



Florida Action Committee, Inc.
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www.floridaactioncommittee.org

ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union
Attn: Anthony D. Romero
125 Broad Street, 18th Floor
New York NY 10004

SENT VIA EMAIL
Executive_Director@ACLU.org

ACLU People Power

SENT VIA EMAIL
info@peoplepower.org

ACLU of Florida
4343 W. Flagler St., Suite 400
Miami, FL 33134

SENT VIA EMAIL
aclufl@aclufl.org

**RE: ACLU'S POSITION WITH RESPECT TO PERSONS
REQUIRED TO REGISTER AS SEX OFFENDERS**

Dear Mr. Romero:

Following, please find a letter sent to the County Attorney for Miami-Dade County, Florida, regarding an ACLU event we would have liked to have attended. The letter concerns a county ordinance that bans persons required to register as sex offenders from parks – which is where the ACLU event was held.

Aside from sharing a courtesy copy of the letter, I wanted to reach out regarding a more important concern.

The Florida Action Committee has always had the utmost respect and appreciation for the ACLU. You are doing incredible things for our homeless registrants in Miami-Dade and across multiple registrant issues nationwide. So, with all due respect, we strongly object to your underlying support of Florida's Amendment 4 and the method you are taking to promote it.

With regard to Amendment 4; the measure would amend Florida's Constitution to restore voting rights to former felons in Florida *except those who committed murder or a sexual offense*. How can the ACLU support a measure that would so blatantly enshrine discrimination into the Florida Constitution? From our perspective, it's tantamount to the ACLU endorsing a coffee shop that refuses service to a racial minority. Except, instead of coffee we're talking about an arguably fundamental right... our right to vote!

As badly as it felt to be excluded and as offended as we remain by the ACLU's position on Amendment 4, we recognize individual's and organization's freedom to have points of view different from ours.

We decided to view this adversity as an opportunity. The opportunity to attend public events, network and open dialogue about this important issue, dispel the myths that allow these discriminatory laws to pass and to remind the public that is a population of human beings that are being thrown under the bus (or if you prefer; "... that get left behind").

What we recently discovered is the ACLU has scheduled the majority of these events at parks and libraries! Most of the events in South Florida will be taking place at Liberty Tree Park, Pinetree Park, Athalie Range Park, Fig Tree Park, Veteran's Park, Jose Marti Park, Charles Hadley Park, the Hollywood Branch Library, etc. These are all places people on the sex offender registry can't go!

As if intending to add insult to injury; we are unable participate in a discussion about having our voices heard at events where the topic is having our voices heard!

We have interacted with enough individuals involved with the ACLU to know that not everyone shares the organization's bias. We also can't imagine that whoever is planning these events orchestrated them to ensure our population is silenced. But effectively that is the result.

I am reaching out to highlight this situation so that nobody can feign ignorance and in the hope that the ACLU reconsider its posture prior to the election next month, after which it will be too late.

Sincerely,

s/

Gail Colletta, President
The Florida Action Committee, Inc.



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October 12, 2018

Miami-Dade County
Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces
c/o Abigail Price-Williams, Esq.
Miami-Dade County Attorney
SENT VIA EMAIL
apw1@miamidade.gov

RE: MIAMI-DADE COUNTY ORD. 05-206

Dear Ms. Price-Williams:

I am president of the Florida Action Committee (FAC). FAC is a not-for-profit public safety advocacy organization. We advocate for criminal justice reform based on empirical evidence and best practices, as opposed to many of the policies that are currently in place. Our membership is comprised of over Two Thousand (2,000) individuals in Florida and their families, including persons required to register as sex offenders.

On October 11, 2018, the ACLU held a "Miami Criminal Justice Reform Forum" at the Country Club of Miami – Gleason Room, 6801 Miami Gardens Drive, Miami, FL 33015. The Country Club of Miami, as I now understand, is considered a Miami-Dade County Park.

As a criminal justice reform organization, we had an interest in attending the event and participating in the advocacy. We sent a representative member to attend the meeting. Our representative happens to be a person required to register as a consequence of an event that took place almost twenty (20) years ago for which adjudication was withheld.

As our representative entered the venue, he noticed a sign that contained the following language, *"Welcome to your Miami-Dade County Park. May we remind you that... sexual offenders and predators are prohibited in parks when a child under the age of 16 is present pursuant to Miami-Dade County Ord. 05-206."*

Without knowing whether the ordinance was applicable at this time (it was an evening meeting), for this event (a private entity presumably leased the Gleason Room), or prophetically knowing whether someone under 16 would be present inside the meeting (or, for that matter, whether the "presence" requirement included the entire park - which could be acres of land), he left rather than risk arrest.

I can appreciate the County's concern when it comes to *any* adult loitering inside an area designated primarily for children (such as a playground) without a legitimate justification for being there. That would be concerning regardless of whether the individual had any criminal history.

That said; there are plenty of scenarios, such as our present one, where there is perfectly valid and compelling reason for this individual to be present.

In order to avoid a similar situation in the future, I'm reaching out to you to ascertain the County's position on whether a person required to register would be lawfully permitted to attend this meeting, or whether he or she would be prohibited from attending.

As you can imagine, with the election approaching, the ACLU and other advocacy groups have similar events and rallies organized in the very near future. As you can also imagine, it is critical for our organization to have a voice at these events. For that reason, is urgent for us to know the County's position on this issue.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

s/

Gail Colletta, President
The Florida Action Committee, Inc.