



Florida Action Committee, Inc.
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August 6, 2018

Candidate for Governor

XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXX

Dear XXXXXX:

I am president of the Florida Action Committee (FAC). FAC is a not-for-profit public safety advocacy organization. Our membership is comprised of over One Thousand (1,000) individuals in Florida and their families.

Among other things, the mission of our organization is to reform the ineffective and tax-wasting policies that the State of Florida has implemented for the management of persons required to register as “sex offenders”. Our position, which is based on studies and empirical evidence, is that most of the current laws are “feel good legislation” that do little to make our public safer.

Our members have asked us for recommendations as to which candidate(s) we endorse in the upcoming election. To decide, we wanted to ascertain your position on the following five (5) important issues and have therefore posed questions relating to each. If you can respond with your position, it will help us formulate an opinion as to which candidate we will endorse to our membership.

Your reply would be helpful and appreciated.

Issue 1: Restoration of Civil Rights

The State of Florida is one of the only states in the Country that permanently disenfranchises its citizens. Since many of the laws passed impact our members, our voice in government is critically important to us.

There is a November ballot initiative that would restore civil rights of former felons *other than* murderers and the broad category of “sex offenders”. We feel this blanket exclusion is arbitrary and irrational.

What is your position on restoration of civil rights (or at least voting rights) to former felons who have satisfactorily completed their sentences? Would any class of former offender be excluded from your policy on restoration of civil rights?

Issue 2: Effectiveness of the Sex Offender Registry

The Florida legislature has passed new sex offender laws in nearly every legislative session for the past two decades. Although these laws impose more burdensome requirements on both the individual required to register and the agencies charged with enforcing them, to our knowledge no internal studies have been performed to assess whether these laws are working.

As Governor, would you implement a “sex offender task force” comprised of law enforcement, victims’ advocates, treatment professionals, persons required to register and other stakeholders, to assess the effectiveness of current laws and make recommendations? If yes, would you have the political integrity to implement their recommendations?

Issue 3: Private Prisons in Florida

In our opinion, the present administration has been strongly influenced by lobbyists for the private prison industry. News reports have come out recently about the tremendous financial support our current Governor has received from private prison companies such as Geo Group and CCA and noted a significant increase in the award of government contracts to them. State Rep. (and retired forensic auditor) David Richardson, who spent two years investigating the issue, concluded there was a “nexus” between the two. Our position is that treating incarcerated human beings as a “for profit” commodity is ethically wrong.

What is your position on the use of “for profit” prisons and do you plan on expanding or reducing their use in Florida during your administration?

Issue 4: A Tiered Sex Offender Registry and Lifetime Registration for All

The state of Florida is one of a very small handful of states that do not have a “tiered” sex offender registry. Although we have the categories; “Offender” and “Predator”, both categories appear on the public registry *for life* and are subject to the same residency restrictions, travel notification requirements and other sanctions. The State of Florida treats all persons required to register homogenously, although there are drastic variances as to the culpability of their offense and their likelihood to re-offend.

Florida currently has more than 70,000 people on its sex offender registry. More than half are NOT in the community. They are either incarcerated, left the state, were deported or died. Yes, Florida keeps people who temporarily visit the State on the Florida public registry for life and keeps people on even after they die!

Most states have a “tiered” registry, providing an opportunity for lower level registrants to be removed from the registry after a certain period offense free in the community. Most states do not keep people publicly registered after they leave the community as it dilutes the registry and defeats the purpose of “public notification” and treads into “shaming”.

Do you support the implementation of a tiered registry? Do you believe people who are no longer in the community should forever be listed on the Florida registry?

Issue 5: Evidence-based Criminal Justice

There has been a shift towards the use of evidence-based practices (EBPs) in criminal justice. Evidence-based policy and practice is focused on reducing offender risk, which in turn reduces new crime and improves public safety. Among other principals, EBP include; Risk/needs assessment, targeting appropriate interventions and supporting reintegration of ex-offenders.

Florida's policy, when it comes to people required to register as sex offenders, is exactly the opposite. It is based primarily on the myth of high recidivism (which has been repeatedly disproven) and a one-size-fits-all, strictly punitive approach that imposes such harsh barriers to reentry that it becomes virtually impossible to succeed.

Florida incarcerates 833 people for every 100,000 Floridians! That's approximately 20% higher than the US average and already higher than any other country in the world. Our jails and prisons are rampant with violence and corruption. The bottom line; our system is broken and particularly when it comes to the sex offender registry, it is shattered.

Do you support EBPs in Criminal Justice? What will you do as Governor, to fix our broken system of Criminal Justice and specifically to fix our broken sex offender registry.

We look forward to your responses, which can be sent to the address listed above or emailed to me at gail@floridaactioncommittee.org.

Sincerely,

s/

Gail Colletta, President
The Florida Action Committee