

BRENNAN
CENTER
FOR JUSTICE

Brennan Center for Justice
at New York University School of Law

161 Avenue of the Americas
12th Floor
New York, New York 10013
212.998.6730 Fax 212.995.4550
www.brennancenter.org

For Immediate Release: April 5, 2007

Contact: Erika Wood, 212-992-8638
Mike Webb, 212-998-6746

**Brennan Center Applauds Gov. Crist, But Finds Flaws
With Florida's New Voting Rights Rules**

The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law issued the following statement regarding Florida Governor Charlie Crist's new clemency rules to restore the right to vote to citizens who have been permanently disenfranchised as the result of a felony conviction. The statement may be attributed to Erika Wood, Counsel in the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice.

"Today Florida Governor Charlie Crist took an important step toward restoring the right to vote to citizens who have been disenfranchised because of a prior felony conviction. These new clemency rules have the potential to re-enfranchise hundreds of thousands of Florida citizens and we congratulate Governor Crist on taking this important step.

The new clemency rules set a procedure to restore voting rights to people convicted of nonviolent crimes who have completed their sentence and paid restitution. Governor Crist must now ensure that the rules are implemented in a way that re-enfranchises people who complete their sentences in the future. He must also see to it that those who have already completed their sentences and waited years for the opportunity to cast a ballot, get the opportunity to do so.

While the new rules represent a dramatic step forward, some of the provisions raise serious concerns. For example, the rules continue to require large numbers of would-be voters to navigate a slow, complicated, and expensive bureaucratic process. They also condition the right to vote on an applicant's ability to pay restitution. And the new rules impose a 15-year waiting period on some people even after they have completed their sentence.

Across the country states are restoring the right to vote to Americans who are living and working in our communities. It is time for Florida to join this national movement to strengthen our democracy."

#