

Florida Demands Representation

Florida Demands Representation (FDR)

For immediate release
April, 2008

January 29, 2008: a date not forgotten by Florida voters! On this date, the State of Florida held a legitimate and legally mandated primary election for both the Democratic and the Republican parties as part of the **nationwide** primary process to determine the presidential nominee for the respective parties.

In the State of Florida, the dates on which primaries will be held are established by the State Legislature, not by either party in the State. The resulting story becomes sordid, complex, and beyond the comprehension of most voters as well as among some elected officials.

Vital facts must be addressed. Florida voters turned out in record numbers. In fact, more than 1.7 million Florida Democrats cast a ballot that day, the highest turnout ever for a Democratic primary election.

While Democratic candidates did not campaign in the State, all Democratic candidates were on the ballot. Given that five other contests were held prior to the Florida primary, all candidates were well known to the voting populace.

County statistics demonstrate this: Of Florida's 67 counties, Clinton won 48; Edwards won 11, while Obama won 8. The resulting number of delegates follows: 67 for Clinton, 41 for Obama, and 15 for Edwards.

To argue that an absence of campaigning affected the primary election outcome holds little merit. Results point to a highly motivated and well-informed Democratic electorate.

The decision to move the State's primary, bypassing the rules of both parties, was not a decision in which the electorate actively participated. Most Democrats **did not know** the Democratic National Committee (DNC) would punish its own constituents, essentially relegating the Constitutional right to vote an exercise in futility.

The DNC's "punishment" of the Florida Democratic electorate continues to alienate and disenfranchise its own members! The DNC's refusal to seat Florida delegates at the Democratic National Convention, based on the January 29, 2008 primary results, is an act of sabotage against Florida's Democratic Party and, perhaps, the Democratic Party nationally.

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As Americans and voters in this great democracy, we believe that when called upon to vote, we do. We regard this right and the resulting outcome as sacred--that it counts! How often we hear public service announcements reinforcing the idea that **every vote counts**.

Instead, we are subject to autocratic rules and insolence by Democratic Party leaders that border on the absurd. These leaders continue to espouse their rules are more important than the voices of millions of voters. It is beyond comprehension that after spending more than \$20 million in consort with 1.7 million voters who exercised their Constitutional right to vote the DNC continues to dig in its heels to the point of alienation and disenfranchisement of the very members it purports to represent.

Florida Demand Representation (FDR) is dedicated to one cause: protecting voters' rights and civil liberties. We are adamant in our demand for representation. We seek no less than recognition of our votes as valid by the DNC and the Florida delegates seated at the Democratic National Convention based on the results of the January 29, 2008 primary.

We are incensed by the unwillingness of the DNC to understand the plight of Florida Democrats. We are dumbfounded that our party leaders have not moved quickly and resolutely to remedy this situation.

More disconcerting is the lack of strategic forethought. A stubborn insistence that rules are more important than the voices of almost two million Democrats are autocratic and a disgusting display of arrogance.

We do understand that there is a need for guidelines to ensure process and structure when nominating a Presidential candidate. Many Floridians, like most voters in other States, are not even slightly familiar with the rules, by-laws, credentials, and other aspects that constitute "appropriate" rules of engagement by States in this process.

FDR is the truest of a grassroots movement. We are not funded. We are not tied to any campaign. We do not endorse a specific candidate. Our organization is comprised solely of volunteers who support their candidate of choice. That support is a private and personal issue not relevant to the cause and mission of FDR.

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As such, our volunteers are from all political persuasions. Whether Democrat, Independent, Republican or member of a minor party, we share a common set of philosophies that binds us together:

1. We believe when we vote in the United States our votes count.
2. We need to protect our Democracy for ourselves and for future generations.
3. We honor the generations that came before us giving their lives to maintain our freedom and our Constitutional right to vote.
4. We know that nominating a Presidential candidate without representing the **ENTIRE** United States is **NOT** democratic.
5. We need to identify the flaws in our primary system and require elected leaders to address necessary change.

Apathy destroys democracy. Autocratic decisions made by the DNC Leadership are destroying the faith in the electoral process of millions of voters, not only in Florida, but also in Michigan, Oklahoma, California, Tennessee—all across our great nation. Collectively, we need to put an end to this. **We**, the people, have an opportunity not often afforded us, to effect change.

History shows this can happen. We have done it before. We WILL do it again.

Over 230 years ago, 13 colonies, each with different charters, goals, and citizenry, banded together to fight for the principle of representation. While the odds were against them, their belief in their cause propelled them to victory. Today, their victory is ours to protect!

Our volunteers are motivated to protect our civil liberties. Many of our volunteers are anguished by the demise of the party with whom they have so long been associated, the party of the people. What has happened to the party of the people, for the people, by the people?

The DNC cares to neither understand nor empathize with the sentiment of Florida Democrats and voters in general. They do not take us seriously. WE DO!

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We hear the frustration of voters. A woman in Miami, from the Dominican Republic, now a United States citizen, was so excited to vote in her first Presidential election. Now she is considering sitting out the November election--unless her vote in the primary counts. We hear it from the 81-year-old man in Jacksonville who has cast a Democratic Party vote his entire life but who will not vote in November--unless his primary vote counts. We hear it from the homemaker in Orlando **who will vote against her party** in November out of frustration, hoping her vote will count. We hear it from the Independent voter in Oldsmar who asks, "How can you run a country when you can't even run your own party?"

These are the voices of Florida voters. This is serious. Our Democratic Party leadership has jeopardized its own Party, perhaps the future of the United States as well. Why? Because the Party rules are THAT important. Shame, shame, shame!

We cannot afford to tolerate this.

FDR calls upon voters nationwide to stand with us. Help us change our democracy. Go to our website (www.floridademandsrepresentation.org) and download our petition. Forward our website to your friends and ask them to do the same.

Attend one of our statewide rallies on May 31, 2008. Better yet, organize a rally in your state on the same day in support of our effort, and help us send a message to Democratic Party leaders.

We need your support and we need it quickly--our democracy is at stake.

In closing, a true leader does not exclude but stands up for the rights of others, for equality, for representation, for inclusion. Who is your leader?