

Proposition 17 will:

- ✓ Allow 50,000 Californians who have completed their prison term to fully participate in our democracy by restoring their right to vote
- ✓ Help Californians who are returning home from prison reintegrate into society and have a stake in their communities
- ✓ Help combat voter suppression among Black and brown communities, who are over-policed and subject to systemic inequalities within our criminal legal system
- ✓ Make our communities safer as voting and civic engagement reduce the likelihood that people will be rearrested
- ✓ Ensure California election laws are fair, inclusive, and in line with other progressive states

PROBLEM

Right now, 50,000 Californians who have completed their prison term can't vote. As the rate of mass incarceration in the U.S. has exploded in recent decades, the ban on voting for people with past convictions has only intensified voter suppression. The California Constitution currently prohibits people with felony convictions from voting while they are in prison or on parole. As a result, nearly 50,000 Californians living in and contributing to their communities who have completed their prison sentence are denied the opportunity to help choose the representatives and shape the policies that impact their daily lives. Californians returning home from prison should be encouraged to reenter society and have a stake in their community, not be punished by having their voting rights denied.

Biases in the criminal justice system mean that poor people and people of color are more likely than others to be convicted of crimes and to lose their voting rights, while wealthy people can always afford the best lawyers. Because of persistent and systematic racial inequalities in our criminal legal system, three out of four men leaving California prisons are Black, Latino, or Asian American. This means California's constitution disproportionately locks people of color out of the voting booth. We can't have an elected government that represents all of us when some members of our community are being excluded from our elections and denied the ability to participate in our democracy.

SOLUTION

Prop 17 would restore voting rights upon release from prison. Nearly 50,000 Californians who have returned home from prison can't vote even though they are raising families, holding jobs, paying taxes, and contributing to society in every other way. Prop 17 will ensure that everyone who has completed their prison term can have their voice heard in our democracy.

Civic engagement makes our communities stronger. When people feel that they are valued members of their community, and that their voices matter and concerns are addressed, they are less likely to re-engage in criminal activity. Research has found consistent differences between voters and non-voters after release in rates of subsequent arrests, incarceration, and self-reported behavior. That's why the American Probation and Parole Association and the Association of Paroling Authorities International support automatically restoring voting rights upon release from prison.

California currently lags behind 19 other states plus Washington, D.C, which either automatically restore voting rights upon release from prison or never take voting rights away. National momentum is growing to restore voting rights to people with past convictions. It's time for California to reclaim its role as a national leader in progressive and inclusive policy-making by passing Prop 17.

It's time to #FreeTheVote for Californians who have completed their prison sentence