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Returning voter registers at CEE event



The arms of Drollene Brown, co-founder of CEE, extend across the registration table to congratulate newly registered voter Dorlinda Gilham.

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WILLISTON -- Citizens for an Engaged Electorate (CEE) held a voter registration event in Williston on Saturday (Jan. 12).

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Barbara Byram, co-founder of CEE, shows newly-registered voter Dorlinda Gilham an example of the material she soon will receive in the mail from Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones. In the background are CEE members Deborah Goad and Nikki Rae Sun.

As CEE members arrived to setup their voter registration outpost at the new community center at 50 N. Main St., there showed up a woman they'd never met. The new community center is part of the brand-new Williston City Hall.

Introducing herself as Dorlinda, she proceeded to help move the tables and chairs, layout literature, and setup refreshments. Finally, the members found out the newcomer actually had not come to help. Instead, she had come to register to vote. She was a Levy County resident returning to the active rolls as a registered voter.

This story really began for CEE in early 2014, when members voted unanimously to join the Second Chances campaign to restore voting rights to convicted felons.

In April of 2014, the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida sent a lawyer to Williston to train CEE members on proper methods for collecting petition signatures on

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the ballot initiative.

Immediately getting to work, they collected a good number of signatures. Unfortunately, the initiative did not receive enough signatures to qualify for the ballot in 2016.

The Second Chances campaign did not give up, and neither did the CEE. Because petition signatures expire two years after the date of signature, the project had to start over.

Anyone who had signed before, had to do it again. Thanks to a groundswell of support from small groups across the state, enough signatures were collected for the initiative to get on the 2018 ballot as Amendment 4.

The amendment to the Florida Constitution passed during the general election of November of 2018 with 64 percent of the state voter making it law, which went into effect on Jan. 8.

The amendment made it automatic that felons (other than murderers or sex offenders) who had served their time and paid all fees and fines were eligible to register to vote.

Florida supervisors of elections have stated that they will accept all registrations, regardless of what may be brewing in the Florida Legislature to circumvent the vote of the people.

Anyone who registers now need not worry about having their voting rights taken away.

Passage of the amendment and advertising of the Williston event brought Dorlinda Gilham to the doors of the community center on Saturday.

After CEE Co-Founder Drollene Brown accepted the application and checked it to ensure it was properly filled out, Dorlinda broke down and cried tears joy and gratitude. She received hugs from everyone present and proudly showed off her application.

“I have waited seven years for this,” she said. Hers weren’t the only tears shed that morning.

Welcome back to the rolls of registered voters in Florida, Dorlinda!