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Joshua B. Hoe

0:04

Hello and welcome to Episode 82 of the Decarceration Nation Podcast, a podcast about radically reimagining America's criminal justice system. I'm Josh Hoe, among other things, I'm formerly incarcerated freelance writer and criminal justice reform advocate and the author of the book, *writing your own best story, addiction and living hope*. We'll get to my interviews with Desmond Mead, Neal voles and Sean braless Doyle about amendment four in Florida in just a second, but first the news.

I was proud to be the moderator for the evidence base case for ending sex offender registries, a webinar that we did last week featuring Miriam Ackerman mentioned Shruti and Judith Levine, almost 300 people watched it live on zoom. Several hundred more have checked it out on Facebook and another 540 people have watched it on YouTube. You can check it out now from the safe and just Michigan YouTube channel as well. is really rare. than anyone publicly makes the case against registries outside of academic papers, despite the case being an incredibly strong one, so I hope you'll check it out if you haven't already. We'll next be doing a series of webinars in support of the implementation of the Joint Task Force on jail and pre trial incarceration here in Michigan. That set of webinars will start on June 8. You can also catch up on all of the webinars that safe and just Michigan has done which I think we've done eight so far. Over the last several months since this COVID crisis started.

Since last week's episode with fury on die Jim Crow records, the label released a new video by bL charelle, called *cigs*. It's a very powerful song, you should check it out and support the art of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people whenever you can.

Okay, Amendment Four moved the tectonic plates. It's sent a strong message about the right to vote for formerly incarcerated people all around. across the country. As usually happens in these moments, the Empire struck back and Florida tried to seriously limit the impact of that ballot initiative. At the same time amendment four entirely excluded important categories of people convicted of crimes. I speak about everything that's happening with the leaders of the Florida rights restoration committee. And afterwards, I have a discussion with one of the attorneys fighting against the legislative imposition of what many have called a poll tax. Let's get to my interviews with Desmond Mead, Neal voles and Sean Morales Doyle.

I am here with two of the leaders of the Florida rights restoration coalition, the group responsible for passing amendment four in Florida. Neal voles has more than 25 years of experience as a public servant community advocate. This includes works as work as the chief staff for a member of congress and staff director for a full congressional committee, as well as the Outreach Director for one of the fastest growing churches in the country as the program director for a leading nonprofit organization that serves formerly at homeless that formerly homeless

veterans. Desmond Meade. Desmond Meade is a formerly homeless returning citizen who eventually became the president of the Florida rights restoration coalition. He's the chair of Floridians for a fair democracy and a graduate of Florida International University College of Law. It's also received many accolades celebrating his hard work and dedication to leadership and commitment to social justice. He led the FRC to historical victory in 2018 with this successful passage of amendment four, which restored voting rights to over 1.4 million Floridians with past felony convictions. Welcome to decarceration Nation podcast, Neil and Desmond.

Neal Volz

Josh is pleasure being on man.

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Joshua B. Hoe

3:48

Yeah, it's great to talk to both of you all, I always ask the same first question. How did both of you get from where you started to where you were leading the largest expansion of voting rights in the last 50 years? Just a small question.

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Desmond Meade

4:01

You don't have enough time in your show that properly answer that question, give it the just do it deserves. But, you know, I think on the short end, I think it's, you know, and Neil can speak for themselves. But no, collectively, I think it's our willingness really to step into the pathway that God has created for us and separate to our purpose that he laid out for us man to do his work at the end of the day.

Joshua B. Hoe

That certainly makes sense. What about you, Neil?

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Neal Volz

4:32

I know, I just thought I'll add to that. I mean, as a person of faith myself, I think God uses broken and hurting people to do great things. And I think that's the contours that we walked into. I know for me, it was, you know, getting a felony conviction, gosh, almost 15 years ago, making some stupid decisions blowing up my life and, and starting over and wanting to live a life of integrity and move into Florida and you No, working as a janitor making minimum wage struggling get a job trying to find, you know my way, and ultimately meaning Desmond. By that point Desmond was already leading the effort to get amendment four on the ballot. This was 2015. For me. We became fast friends and brothers, and it's just been a journey of a lifetime man to see what's possible. You know, when you put people first.

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Joshua B. Hoe

5:26

So let's start really simple. What is amendment for and what does it do?

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Desmond Meade

5:36

Well, I mean, in a nutshell, the state of Florida prior to 2018, state of Florida was one of four states that permanently disenfranchise people who are convicted of felony offenses. And what that means is that folks lose their civil rights for life, right, and you're talking about the right to vote the right to serve on a jury. the right tool. I run for public office, and of course, the right to bear to bear arms. And so Florida joined the ranks of states like Kentucky and at the time, Virginia and Iowa, of having this policy and what a members for did in a nutshell was create alternative route people to be able to vote again, without having to rely on the mercy of Governor of their respective states, and not let you know, especially partisan politics weigh in, you know. And so, whenever you have a politician that has the power to decide which American citizen get the votes and which American citizen don't get the vote, it leaves a lot of room for partisan politics to influence and so amendment four provided a way that wouldn't be tainted by partisan politics in allowing American citizens vote once they've served their time.

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Joshua B. Hoe

7:03

I think many people these days kind of often take the right to vote for granted. I know at least, I think all of us in this conversation have had have, at least for a time had our votes suspended. What made protecting the right to vote so important to to what how did this bring you two together?

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Desmond Meade

7:20

You know, so first and foremost, I think that there is nothing, that there's no greater indicator of citizenship than being able to vote, you know, and, and so when you talk about voting, you talking about being a citizen, you talked about actually being able to have your voice heard, you know, and be able to participate in our democracy and, and that is, that is a huge thing. You know, and so, that self, you know, people like me, who were convicted of a felony offense and and was disenfranchised. So I was living a life When I wasn't a full citizen, I was a second class citizen, if that at all. And that is not a was not a good place to be for me. Because not only did it impact, you know, my ability to to practice in my profession of law, but it also impacted my ability to even vote for my wife when she ran for office.

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Neal Volz

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And I gotta, I'll just add to that, because, you know, I just think that losing the ability to, you know, have a safe, right and losing your voice, losing your right to vote. I mean, that that, for me spurred on this passion. I don't think there's a better evangelist for democracy than somebody who's lost the right to vote, and then gets it back. And I think in many ways, I speak for me but probably for Dez as well, like, it's an incredible joy to be in this moment, despite everything

going on, but almost every day, I get a phone call or an email of somebody who just registered to vote, and is going through that process of getting their voice back. What that does to you as a person, like it's not just that you're getting your right to vote back, but you're getting your dignity back and you're standing and community back. And, and I think that that's a really powerful thing.

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Joshua B. Hoe

9:11

Yeah, one of the very first people I had on this season of the podcast was my friend vow, who did over 40 years in prison and you know, there was nothing that was gonna stop him from getting to the voting booth. I know that for sure. So, in the context of where you all are from what made you all think it was possible to restore the vote in a place like Florida, which is a state not exactly known for its friendliness to criminal justice issues?

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Desmond Meade

9:43

Oh, man, listen, I go back to God you know, with God, all things are possible. And and here's the thing that you know, ever personal faith. I see even throughout, you know, the Bible where God always used, like Neil said, The procon of the least among a group of people to bring about the biggest change And, and and I tell folks that this movement was divinely inspired. You know. And so, you know, at the end of the day, we I truly believe that and I have faith that we were on the right path and that we weren't going to be successful in spite of what the naysayers may have said and and to be quite honest, all the experts said that it was impossible for this to even happen. And if my mother was alive, she would have probably told me the same thing too. But you know, aware man says no, God says yes. Right. And and, and he's proven that time and time again with this can't be at every junction.

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Neal Volz

10:38

Yeah. And just to add to that, like, I mean, like Desmond said, all the experts, everybody knows everything, you know, was was saying that this just isn't possible, right? in a state of Florida. You're going to talk about voting, you're going to talk about, you know, felons, even though we'd like to use the word returning citizen, you want to talk about crime, and you're going to have to get 60% of the vote. Right like that. Those those words just add up to impossible, you know, but this this is this is a this is a faith mission, you know. And so and and, and I give so much credit for leading this effort, right because if you think about the process that was required, you had decades of elected officials promising to make changes, or it's some people not even listening but this is a there was no hope. And ultimately this became the hope and you saw something amazing happen in which families from all over the state rallied around returning citizen family members and friends and neighbors. And you got to see this family this network gets stitched together around built around the pain of people trying to live with a broken system, suddenly seeing an opportunity through a citizen ballot initiative to change something on their own. And man, it's just been amazing to watch that family come together and it still exists here in the state

of Florida all across the state. They're returning citizens have been walking with us for years. And it's really just a powerful thing to see. I mean, that's

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Joshua B. Hoe

12:07

one of the reasons I actually called the podcast decarceration nation was in hope that all of us would kind of unite and sort of move toward that kind of and to see you all do that. It's really, really warmed my heart in a lot of ways. You know, there's this kind of I think, I think it's a misperception. I know, when I was in prison, it sure didn't seem like everyone was all of one political persuasion. But I know that a lot of the pushback had to be somewhat political, maybe how did you kind of navigate those waters?

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Desmond Meade

12:40

Just the nature, the very nature of the ballot initiative. Definitely with a tract of political commentary, right, because we talked about voting, but what we felt was most important was people, right? And so we could have either focused on that The political nature of it, we could have even focused on the racial impact that this policy had. But what we chose to focus on was actually the people. And what that meant was it allowed us the opportunity to connect with folks from all walks of life, all political persuasions, all right along the lines of humanity, you know, and along the lines of what is the means to be a citizen? What does it mean to participate in democracy? And so the easiest way that I found to navigate those treacherous political waters was by maintaining focus on the fact that at the heart of this issue with real people's lives will be impacted.

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Neal Volz

13:42

Yeah. And so I think if if to pick up on where Dez was coming from, like, I think of election night, right and realizing that on election night, when it came to this amendment, we knew deep down that people were not going to vote for a political ideology. They weren't voting for candidates. Have candidates in mind they literally were thinking about their neighbors, their friends, you know their loved ones. And that was at like their said at the heartbeat of this entire movement was this idea that you know what if you can connect along the lines of humanity and we can go loved one to loved one, and know that we're not going to confuse it with the other issues that are out there that can sometimes be confusing, you know, and noise in people's minds and a distraction and then turn to partisanship. But if we can keep people focused on their loved ones, their neighbors, somebody that they know, who's impacted by this policy, that was a way to Move, move, move, move the needle forward. And, and so that I think just that that was what Desmond was talking about, watching it play out, and for me, it was seeing people who were afraid to share their own stories, you know, two years earlier suddenly the night before the election or the months before the election, being willing to go in front of a group of 100 people, their neighbors, their friends, their church, their civic group or their sporting, you know, their

team and share their story. And that was powerful. And, you know, that was that so much of the heartbeat of what happened and continues to happen.

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Joshua B. Hoe

15:14

So one of the things that you've talked about, and I think is, you know, with all three of us being people of faith is really important, is church and faith and prayer. But I'm hoping that a lot of the people listening, I know everybody across the country is involved in different levels of political struggle in their cities and their towns and their states across the country. And so I'm hoping maybe they you know, that if there's practical information you can share on you know, how you started and kind of which ways you you built the coalition, or like how people you know, how you would start, you know, I think that might be helpful to folks who are just starting to become active or are active, but don't really know how to To make something like this happen,

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Desmond Meade

16:01

man, let me tell you, it's so simple. Right? You know how I started? Right? Just having conversations with returning citizens throughout, throughout the state of flow, right is over one on one conversations. One person that, you know, is that old Chinese adage, how do you eat an elephant, right? You eat one bite at a time. And so this was no we started pure grassroots, grassroots efforts, right, whether we're meeting people in their homes that they'll say in the coffee shops, restaurants out there in the community, and being willing to have conversations with folks and really talk about this issue and how important it is for us to change these policies and really connect with people on a very personal level. And, and so, you know, any coalition, you know, you're going to have organizations that's a part of it, whether they're national or state based organizations, but You know what, what we experienced was that there was a time when none of those organizations were around, you know, and and we had to just keep moving. We had to keep having that when you go and you build a grassroots movement, right. And then the organizations will, they will come back, you know, and you're able to do something great. But I think the key is, is really being able to build the grassroots movement. And that just don't just come overnight, you know, definitely take years and years of sacrifice. You know, I used to drive around the state of Florida, over 50,000 miles a year, right? over a lot of conversations, you know, but those are the sacrifices that need to be made and that this wasn't a ready made campaign. This wasn't a campaign that was that was just the brainchild of some rich billionaire or whatever that wanted to do something. This was the brains Out of everyday people from all walks of life that was able to connect with each other and said that you know what? We're going to make this happen. We believe in second chances

Joshua B. Hoe

Neal. Did you have any thoughts?

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Neal Volz

18:13

It's interesting because I when I think about what's the question, I think about the first time I met Desmond, right, so it's 2015 I'm helping to run the drug and alcohol recovery program and putting the putting my life back together starting to make a little bit of progress and, and, and it was a divine appointment, right. So I don't know that we have time to go into the whole backstory on on how we got there. But I remember walking into the room on a college campus, and Desmond was there and I was actually there helping a young person who I go to church with at another event and I saw a felon disenfranchisement I'd been thinking about trying to get involved or dig into it or see what what I should do and, and that was the moment the door open for me, and I walked in and now mind you, I Got 20 plus years of conservative activism I grew up I was a professional republican for a while and, and, and, and got kind of when I got in trouble that that whole life is gonna end it for me. And I started over again but that's where it come from I walked into this room and my first instincts and it was me it wasn't the room itself and it wasn't the house was leading but but my first instinct was, I may Oh, wow, I kind of stumbled into the kind of progressive, you know, event here. And I regret it regretted sitting down. But I'm telling you, man within 30 seconds the way Dez was leading the conversation, like I went from, I don't know that my story fits here to oh my gosh, I'm supposed to be here. And there is a place for my story in this bigger story. And I think that when I hear Dez talking about it like I just wanted like the another reason for success is great leadership from him. You know, the ability to create a culture that really did I mean, on any 24 hour period, I could have gone from a Trump rally collecting petitions, you know, to a black church to a biker event, right? And we're all talking the same. We're just meeting people as people, like, Oh, you know what it's like to have to deal with it too. Right? Let's change it. And, I mean, just a incredibly empowering grassroots movement, you know, that built up around some really basic values that we all could, you know, connect to.

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Joshua B. Hoe

20:31

Okay, I have to ask a few, just slightly tough questions. I think you've heard of a couple of them before. First, I you know, the one I hear the most, and the one that me is I won't deny or frustrated me a little bit, although I still saw the overall value of the campaign was the carve outs for people who have been sentenced for murder or for sex offenses. Do want to address that at all.

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Demond Meade

20:53

Most definitely. I have no problem with that because it frustrates the heck out of me to end of the day, you You know, because here's the deal, right? That that I believe that no one should ever lose their right to vote, they should not ever lose this period. Right. And, and and how I, I know the analogy that I use as my sons, I have four sons. And you know, if you have boys, you know growing up, they're gonna do some boneheaded things. But no matter what they do they never stop being my son. Right. And so a citizen should not stop being a citizen. Right? And but that's how I believe and the folks in the coalition also believe that as well. And then we also

believe that if anyone do lose their rights, that the minute that they've served their time, they should all get it back. Right. But, you know, Florida is like, the most difficult state there is to pass a ballot in this. And so we It was a very distinct difference between what was I was was ideal, and what was actually practical or could be accomplished. And, you know, at the end of the day, we knew that we still have a lot of work to do with the public or with voters to really talk about people who have committed offenses and the fact that if people are released back into our, to our communities, then they should be given every opportunity to be successful. But unfortunately, voters are not there yet in the state of Florida. Right. And, and, and, and we we struggled with that, with those carve outs, to the tone of the way it actually set our campaign back almost a full year. Because we was trying to find the various ways where we could bring everyone when we looked at the data, and then we seen Okay, we have 1.4 million, that's about 1.68 million, that that's a more accurate number. That was disenfranchise that people who fit fit in those categories are represented less than 2%. And so we were faced with this philosophical dilemma that a lot of us go to no studies in college, you know, what do we do? You know, this is a moral dilemma. You're in the boat with 100 people and their lifeboats for 99. Do you let everyone sink in the boat? Or do you rescue as many as you can? What we looked at was that the bottom line that we wanted to accomplish was to create an alternative pathway. There was a wall that was erected during the Jim Crow era of these policies with Jim Crow policies, part of the black code that permanently barred American citizens from voting, and so amendment for its primary purpose was to destroy that wall and could end up really create an alternative pathways. What's very notable is that even with the carve out, the folks who are impacted by the carve outs are not forever barred from being able to that there is a pathway that that's available to. But remember, four did not create that pathway where the member for did was create that opportunity for folks to be able to vote. Unfortunately, those carve outs was a necessary in order for us to actually meet have the level of support that we needed to meet to pass anything that would have impacted. Oh, anything that would have had a shot at destroying that wall of discrimination there.

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Joshua B. Hoe

24:43

Yeah, that makes, you know, a lot of sense. And you talk about another pathway. But one thing I do wonder, you know, I think sometimes because this was a constitutional amendment, it arguably makes it a little more challenging to go kind of, you know, with a lot of Legends I work on we do have carve outs, because the same thing you're talking about the problem with the constitutional amendment a lot of times is that the bar is much higher for for changing it in the future. Have you thought about pathways or or some way to kind of mobilize the coalition and go back and help the folks left behind eventually? Or is it?

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Desmond Meade

25:20

Of course, of course, you know, that was never a doubt day because at the end of the day, like I said, we believe that everyone should be able to experience the citizenship, right. And so when we when we look at a lot of these different states, just like in Florida, where the governor has

clemency powers, right and and, and and that is shared with his cabinet that make up the clemency and these are all elected officials. And here's the thing prior to amendment four, you know, we could have gotten a million returning citizens to knock on the governor's door and say Hey, we want our rights back. Right? And he would look out the window and a million people who could not vote.

Joshua B. Hoe

Right?

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Desmond Meade

26:08

What we've created is a situation where as we're as we're moving forward and registering and engaging more and more returning citizens, we see a situation where you don't need a million 100,000 people can go and say, give us our rights back. And when you talk about elected officials that win elections by only 30,000 votes or 16,000 votes, you know, that's a lot of leverage that can be used to fight fight brothers.

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Joshua B. Hoe

26:39

Oh, yeah, that's, I say that all the time. I agree with you 100%. You know, if we can get, you know, our politics are different than the other. Go ahead. Sorry.

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Desmond meade

26:49

Let me let me add another thing too, because when I talked about that, we, it puts us back almost a year. during that timeframe. One of the things that I personally took corn was we had members in our organization who would have been impacted by the carve out. Right. And we also had volunteers that worked with whose loved one would have been it would have been impacted by the carve outs, right. And I went to each and every last one of them and had one on one conversations with them and, and really be able to talk this thing through. And I'm going to tell you, not one, not one turned away from the campaign. They fought just as hard to pass this amendment to collect and petition to get it on the ballot. They fought just as hard to make sure that this petition pass. And so we're very, very satisfied with the efforts that we took to really have those conversations and, and how the coalition really, really uh, gave all these ramifications, some deep, deep considerations on prior to us launching this dominance

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Joshua Hoe

28:00

I think one of the most hopeful things is that well, you know, there are, you know, kind of traditional and party politics in the United States. I always feel like that if we can get all of our people all the formerly incarcerated people in, you know, with the right to vote or as many of

them as possible, that we mostly agree on our issue. So I think it's really powerful that you got that many are getting that many people empowered.

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Desmond Meade

28:25

Yeah. That's where we want to remain aligned on our issues. You know, one of the things that we tell folks constantly is that organizations does not lean left, we do not lean right. We lean straight forward into the issues that impact people with felony convictions and their family member.

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Joshua Hoe

28:42

That's, I could not agree more. I often say, Oh, go ahead. Sorry, Neil.

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Neal Volz

28:47

No, no. And I think I think when you start thinking about things in those terms, just like both you guys said, right, that that becomes a transformational mindset. Right, because you're literally like this, this group. People are us, our family, this network, whatever, however you want to describe this constituency knitted together along the lines of humanity and shared experiences that are willing to put our issues first, that creates incredible leverage, you know, because we're not exactly playing the game the way other people want us to write. And so you're able to just mobilize along the lines of communities and families and, and suddenly, you can talk to anybody. Right? And that that's the goal, right? Because we do have shared experiences and life experiences that make creating safer communities more likely, if we're allowed to use our voices. And if we can get a seat at the table, and then we could start to impact policies, because we want to take that pain that we've been through and turn it into purpose, you know, and so when you could see that play out in a real way, like amendment four, right, and all you want to do is do it to more because there's more lives to be impacted.

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Joshua B. Hoe

29:56

Absolutely. And this kind of brings us well, first of all i should say I always say to everybody, it's really important whenever we do when to celebrate our victories. How did it feel right after amendment four was passed?

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Desmond Meade

30:09

It was, let me tell you a quick story a couple years prior, it was a gentleman in one of the counties in Florida that thought he could vote and I remember taking them to the voting location. And after he came out, you know, he revealed that they wouldn't let him let him vote. It was the elderly man arm, and I was, you know, a little perplexed that they didn't let them vote because I seen his name on the roster. But then I decided to look up isn't know to run his name through a

database and discovered that eight years prior, he was convicted of driving with a suspended license. And that voting location was right across the street from a cemetery. And the only thing I could think about was that this man was going to die before he got to experience what it was like to be an American citizen to be able to vote right to have his voice. And that bothered me. Well, that night, we went, he was there. And I remember that we were hugging each other and, you know, I'm crying and he's crying. And the only thing he kept saying was I can vote now I can vote now. You know, and, and that really sums up you know, that, that that feeling that that I had that night, you know, and it was like it was a relief, but it was also overwhelming because knowing how many people in this state man that have this, just urge this yearning to be able to be a part of society in a way that says that, yes, I have said this, and I know that people been waiting years and decades, right. Just to be able to, just to punch a ballot man is it was huge. It was huge at night. I know.

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Neal Volz

31:56

I know for me, my personality and was just like it foot on the pedal till the end, you know, so it was like, not really being able to get mentally prepared to suddenly be in a room and watching that pass, you know, when when the numbers ultimately are counted, and then just looking around and just being surrounded by underdogs, man, you know, I people who had been discarded by society, folks who just had been overachievers like so many people in that room, I mean, from all walks of life, right, some folks lived in the trailer park, some folks lived in the hood. And we were one family just celebrating but what was bound us together was just some amazing people, right? People were willing to say, hey, my life, I gotta work twice as hard to get half as far and I'm good with it. You know, and that that was an army that was assembled that you know, ultimately was there that night and I was just overwhelmed by like, for for me, it's just a faith moment of like a verification of something I believe so dearly, which is like a God really does us. The broken and the hurting the underdogs, you know, to bring about like real real change, and it happened at night and, and we're just shedding tears and hugging like it was it was a great, great moment.

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Joshua B. Hoe

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But of course, in anything that's worthwhile, nothing ever comes easy. So this brings us to the controversy over implementation. So what do you all want to explain what happened? And how the legislature managed to basically work fines and fees into this whole thing?

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Desmond Meade

33:29

That's, that's no, that's a great question. You know, I think this whole situation for further illustrates why it was so important for us to keep this campaign elevated over above partisan politics and make sure the anxieties and the biases. Um, you know, at the end of the day, you know, there been a lot of back and forth around litigation around legislation, you know, and we've been just screaming at the top of our lungs that to not lose sight of the most important

thing, and the most important thing are the people. Right? The most most important thing. And, you know, we knew and here's where it gets a little complicated is that the real debate? Or the real discussion is really laid around what constitutes, you know, does it mean that you, once you complete incarceration that you're, you're done? Oh, you whether you have to complete probation if you have it, their monetary obligations that's there, and if so, what type of monetary obligation? This is, one of the things that we knew is that there were some financial obligations that was inherently connected to have sentence. We know that there are not many, but there are statutes in every state have them where these these law are made by the legislature and basically carries with it a terms of imprisonment and all Some type of financial obligations. So if you're convicted of violating a certain statute, you face up to five years in prison and up to a \$5,000. Fine, if at the time of sentencing, or when you are standing in front of a judge, and you were found guilty, and that judge says, because you were found it, I'm going to send you the two years in prison in order to use a pay \$500 fine, that is statutorily imposed, right? That for us to be able to say that when the debt is paid, is paid, or we've done our time we've completed our sentence, then those two requirements had to be met. Right. The issue came when their legal financial obligations that was not punitive in nature, but rather administrative in nature, such as the cost of doing business or even financial obligations that incur while a person is incarcerated, right. The initial legislation includes did all of that. And that's what we stood up for. We stood up and said, No, you cannot, like add all these different costs to completion of Senate because they're more administrative in nature. And so do I allow the debate raised on we had phrases like pole tags and, and they were accusations of racism and it was just a lot of these arguments was strictly along the lines of partisan politics. Right. And what the reality was, was that it didn't have to be as complicated. It wasn't as complicated. And and we could have implemented this without legislators actually even being involved in that. But unfortunately, you know, voting is by just the voting by itself is something that brings on the partisan back and forth and unfortunately we have to deal with you know, but we We're resolved to let the litigators litigate, let the legislators legislate. And we're going to remain keenly focused on people and using avenues that was provided in the legislation to allow people to go to not have to pay those fines, and still be able to.

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Neal Volz

37:19

And just let me just, like Add to add some context to that, because I thank you. I mean, the way it is just outlines kind of the road, right, like how we got there. But you can put yourself in a situation in which you can see like these these dueling narratives that are on one hand, it's like, you should never have to pay anything to vote right on and then the other is, hey, you have to pay everything before you're done. Right. And we found ourselves in this like, dual headwind of actually we were saying something different than that and it seems to be getting lost in this you know, hacksaw between two ideological or partisan or kind of this yet. Either or kind of conversation that was happening. But then we saw something pretty beautiful develop. Right? So these first bills that came out in the legislature were very broad, right? They, there was this, the definition of murder, for instance, included manslaughter, attempted murder, a variety of different charges, you know, and like Desmond said, there were in the completion of sentence,

suddenly, there was all kinds of fees associated, you know, cost, debt collection costs, interest, all these things that were added on. And we bit by bit, we're able to work with returning citizens. I'm so amazing returning citizens who came to Tallahassee basically for all of session, right, and over a course of several weeks and months, you know, through five or six subcommittees, we got to see the bills get a little bit better. Right. And I'm not saying that, you know, the bills are what we would write, right, but we were dealing with a situation where it's like, Hey, we fought to have our voices back, and now you're getting to see those voices. You know, It'd be utilized for the good of the community and to educate people in the legislative process, so bit by bit, you know, the bills started to take shape and get closer to what the original spirit of amendment four was. And again, you talk to Dez. Now you can hear us in ear the same way I know Josh was like, we're just optimist, man, this this whole movement is built on hope and love, you know, so we're gonna keep we're gonna get up every day, roll up our sleeves, keep fighting with a smile on our face, you know. So what we do know is that that with that legislation, 766 it provided tools that that gave us pathways and access to the courts, where we could work with the judicial districts to help returning citizens complete their sentences and become eligible to vote and ultimately reintegrate into the community.

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Joshua B. Hoe

39:52

And one of the ways that you all are fighting back is kind of creating a, for lack of a better I think kind of a bale project. model where people are contributing money to help relieve people's criminal justice, fines and fees and dead Is that correct? Yep.

2

Desmond Meade

40:08

And anyone that wants to donate, they can always text the word fee to the number 82623 to help contribute to that fundraising efforts, but we're using those monies to help pay all fines and fees to individuals who may live and do this with circuits in which we have not had an opportunity set up processes to run them through the courts.

Joshua B. Hoe

And how has that been going so far that effort?

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Desmond Meade

40:39

Man, it's a it's a heartless nothing worth having comes easy. But we have raised over a half a million dollars we're nearing 600,000 now and over the holiday see we've been able to pay off about \$250,000 worth of fines and fees For individuals, and Matter of fact, this week tomorrow, I think we're going to be going down to South Florida. And we're going to be paying off some fees of a few folks getting them on the vote and Ross, it's amazing.

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Joshua B. Hoe

41:14

You know, part of the reason I want to do this episode is to start to try to help raise awareness of that campaign. At the same time, just about a week ago, the 11th circuit released decision nullifying at least for 17 people, the fines and fees requirement, right.

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Desmond Meade

41:32

Yeah, it's so it's so the part about this case that a lot of folks don't know that those 17 plaintiffs most if not all of those individuals, were able to register when we pass the amendment. And so what we what we've seen with the ruling is basically saying to the Secretary of elections are the Supervisor of Elections that you will not remove those people. If is determined that they have money that they still owe you and not remove those people. And so that ruling was basically a ruling that was based on an injunction, a partial injunction that was issued sometime late last year in which the state appealed. And so the 11th circuit says no, that injunction is fine. Those 17 people will not be removed from the roster for inability to pay any outstanding fines and fees that they may owe. And so that's a great thing. The language of the 11th circuit was beautiful language that really just spoke to how access to the ballot box should not be determined by a person's wealth, right? That all Americans should have unfettered access to that and we are, we're continuing to stay in this fight like Neil said, make sure that At the very minimum, that we're utilizing the avenues that we do have the way other people face the obstacle, see opportunity. And we're going to utilize whatever avenues it's available to make sure that any one of the 1.4 million Floridians who have a desire to participate in elections have that opportunity here.

Neal Volz

Speaker 3

43:21

And so let me just talk to you a little bit about the 11th circuit, right? Because it's like, I think, as you can see, and your listeners can hear, right, like, for us to North, and just our singular focus is, is our community, right, the returning citizen community in Florida. And so one of the things that we're seeing, and this isn't a critique as much as like just an understanding of the context of what it's like to go through the process of applying and working under the existing law, and then knowing that there's some cases out there is that there is this little bit of a feel of being on a rollercoaster ride, right? Because you've got state courts, federal courts, and and one of the things that we take very seriously is that is the family nature of the movement. So it's like When, when, when something appears through the media to be, you know, some amazing news that impact somebody's life, when actually it is good news and gives us cautious optimism, but actually does not allow the, you know, so many hundreds of thousands of people to vote in Florida, like the headlines might say, then we're the ones who walk with people. And and I think that that's one of the things also that folks should should understand about this process is we've all been in a situation where the expectations get brought up, and then that's actually not the full scope. And so I think that that is also a part of the story that's important for people to know is, is that we know that this is a roller coaster, and that there's some more steps to go and it's and we take very seriously the process of walking with people who were impacted by that who see the

headlines. I know for me when the 11th circuit came out, I was tagged on seven but then an hour or 279 different And posts in Southwest Florida where I live, and people encouraging other folks to go vote, when actually that isn't how it played out. Right? It was, you know, another step in this legal discussion. And people were on this roller coaster. And so I think that's important context too, because in those moments, we want to be there. We want to do exactly what Desmond just said, which is like, if anyone is interested, there's a returning citizen who wants to walk this out and explore these pathways. We want to be there for them, which is why the fines and fees program is so important, because there are pathways that we can walk with people to get them where they want to go.

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Joshua B. Hoe

45:38

So we have a you know, I mean, you're in Florida. I'm in Michigan, but we're all part of a bigger family. I'm sure you've heard about what's been going on in Mississippi. 24 people have died in the last two months in Mississippi presence. Do y'all have anything y'all want to say here?

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Desmond Meade

45:55

So, you know, what we're seeing happening in Mississippi Be a nun though, that they have a lot of factors that are impacting that situation. But I think first and foremost is it really speaks to why it is so important that we're shifting a narrative, right? Because, you know, when you think about a person that commits a crime, you know, all of a sudden now we're felons with comics. Were these evil folks, we're these monsters. And and we're separated from the rest of society, when the reality is, is that each and every one individually or someone's son, someone's daughter, someone's grandson and granddaughter, and that they're human beings, right? That Yes, they made mistakes, they may have committed crimes, the various levels, but they're still human beings. And I think that when you when you separate a person from humanity, then it desensitized society and we're not as outraged at how People are being treated and how people are being impacted and, and even with the collateral consequences that come along with felony convictions with people not being able to get jobs, people not being able to further their education, people not being able to live in safe and affordable housing. And it seems like society is not as as apathetic to these situations because of the pictures and the narratives, that's a list of people who commit crimes and but at the end of the day, in spite of what they're done, what they've done, they're still human beings, and we cannot lose sight of that humanity because when we do lose sight of the humanity, things like what's happening in the Mississippi prisons will continue to happen.

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Neal Volz

47:49

I'm so with you like I My my, my blood boils and I talked to friends in Mississippi and I am just like saddened and angered and pissed off But the gap that exists between the outrage that I know so many of us feel, and what appears to be utter apathy about how our fellow human beings are being treated. And, you know, to kind of piggyback on what Desmond was talking

about, it reminds me of just how far we have to go in terms of really truly seeing each other as humans and people first like sons and daughters of God, you know that, who no matter what our behavior is, and where we are, in this walk, that there is an alignment that there is a common humanity that should transcend all that and to be honest with you, when I think about when you ask that question that that that it's that gap, that I feel like, hey, I want to spend part of my life in some way, shape or form, even to the smallest ability to narrow that gap a little bit because the world needs needs to be a better place for for folks. Of all Young people from all walks of life. And I think that when that switch gets flipped, we've all seen it. What a better world it can be. Once we begin to see each other that way, and a man that's I'm frustrated, you know, because the numbers keep going up, right? It's like, every week, it's kind of like, hey, when are we gonna? You know, why aren't we got to stop this? What's, you know, what's holding it up? So, I appreciate the question. And I wish I had, you know, I'm kind of a solution oriented person, but that's frustration is what, what I think of when, and for the families. It's, it's hard man.

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Joshua B. Hoe

49:35

I've been asking people this season since is the decarceration nation podcast, what people think would be some of the best changes that might help get more folks out of prisons and jails, like what are some things you all think might be good solutions now?

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Neal Volz

49:53

Um, you know, a couple things that you know, that jumped out to me obviously, it's, there's, there's points on, on, on on all sides, right. So it's Like I think the sentencing reform is is incredibly invaluable. Right as it relates to people going in, I think working on anything that will reduce recidivism on the reentry side on the back end, when we get out, like, I think the systems are set up wrong, this kind of punishment mentality, just like, you know, just get stuck on somebody. And we have, you know, I look at here in Florida where, you know, to get a job license, sometimes you have to wait 515 years, and it's kind of like when all the data and all our real world experience shows, it's like, Man, you got to be able to get a job. The minute you're off community supervision, the minute you're out of jail or prison, you know, like, and so I think that it's like, it's that focusing on the two different points of entry and then coming out. So really that reentry reform, sentencing reform, I think those are the things that can really allow us to see our friends and family get out faster in the first place,

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Desmond Meade

50:58

man You know, I think that it's definitely an in combination. Could I pick two things? Sure. Go ahead. I think that we eat that we have to eat the apple from both sides. You know, I think that we have to decriminalized and I think he goes beyond sentencing. I think that there are things there that his people are actually getting arrested and and appearing in court that they should not be right. And he when he talks about legalizing marijuana, you know that how that plays a

role in it and also finding alternatives for drug addiction or alcohol addiction, right, other than utilizing the prison system, and then the other thing that we utilize the prison system to do as a house are people who are experiencing a mental challenge there. Yeah. So I think that that is the beginning of peace. And then, of course, when people are released from prison, that they have to be a mental shift, you know, and understand that it is in society's best interest that people who are released from incarceration be given every opportunity to successfully reintegrate. And so they must be a comprehensive application to re entry, that no matter what part of the city or the state, or what part of the country you're being released, in, that you're giving resources that are necessary to to be able to to move on with your lives and to pursue life liberty and happiness. You know?

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Joshua B. Hoe

52:40

Absolutely. I always ask the same last question. What did I mess up? What questions should I have asked but did not you can answer it any way you want to.

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Neal Volz

52:48

Maybe I can, I can jump into that. I one of the questions that I I think when we talk about amendment for a lot of the questions we get are about the what you know, what happened what you know, What does this impact? And I think one of the things that I always go back to and I know we touched on a little bit as to how, right like this, this was actually, you know, if you want to be bold about it is that you had people who had been left behind by society and our communities who are heroes of democracy in the state of Florida, right? Like that is a transformation that so many people when I talk about this, they it's they can't comprehend it right away, but it's a reality. It is people who are showing the rest of the nation, right, you're talking about folks returning citizens, people who put, uh, their pain to, you know, to good use and develop the purpose to change a policy that had been in place for 150 years, and do so in a way that transcended politics. And I think just think that that's an amazing process when you think about that movement being led by data In a returning citizen community directly impacted community. And what that says that there are so many lessons to be learned that I think about how we can make change that are embedded in that process. And sometimes not here on your show. But in some spaces, I think people have a hard time digging into it, because it is included in it is the idea that it is these folks with the labels, the folks who have the criminal past, who are actually the ones who were leading this effort, and that that becomes a little bit of cognitive dissonance for some folks. So I appreciate, you know, every question that you asked, but when given an opportunity to talk about this movement, I love to kind of go into the how, you know how this thing works? Because it's really pretty special. If you think about it.

You have any thoughts Desmond,,

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Desmond

54:58

Yeah, Neil you know As one was able to really talk about really nothing at the end of the day, how can people help you no matter what part of the country you live, whether it's in Idaho or or Minnesota or Washington, you know, at the end of the day, I think that there is interest in really expanding democracy here in Florida. And so though, folks, no matter where you're at, that you can help, you can help out efforts you can donate to help out, pay fines and fees, you can just check us out on our website, man, see the work that we're doing, and find ways that you can help volunteer for our efforts, even though you may live states away. Maybe you could help us make some phone calls or, you know, tell other folks and or reach out to people that you might know in the state of Florida, and make sure that they're connected with the work that we're doing.

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Joshua B. Hoe

55:57

That's a great lead into the next thing I was going to say Just before we go, I have two things. I want you all to tell everybody. The first one is how can they find the Florida rights restoration coalition? Go to

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Neal Volz

56:09

our website, which is Florida RC Comm. Florida RC Comm. And there is a section there for fines and fees. There's also like Desmond mentioned, lots of different interactive tools. And especially for folks who live in Florida who might want to get involved in our chapters, or who might be returning citizens, we'd love to get plugged in.

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Joshua B. Hoe

56:31

And the second one is how can they contribute? What's the text and all that stuff that Desmond said earlier about helping reduce people's find some fees?

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Desmond Meade

56:39

Yeah, so they can definitely text the word FEES, f e, f to the number 82623. Or they can always go to we got the vote.org as well. Um, both sides are connected and those ways to donate, they can go to our website, also click on the donate button. There. Give them various options of how to donate. Most donations are tax deductible. So, you know, you can use the full tax write off next year, but we're there. And we're welcoming any and all individuals that want to contribute to expand the democracy here in the state and improving the lives have served their time, and we're ready to move on.

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Joshua B. Hoe

57:22

Absolutely. It's a real pleasure to get to have this conversation with both y'all kind of my brothers in the struggle here. And thanks for doing this

Neal Volz

key Josh, man, we really appreciate it.

Absolutely.

Thank you. Thank you really appreciate it.

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Joshua B. Hoe

57:39

Shawn Morales- Doyle serves as senior counsel in the democracy program at the Brennan Center for Justice, where he focuses on voting rights and elections and was part of the recent decision on amendment four in Florida. Welcome to the decarceration nation podcast and thanks so much for taking the time, Shawn.

Sean Morales-Doyle

57:55

Thanks for having me to be here.

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Joshua B. Hoe

57:58

If I understand correctly, You were part of the legal team working on this decision. How did the team come together?

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Sean Morales-Doyle

58:05

Yes, I was. I'm a lawyer at the Brennan Center for Justice, as you noted, and he as an organization have been working on this issue in Florida for many years. She brought some litigation on this issue back in the early 2000s. And we're involved in the drafting and the campaign for amendment four. So was where our partner organizations and so when the bill was passed in 2019, we had already been working with the ACLU, the ACLU of Florida and the NAACP, Legal Defense and Educational Fund. And that's the team that formed together to bring this litigation. We represented organizations in Florida that we've worked with for many years to live women voters of Florida and the NAACP of Florida and county, along with some individuals that we got in touch with once Before was on the books, and we ended up then later being joined by a couple other organizations who filed their own suits the campaign legal center, Southern Poverty Law Center, and it's within politics.

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Joshua B. Hoe

59:13

I wanted to have you help people understand this new US District Court decision. I'd already talked to the guys from the Florida rights restoration committee prior to this court decision

coming out, so I read it earlier today but you know, having an expert on to summarize it makes sense to me. So could you summarize as well as you could, as well as you can, what was a pretty long decision was like 125 pages long for everyone listening?

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Sean Morales-Doyle

59:42

Yes, surprised. You read it this morning, but it was honored 25 pages is a little bit of a opinion to get through but you know, I'd recommend people are interested to read it because I think it's a really good opinion. The court did a few things in this opinion. It made a number rulings about who is eligible to vote and when it is unconstitutional to have the right to vote. And basically, the court ruled that there were two categories of folks who are eligible to vote and categories of folks who had been barred from voting unconstitutionally. Bill 7066. Most of those are people who owe fines or fees or some kind of legal financial obligation they're unable to afford. That's a ruling that actually the judge had made back in October on a preliminary injunction. And that has already been upheld by 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. Now, that one wasn't a surprise, but it now applies to everyone across Florida. The second group is people who only owe in costs. judge said that fees and costs in Florida, as distinguished from fines and restitution, ship like like taxes. There are primary purpose is to raise revenue, not really punishment aimed at the severity of the offense, being punished or anything like that. They're just, you know, run of the mill costs that are taxed against anybody who conviction. And he said that under the 24th Amendment, which people may know is the amendment that prohibits payroll taxes. it's unconstitutional to charge someone attacks in order to before they can vote. And the third category is people who can't figure out what they did. So there's a lot of evidence in this case. And the judge found that basically, Florida has no reliable system for determining somebody owes. He described the attempted administration of this law as an administrative train wreck. So as he put it, sometimes easy, sometimes hard, sometimes impossible for someone to figure out what they owe and said is if you can't figure out whether you And amount, even with budgets that can't be held against you for voting either. So it's unconstitutional to deny someone the right to vote based on what is unknown can't be discovered. Those are the first important rulings about who's eligible. He followed up to provide a remedy will fall into those categories and people who aren't sure so that they can have clarity and they can feel comfortable going and registering and voting and not about getting in trouble for it. And that came in a couple different forms. One said the voter registration form that this bill created is illegal violates the national Voter Registration Act. It was a complete mess. And it really looks like it was aimed at discouraging encouraging them to so he got rid of that form. And then the second thing he did is provided some guidance to people to figure out whether they are and he was unable to afford what they owe, or to figure out what it is that they do. She said there's some categories, some criteria selectively show that you're able to afford what you owe. So if you were appointed a public defender, then you simply can't afford to pay off your lease costs, fines, restitution, and so unless there's some reason why now you are able to afford those things, you're good to register and vote, if you had your fees and fines, etc, converted to civil judgments, which is a frequent practice in Florida for people who can't afford them, and you're presumably able to go and vote as well. The last part of that is he said, if you don't know, know what you owe, you can't figure it

out. You've tried it or you're not sure whether you meet the requirements for unable to afford to pay. You can ask the state for an advisory opinion he provided a form that on, tell them, here's my financial situation, or I can't figure out what I owe. They have to give you an answer to say to definitively what you need to pay off and why and give you an explanation. If they don't give you an answer within three weeks, then you're good to register and vote can still give me an answer after that, but you're good to go until you. So like, it's my way, not that short summary of a very long opinion. And there's a lot more in there. But But basically, he said this law was unconstitutional. And the vast majority of the hundreds of thousands of people who are disenfranchised by it can vote now. Here's a way for them to go do that without being scared.

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Joshua B. Hoe

1:04:31

I've read enough court decisions to know that this isn't always the way it goes in terms of a judge being willing to roll up their sleeves and kind of work through the day to day issues a person faces for instance, in this in this circumstance as someone with a felony conviction, and LFO was in Florida. I'm guessing he felt the same way. It seemed like this was a lot of work by good work by a judge

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Sean Morales-Doyle

1:04:58

was a lot of work and good work. As you say, I know he issued a much narrower opinion back in October of last year on the preliminary injunction. It was narrow, in part because asked, only asked for a preliminary injunction on some of our claims. He only ruled on one of our claims there. But he also basically said back then, though, really, it's not supposed to be my job to fix the state's problems, the state should do that. So I'm telling you that what you're doing is unconstitutional. The legislative session coming up, legislature and the Secretary of State to figure out a way to make this work, they need to figure out a way to determine who's unable to afford what they owe, make it possible for people to register and vote. He gave them months to do that, and he kept pressing them on it, and they did nothing to make it any easier for anybody. And so then we got to the trial and that became abundantly clear and, and it was clear, they didn't know how to administer this plea and administrative law and so he I came up with a solution. So I do think it isn't maybe your typical billing, but it was one that was necessary, given the situation and when, when courts need to when federal courts need to in civil rights cases, in particular, they have a lot of power by the remedy that people need in order to avoid a constitutional violation. So add that he did it.

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Joshua B. Hoe

1:06:21

Yeah, we had a similar situation with the dose versus Snyder, a class action case, here in Michigan pre recently with the same judge dealing with the same kind of problems with legislative intransigence. I think most people will be wondering what happens next. I seem to remember from a couple of minutes ago, you mentioning that the state filed their appeal today, where do we go from here?

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Sean Morales-Doyle

1:06:45

I guess just minutes ago, actually, when we're talking the state filed a notice of appeal that that wasn't a surprise. The governor said that he would be appealing earlier in the week. And they've asked the court to stay the decision. While appeal is pending. I, the vision won't be stayed. And, you know, we have already now won at least one of our claims, essentially three times over with the court and the appellate court weighing in, um, for the time being until something like that happens this, this is the law. This is the law of the land. And so people are eligible to go register using the process the court put in place. And I I'm very confident about our claims and I and I hope that this decision is upheld on appeal. I'm not going to make a prediction about how that court will, will handle this. I will just say that we've we've had a number of victories so far, and it continues that way. I do expect the courts will will expedite this appeal. Because in elections cases, that's frequently the practice it's important that we get answers to these questions before elections take place. So everyone knows, you know, we have a, an agreed upon understanding of who's eligible and who's not when, when the election happens, I hope that we get that final 30 from the appellate court sooner rather than later. So that, you know, and I hope, obviously, that it isn't half of the decision we already have, that we all head up into this election. Whichever one understanding that rights and with ample time for people to exercise those rights, I'll just say, amendment for the real victory here that even allowed for this fight to happen. And that was when Florida's voters made clear that they want open up their elections to more people that this is what they want their democracy to look like. And so I'm thrilled with this opinion in the fact that it's going to really allow them in for reach its full glory. And I'm, I'm really hopeful that that's going to be able to play out in the next couple of months. So that collections that we have in I guess in November in Florida will look the way that Florida's borders Waffan Yeah,

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Joshua B. Hoe

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I guess that's the next question. I guess we do have elections coming up in November, you save this laws, the law of the land. You know, if this, you know, for instance gets, you know, they give it a stay until it gets to the next level as this is they're still going to it. How complicated is it potentially going to get for people to figure out if they have the right to vote or not,

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Sean Morales-Doyle

1:09:32

with the stay in effect, if there were a stay? And again, I hope there won't be but if there were a stay on, it gets complicated. Again, the you know, court has made very clear how hard this is for people in the absence of the remedy that he's provided. We heard testimony from the Secretary of State's head of elections during the trial about how much they don't know how to figure out what people owe or to administer this law. And so So that that's why I hope we don't get back into that situation. And I'm sure that the courts will take that into account when deciding whether or not to do this decision. Regardless of whether we have that stay in regardless of what ends up happening on appeal, as I said, I do think the courts will move this quickly as they tend to in

elections cases. The judge in the trial court, kept this trial on pace. Been in the face of a pandemic, he you know, he delayed it by only three weeks, we had the whole trial by video conference, which was an interesting experience, but work pretty well, because of the importance of getting a decision quickly and allowing the field to play out in full with ample time for voters and elections have taken into elections was the right thing to do. And I think the courts will continue to take that approach.

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Joshua B. Hoe

1:10:53

So I always usually ask the same last question, which is what did I miss? What should I have asked but didn't in this case, since it was on short notice, I hope there are some things that I missed and need to be covered. But if not, that's fine, too.

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Shaun Morales-Doyle

1:11:05

I guess I would harken back to something I said earlier, but I do think it's important to remember that we are buried here at this stage. Because what is voters came out, overwhelming support, as I'm sure your other guests mentioned, 64.5% of the electorate came out in support of amendment four was groundbreaking, was monumental. And it's created a lot of enthusiasm and excitement about new voters in Florida. Then a lot of that was put on hold by this law. And there's been a lot of angst and concern and fear in the intervening months. And this opinion really does pave the way for hundreds of thousands of those people that were the audience out there welcoming back into the electorate in November 2018. under the table and participate, it's a big deal. And this decision also I will say, you know, had talked through the different sides of the opinion, it's a big deal to, to a big deal for a court to acknowledge the rights of this group of people who are so often, um, you know, to the side by our, our society, by our courts by the legal system to acknowledge that they have these rights under the Constitution is a big deal for a court to apply the 24th amendment in this context, not that it wasn't obvious in my view that it should apply, but just that it is applying important. Many people should be happy about the system we had in Florida, before amendment four and the system that was created by this bill, so far out of step values that we as a nation, embraced plus years ago when we ratified the 24th amendment. And so I think it's a powerful statement.

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Joshua B. Hoe

1:13:10

Well, I will include a link to the decision if anyone wants to read it. And Sean, thanks so much for doing this on such short notice. I really appreciate it.

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Sean Morales-Doyle

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I appreciate you having me. No problem there. Thanks again.

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Joshua B. Hoe

1:13:28

And now my take. That was a very long episode, so I'm going to have kind of a shorter take than usual. I want every single incarcerated and formerly incarcerated person to have the right to vote. Everyone should have a say in the government that imprisons them, and that surveilled them. This podcast was actually created as part of my effort to try to educate normal folks and impacted people and their families in order to build and organize the critical necessary to bring it in. To the era of mass punishment in this country that requires people having the right to vote. It is incredibly important that over a million formerly incarcerated people in Florida might finally have earned their right to vote. It is incredibly important that all incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people similarly earn the right to vote. And it is not okay that people sentence for murder and for sex offenses were excluded and amendment for. Obviously, we can say all of us are none. But the world doesn't always conform to our will. At the same time, we cannot stop the fight until everyone in America has a say in their own governance. I'm thrilled for every single person who can now vote in Florida. I will support them with every fiber of my being. I am thrilled that the Brennan Center at the ACLU and all of their partners are fighting to ensure that every person eligible to vote in Florida and can actually vote. I will support this effort with every fiber of my being. But this job will not be done until every incarcerated and formerly incarcerated person can vote. I want to thank my guests Desmond Mead, Neil voles, and Shawn Morales Doyle for joining me to discuss Amendment 4 in Florida.

As always, you can find the show notes or leave us a comment at decarcerationnation.com. If you want to support the podcast directly, you can do so from patreon.com slash decarceration Nation. For those of you who prefer a one-time donation, you can now go to our website and give a one-time donation. All of the money we raised from Patreon and from other donations goes to our volunteers Robert and Kate. You can also support us by leaving a five-star review from iTunes or like us on Stitcher or Spotify. Special thanks to Andrew Stein who does the editing and post-production for me to Robert Alvarez who helps with the website indicates summers who are helping with our Instagram and Facebook pages. Make sure and add us on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Share our posts across your networks. Also, thanks to my employer safe and just Michigan for helping to support the decarceration nation podcast. Thanks so much for listening to the decarceration nation podcast. See you next time.