

The Delray Democrat

DeSantis's Abortion Rights Petition Intimidation Reminiscent of "Police State"¹

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"The experience has left me shaken" said Isaac Menasche, one of thousands of registered voters who are being investigated by authorities after signing the Amendment Four petition to put abortion rights on Florida's November ballot. He was describing a visit from what he believed was a "plain clothes officer" who came to his home to check the validity of his signature.

As reported by the [Miami Herald](#), "In a move that supporters of the amendment fear could be "political interference," Gov. Ron DeSantis' deputy secretary of state has asked supervisors in Hillsborough, Orange, Palm Beach and Osceola counties to gather roughly 36,000 signatures for the state to review."

Menasche spoke to [The Delray Democrat](#) about the experience. "He had a badge. And a folder of my personal information. He showed me a copy of the petition. I recognized my signature. He asked me if I was sure it was mine." He was. Menasche said he believed the discrepancy occurred because he had used a "quick" signature on the petition, the way "you'd sign a check at a restaurant, not giving it the same care as you would a formal document." That's probably true of many people.

Menasche told the [The Delray Democrat](#) he was "troubled that they (the State) had used so many resources to investigate a signature. Obviously, someone had pulled my driver's license and other information and drove to my house, a significant amount of man hours." He was also concerned that "the petition had already been approved by local authorities. I support investigating fraud, but this felt heavy-handed—or a police state."

His next comment was chilling. Menasche said the incident reminded him of when "felons (who believed they had the legal right) voted and then were prosecuted." He was referring to the "arrests of 41 formerly incarcerated people, also known as returning citizens, who were arrested in 2022 and 2023 for voter fraud in Florida following the 2020 election," as the [Miami Herald](#) reported. "Nearly half took plea deals, fearful of facing the unknown of a jury trial and guilty verdict." They had voted following the passage of another Amendment, also numbered Four, approved by 62% of voters, giving these citizens, none convicted of violent crimes, the right to vote after serving their sentences.

But DeSantis found a way to essentially nullify the people's vote by arbitrarily demanding payment of various fines and fees, outside of their sentences, that these people couldn't afford.

Florida's abortion rights proponents have followed the law. Floridians Protecting Freedom, Inc., the sponsoring organization, succeeded in the formidable task of getting more than one million

¹ [The Delray Democrat](#), September 2024, page 1.

registered voters to sign the petition. Local election officials approved the signatures. And despite Florida's Attorney General Ashley Moody's request to The [Florida Supreme Court](#) to block the petition, the Court approved the amendment for placement on the ballot. But DeSantis just won't accept it.

Clearly, getting Amendment Four passed isn't the only concern. It's to prepare for what legal maneuverings DeSantis will invent to inhibit or even prohibit the actual exercise of reproductive rights in this state, as he did with the exercise of the earlier Amendment Four. If the people's votes, whether for an amendment or an election, can be eviscerated by the whims of a single person, (rubber-stamped by a majority or, in Florida's case, a supermajority), of the legislature, the defining right of living in a democracy has been stolen.