

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STATEMENT: Florida Executive Clemency Board seeks to appeal U.S. District Court decision rather than reform voting rights restoration process

TALLAHASSEE, FL – Today, Florida’s Executive Clemency Board filed a notice of its intent to appeal the permanent injunction from U.S. District Court Judge Mark Walker, ordering the state to establish a new voting rights restoration process for former felons. Earlier this year the Court affirmed that the 1st Amendment protects the right to vote and concluded that the process by which Florida officials grant or deny former felons’ restoration of voting rights applications is unconstitutionally arbitrary.

The following quote can be attributed to the *Hand v. Scott* Plaintiffs’ litigation team:

In the year since Fair Elections Legal Network and Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC filed this lawsuit, Governor Scott and the rest of the Executive Clemency Board have had ample opportunity to reform the process to restore voting rights to former felons. Instead they have dug in their heels and defended an arbitrary and backlogged scheme that prevents people who have served their sentences from rejoining their community for years and decades. A federal judge has found the restoration scheme violates the U.S. Constitution, noting “[t]his should not be a close question,” and recently ordered Defendants to establish a new voting rights restoration process. Though it is the Board’s legal right to appeal, their continued resistance to adopting any uniform, non-arbitrary system for restoring voting rights betrays a brazen disregard, if not disdain, for basic principles that go to the heart of our democracy.

This case has given Florida state officials an opportunity to voluntarily change their ways, join the mainstream of America, and restore voting rights to former felons who have paid their debt to society or, at a minimum, create a non-arbitrary, expeditious rule-based system. Governor Scott and the other Defendants have rejected that opportunity, preferring to waste taxpayer dollars defending the indefensible, potentially up to the nation’s highest court. We will continue to fight for Florida ex-felons’ right to a lawful voting rights restoration system.

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[The Fair Elections Legal Network \(FELN\)](#) is a national, nonpartisan voting rights and legal support organization. Our mission is to eliminate barriers to voting and improve election administration across

the United States. Working alongside other national and state groups, FELN works to make the processes of voter registration, voting, and election administration as accessible as possible for every American.

[Cohen Milstein Sellers & Toll PLLC](#) is recognized as one of the premier law firms in the country handling major, complex plaintiff-side litigation. With more than 90 attorneys, Cohen Milstein has offices in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Ill., Denver, Colo., New York, N.Y., Palm Beach Gardens, Fla., Philadelphia, Pa., and Raleigh, N.C. For additional information call 561.515.1400.