

VOTING RESTORATION & DEMOCRACY ACT OF 2018



FACT SHEET

WHAT IS THE VOTING RESTORATION & DEMOCRACY ACT?

The *Voting Restoration & Democracy Act of 2018* would remove the restrictions that prevent people in prison and on parole in California from voting. If passed, people would not lose their right to vote when they are sent to prison.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE SUPPORT THIS ACT?

The United States is built on principles of democracy and freedom, but these values cannot be upheld if citizens are being denied their right to vote. There are approximately 180,000 people in California who cannot vote simply because they are in prison or on parole.

Most other developed countries (such as Canada, the Netherlands, France, Norway, and Japan) allow people to vote from prison. According to Human Rights Watch, the U.S. "may have the world's most restrictive criminal disenfranchisement laws."¹ Only 2 states in the U.S. (Maine & Vermont) do not remove people's right to vote when they are sent to prison.

Furthermore, studies show that restoring voting rights to people in prison and on parole lowers their risk of recidivism.² When people feel less disconnected from society, they are better equipped to successfully reenter their communities as contributing citizens.

BUT THEY ARE 'FELONS' – WHY SHOULD THEY BE ABLE TO VOTE?

Removing a person's right to vote as a punishment for a crime is based on outdated, ineffective ways of thinking that have no place in a modern democracy. Incarcerated people are still citizens and should not be denied the ability to participate in the democratic process. Restoring this fundamental right lowers the risk of recidivism, promoting public safety as well as upholding principles of democracy and universal suffrage.



180,000

PEOPLE CANNOT VOTE IN CALIFORNIA BECAUSE OF A FELONY CONVICTION



RESTORING VOTING RIGHTS IS LINKED TO LOWER RECIDIVISM, MAKING US ALL SAFER



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STATES IN THE U.S. ALLOW VOTING IN PRISON (MAINE & VERMONT)



THE UNITED STATES HAS SOME OF THE HARSHTEST FELONY DISENFRANCHISEMENT LAWS IN THE WORLD

¹ Human Rights Watch (2003). *Losing the Vote: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement Laws in the United States*. <<https://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/vote/usvot98o-04.htm>>

² Vogel, Matt (2012). Berkeley La Raza Law Journal. *The Violence of Voicelessness: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement on Recidivism*. <<http://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1252&context=blrlj>>; The Sentencing Project (2016). *Felony Disenfranchisement: A Primer*. <<http://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/felony-disenfranchisement-a-primer/>>