

Turnout and Amendment 4: Mobilizing Eligible Voters Close to Formerly Incarcerated Floridians*

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Abstract

Recent scholarship has established a link between felony disenfranchisement and lower turnout, particularly in Black communities. Little work, however, has been done to interrogate how this depressive effect might be counteracted. In 2018, Amendment 4 was on the ballot in Florida, and promised to re-enfranchise most of the disenfranchised population. Amendment 4 offers a unique opportunity to investigate whether this ballot initiative could, on its own, increase the turnout of these impacted communities relative to other, less impacted communities. By leveraging individual-level release records from the Florida Department of Corrections I test whether the ballot initiative disproportionately mobilized neighborhoods and individuals in close proximity to formerly incarcerated individuals. Using multiple identification strategies, I find no evidence that Amendment 4 increased their turnout above-and-beyond increases observed among other voters, indicating that even greater engagement and investment must be made to overcome the depressed turnout resulting from longstanding historical and social factors.

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