



FLORIDA CAMPAIGN FOR CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2020

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Advocates in Florida call on candidates for state attorney to focus on reform and decarceration

Tallahassee, Fla.- On Tuesday, Floridians throughout the state went to the polls to vote. The primary election brought State Attorney candidates closer to taking office in the 17th Judicial Circuit in Broward County and the 9th Judicial Circuit in Osceola and Orange counties. Democrat Harold Pryor will face Republican Gregg Rossman in the general election in Broward with independent candidate Sheila Alu also running. In Orange and Osceola, Monique Worrell, who won the Democratic primary, will face an independent candidate, Jose Torroella, in November (no Republicans ran for this office). These races will be going into the final stretch amid a rethinking of how prosecutors should use their power to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity for justice.

The Florida Coalition for Criminal Justice Reform does not endorse, support or oppose candidates, but encourages all candidates to commit to dismantle the structures in our deeply flawed criminal justice system. Our state continues to overly rely on mass incarceration, despite evidence that it harms our communities. The public knows reform is necessary to safely reduce the number of people in prison and jails, yet many prosecutors continue to stand in the way of reform. With COVID-19 ravaging Florida prisons and jails, it has never been more important to reduce the incarceration rate.

Statement from Carrie Boyd, policy counsel for SPLC Action:

“COVID-19 has focused attention on the overcrowding in Florida prisons and led to calls to get people out. But the truth is that we locked up too many people before COVID happened, and going forward we need to pursue policies that lead to decarceration. Getting people out and seeking to avoid locking up people who are not a threat to the public needs to be a focus in Fort Lauderdale, Orlando and throughout the state.”

Statement from **Kirk Bailey, political director for the ACLU of Florida:**

“There are approximately 95,000 people warehoused in Florida prisons, and 55,000 in Florida jails. Florida clearly has a mass incarceration problem. People continue to test positive and be exposed to the coronavirus in Florida’s prisons and jails because of overcrowding. State Attorneys can help get the medically frail, the elderly and those scheduled to be released soon get out as quickly as possible. Safely reducing the prison population is the best answer from both a humanitarian and public health perspective to prevent more COVID-19 deaths. And going forward, State Attorneys should focus on reducing the prison population by committing to correct injustices and end counterproductive practices that devastate families, squander lives, and do not make our communities safer.”

Statement from **Denise Rock, executive director of Florida Cares Charity Corp., dedicated to improving the lives of the incarcerated:**

“Anyone familiar with the prison system in Florida knows there are plenty of incarcerated people who don’t belong behind bars. Yet we have seen most prosecutors throughout the state do everything possible to keep our loved ones and our friends locked up. As these elections come to a close, I hope these candidates will reach out to us to listen, hear and better understand the profound injustices that we see on a regular basis.”