining voter eligibility to intimidate or deny people’s right to vote. We are deeply concerned that these arrests, which are based on flimsy charges, are an ‘opening salvo,’ as Gov. Ron DeSantis said, meant to intimidate and disenfranchise eligible Floridians with past felony convictions from voting. Florida is weaponizing its new, and unnecessary, Office of Election Crimes and Security against its own citizens who appear to have made honest mistakes about their voting eligibility, particularly those who are low income, Black, and brown.

“The recent arrests raise serious questions about the state’s many representations to federal courts downplaying the risk of prosecution for citizens confused about their eligibility. It is also highly unlikely that the Office of Statewide Prosecution has the authority to prosecute these individuals as it has been doing; indeed, a Circuit Court judge has already dismissed one case on grounds that the Office of Statewide Prosecution lacks this authority. In the meantime, we will do everything we can to ensure every eligible voter, both in Florida and nationally, has access to the ballot.

“In August 2022, our organizations released a [resource](#) for legal and advocacy groups to help Floridians with past felony convictions determine their eligibility to vote. This was intended to fill a void left by the state.

“These arrests and prosecutions – which threaten our democracy – must stop. We will continue to consider measures to help ensure that Florida stops threatening the liberty of its own citizens.”

###