

State Attorney for the Ninth Judicial Circuit

Today, Governor DeSantis suspended Monique Worrell, State Attorney for the Ninth Judicial Circuit, due to her dereliction of duty and incompetence. The practices and policies of her office have allowed murderers, other violent offenders, and dangerous drug traffickers to receive extremely reduced sentences and escape the full consequences of their criminal conduct. In some cases, these offenders have evaded incarceration altogether. State Attorney Worrell's practices undermine Florida law and endanger the safety, security, and welfare of the communities that Ms. Worrell was elected to serve.

Below are some of the more egregious results of her policies or practices in action:

- Just this past weekend, Worrell was at the center of a major controversy. Daton Viel was arrested in March 2023 for sexual battery on a minor, as well as Lewd and Lascivious Molestation. That arrest was made while Viel was on probation for another offense – that probation began in February 2023. Viel was still let out on bond and thereafter shot two Orlando Police Officers.
- In November 2022, 17-year-old Lorenzo Larry shot and killed his pregnant girlfriend, De'Shayla Ferguson. Larry had previously been arrested in May 2022 on several charges, including carrying a concealed firearm, possession of a firearm on school property, and criminal possession of a firearm by a minor. But he was released after all these arrests. Worrell's office did not act on any of these charges until after he killed his girlfriend and their unborn child.
- In 2018, Jasir Dopson invaded a home in Orange County and robbed the occupants at gunpoint. Dopson was charged with multiple counts of armed burglary with a firearm, robbery with a firearm, and false imprisonment. These charges carried a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence with a maximum of life in prison. After Worrell took office in 2021, five of the charges were not prosecuted and adjudication was withheld on the remaining. Withholding adjudication means that Dopson is not considered a convicted felon, and possession of a firearm by a felon would not apply if he were rearrested in the future. He was sentenced to only 51-weeks of jail time and sentenced as a youthful offender.
- In June 2021, a minor was taken into custody for first-degree premeditated murder and attempted first-degree murder. He had previous arrests for burglary, resisting an officer, aggravated battery, and assault with a firearm. This is exactly the type of person to put away. Instead, his premeditated murder charges were dropped. In January 2023, he was arrested for grand theft of a motor vehicle. Yet once again, Worrell's office didn't prosecute the charge.
- In October 2022, a minor was arrested on first-degree murder charges with a firearm. The shooting was captured on video. One month later, Worrell's office inexplicably filed a petition to reduce the charge to firearm possession. He was placed on probation.

- Randall Fredericks was arrested in 2020 for possession of child pornography. In August 2022, he was charged with 45 counts, but by February 2023, Worrell's office amended the charges to charge the pedophile with only 10 counts. Each count carried 15-years per offense. He was sentenced to 130 months that will run concurrently.
- Lathon Yee was charged with attempted murder with a firearm and aggravated battery causing great bodily harm with a firearm. If convicted on these charges, the defendant would face a minimum mandatory sentence of 25 years' incarceration.. Worrell's office amended the charge down to attempted manslaughter with a firearm, which carries no mandatory minimum. He was sentenced to five years in prison.
- In February 2023, 19-year-old Keith Moses shot and killed a cameraman and a 9-year-old girl. He had a long history of arrests as a juvenile, including aggravated battery, assault, and grand theft. As recently as November 2021, he was arrested for drug possession, but no charges were pursued.
- Kaylan Vega was arrested in 2020 for possessing a weapon near the scene of a shooting. In 2021, he pled no contest to possession of a firearm by a felon and possession of drug paraphernalia. There is a three-year mandatory sentence for actual possession of a firearm by a convicted felon – instead he was able to plea down to avoid that sentence and was ultimately given probation. Shortly after release on probation, he was arrested for shooting and killing his girlfriend. Worrell's office has not pursued prosecution for the murder.
- Worrell's office has also shown a pattern of not prosecuting drug traffickers. In 2021, Jamie Lynn Fitts was involved in a high-speed chase and arrested with more than 14 grams of methamphetamine in her purse, which is high enough to be charged with drug trafficking and punishable by a minimum three-year sentence. She was allowed to plead down to 48 months of probation. She had prior charges of methamphetamine possession and carrying a concealed firearm.