

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

December 08, 2020

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. The presence of this ballot initiative offers a unique opportunity to investigate whether ballot initiatives of special interest to these impacted communities might ameliorate some of the depressed turnout. Using individual-level release records from the Florida Department of Corrections I test whether the ballot initiative mobilized neighborhoods and individuals in close proximity to formerly incarcerated individuals. Using multiple identification strategies, I find no evidence that Amendment 4 increased the participation of these neighborhoods or eligible voters, indicating that even greater engagement and investment must be made to overcome the depressed turnout.