Florida’s Voting Restoration Amendment

A second chance and opportunity for redemption for those who’ve paid their debt to society.

- Florida’s Voting Restoration Amendment would allow people who’ve paid their debt to society to earn back their right to vote.
- Floridians believe in second chances. Restoring a person’s right to vote once they’ve fulfilled their obligations to society gives them an opportunity for redemption and a chance to be full members of their community.
- The people behind this Amendment are nonpartisan civic and faith organizations working with men and women who’ve served time and are now putting their lives back together.
- Florida is one of only four states with a lifetime ban on voting. The Voting Restoration Amendment modernizes Florida’s criminal justice rules by bringing our state in line with others nationwide.
- People must fully complete all terms of their sentence, including probation and parole, before they earn back their right to vote.
- The Amendment doesn’t apply to people who’ve committed murder or sexual offenses.
- Young people value democratic access and expanding our electorate— In a survey conducted by the Roosevelt Institute, 80% of young people said they care more about a fair and inclusive democratic system than who wins an election.

Key words to use:
- Second chances and redemption. People we are trying to persuade see voting as a privilege and are willing to take it away from people who’ve committed crimes. But they also believe in redemption and second chances and are open to the idea that people should have a chance at a new life.
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- **Earning back the right to vote.** We want to emphasize that the Amendment makes it possible for people earn back their vote by fulfilling all of the requirements of their sentence. This is important because opponents will argue that we shouldn’t automatically give people their rights back.

- **One of four states with a lifetime ban.** We want to emphasize that Florida is out of sync with other states in having a ban that lasts for someone’s entire life. We are talking about modernizing the state’s criminal justice rules, and people are generally in agreement that the criminal justice system doesn’t work well.

- **We are not defined by our past.** We want to emphasize that it’s not where we’ve been but where we’re going that matters. People with criminal backgrounds and who have served their time want to be civically engaged. They can be anyone; your store clerk, neighbor, or classmate who just want to have a say in government and their future.

**Words and arguments that come to us instinctively but we should try to avoid:**

- **Don’t Say:** Voting is a sacred right, not a privilege and it shouldn’t be taken away. We don’t need to win the argument that voting is sacred in order to win the fight to restore voting rights if we affirm the value people place on second chances.

- **Don’t Say:** You would be surprised at the minor crimes that count as felonies in Florida. People see felonies as serious crimes and will make a decision on voting rights restoration based on what comes to mind when they think of these crimes. Better to remind people that those who’ve committed murder or sex offenses are not eligible and return back to the idea of giving people second chances.

- **Don’t Say:** Denying people voting rights is unfair. People we need to persuade do not instinctively see it as unfair to take away voting rights from someone who has committed a crime. But they do see giving people a second chance as the right thing to do. And they are concerned that the Florida criminal justice system is broken, so better to shift the discussion to how out of sync Florida is compared to other states and the need to modernize our criminal justice system.