

RESTORATION of VOTING RIGHTS: INFORMATION SHEET

Prepared by Julie Thaler, Gainesville, FL 2017

Restoration of voting rights lowers recidivism, saves taxpayer dollars, and allows for a positive reintegration of former offenders of nonviolent crimes back into society. Moreover, it gives them a second chance to become productive citizens, a democratic value.

The proposed amendment clearly states that restoration of voting rights in Florida will apply only to non-violent ex-felons who have served their time and have met their parole obligations. It will not apply to felons convicted of murder or sexual offenses.

- 1.68 Million Florida citizens have lost their right to vote due to a felony conviction. One-third of all arrests are drug related, only one-fourth of those persons convicted serve any time in prison, and 23% are black citizens. ***These people are not dangerous!***
- The felon vote and racism have been historically connected. Blacks make up 17% of Florida's population, but make up 48% of Florida's prison population. Studies show that blacks are more likely to be arrested and convicted than whites for the **same felony offenses**.
- Most states **automatically** restore voting rights once time is served and after completion of probation and parole. Maine and Vermont allow prisoners to vote while incarcerated!
 - **Florida, Iowa, and Kentucky do not.** Florida's disfranchisement rate remains the highest in the US imposing a virtual **lifetime** ban on ex-felon voting due to Florida's restoration process (see next point). *In Iowa 93% of appeals were approved, in Kentucky, 86%, in Florida, only 8%!*
- Florida requires non-violent felons to wait 5-7 years after probation and parole to file an appeal (which takes 1-7 years if court records, etc., are required and can be costly). In addition to this waiting period, it takes 7-9 years before a case can be heard. The Clemency Board meets only three times a year, rendering the average wait between 39-51 years.
- In Florida, the success of voter restoration depends on who is governor. Governor Crist and his cabinet modified the appeals process and 155,000 felons had their civil rights restored in the 4 years he was in office. Governor Scott reversed this policy and in the first 6 years of his administration only 2,339 received restoration of their rights. Presently, the backlog is over 12,000 appeals on file!
- The onerousness of getting your rights restored has the appearance of being deliberately politically motivated. Studies have shown that ex-felons register as Democrats over Republican by a 5-to-1 margin. This fact indicates that voter disfranchisement in Florida, which is a **swing state**, could skew election outcomes.
- A study conducted by the Florida Parole Commission found that recidivism rates for ex-felons who have had their civil rights restored was 11% vs. 33% for those who did **not** have their rights restored. Those who have not had their rights restored have difficulty finding jobs, getting educational loans, and finding housing.

For signed petitions: please send them to Mary Jane Range to verify signers are current Florida voters:

Mary Jane Range
715 Lyford Cay Drive
North Palm Beach, FL 33470
mjrange@comcast.net

This campaign is sponsored by Floridian Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) and the League of Women Voters Florida (LWVF). This information sheet is distributed with permission from Thaler and Range by Arlene Ustin, Palm Beach County.