

SOURCE: ACLU OF FLORIDA

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ACLU URGES DADE ELECTION OFFICIALS TO INCLUDE SAMPLE CREOLE BALLOTS IN COUNTYWIDE MAILING TO HOUSEHOLDS

MIAMI - In a letter sent Monday to Miami-Dade County Manager Steve Shiver, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) urged county officials to take immediate steps to mail sample English/Creole ballots and voting instructions to Haitian-American voters in Miami-Dade County.

On Friday, the county announced its decision *not* to include the English/Creole versions of the sample ballots in a direct mail piece sent to approximately 867,000 households in Miami-Dade County, opting to mail only English/Spanish ballots. The county plans instead to place ads featuring English/Creole sample ballots in newspapers that serve the Haitian-American community.

In a letter co-signed by ACLU of Florida Executive Director Howard Simon and Greater Miami Chapter President Lida Rodriguez-Taseff, the ACLU outlined its concerns, stating: "We do not see how it is possible to employ one program - the mailing of sample ballots and instructional materials - to one of the County's principal language communities, but not to the other ... Miami-Dade County is a trilingual community. That is one of our strengths, and County programs should reflect that reality."

ACLU officials went on to add: "As you are aware, the language issue with respect to Creole is the subject of a Consent Decree that was the result of a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice against Miami-Dade County. In light of that, it is particularly troubling that the County believes that a different program for Spanish-speaking and Creole-speaking voters is not a problem. We urge you not view this as a matter of what may be required by any Consent Decree, but instead that you address this issue in light of what is required by considerations of fairness. "

In the Oct. 28 letter, the ACLU asks the Shiver to "at a minimum," mail "English/Creole sample ballots to all households within the sixty precincts previously designated by the county as being ones in which a significant portion of the electorate is Haitian-American."

The full text of the letter to Shiver, copied to Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas, Elections Supervisor David Leahy and the Miami-Dade County Commission, follows.

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