

Voting with a Felony

What Social Workers Need to Know Now



Nancy A. Humphreys Institute for Political Social Work

Felony Disenfranchisement's Dark History

20 million people in the U.S. have a felony conviction. Felony disenfranchisement laws—which restrict voting rights due a felony conviction-- were written into many state constitutions to explicitly limit the political power of Black Americans and communities of color.

Felony Disenfranchisement Facts

- Nearly 5.2 million cannot vote in the 2020 election because of state level laws and restrictions.¹
- Disproportionate rates of criminal punishment by race continue to reduce access to the vote within minority communities. One in 16 Black adults has lost the right to vote.^{2,3}
- Millions more do not vote because of confusing and punitive state laws (de facto disenfranchisement). Note that Vermont and Maine are two states with no restrictions and individuals vote by absentee ballot even while incarcerated.^{4,5}
- Most states allow people to vote once incarceration, parole, or probation end and some restrict it forever. The ACLU Felony Disenfranchisement Laws Map is a great place to start researching your state's laws.⁶
- Individuals and communities who vote are better off in important measures of wellbeing, including higher rates of employment, health, and education. For example, a study in Florida reported significant drops in recidivism rates when formerly incarcerated individuals were given the right to vote.⁷
- Most states allow people to vote once incarceration, parole, or probation end and some restrict it forever. Individuals incarcerated but not convicted of a felony have the right to vote in all states. See the next page for organizations and resources.

Social Workers: change the conversation, dispel the myths and take action

- Empower clients by knowing the rules in your state
- Advocate for expanded voting rights and access

For more information on felony disenfranchisement, go to votingissocialwork.org

IN CONNECTICUT

- Individuals in CT with felony convictions CAN vote once: 1) parole has ended; and 2) any fines related to their conviction are paid.
- Additionally, individuals who are in jail awaiting trial but have not been convicted are eligible to register using their most recent address and vote by absentee ballot.

Ways to register:

- Fill out a voter registration form and deliver to your local registrar of voters.
- Register directly in [CT's online registration system](#) (English & Spanish)
- Point your smartphone at the QR code below or text 'Vote SW' to 34444.



Voting by Absentee Ballot:

[Get information and absentee ballot applications at sots.ct.gov](#) or your local town clerk.

Questions?

Call the Secretary of State:
(860)-509-6200
Or your local registrar of voters.

Election Day Hotline:

1-866-OUR VOTE

THE NANCY A. HUMPHREYS INSTITUTE
FOR POLITICAL SOCIAL WORK

38 Prospect St · Hartford, CT 06103
959-200-3631

PoliticalInstitute@uconn.edu

UConn
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

www.VotingIsSocialWork.org

For more information, email
info@votingissocialwork.org

NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK VOTER MOBILIZATION CAMPAIGN

“Voting is Social Work”

Social workers have understood the importance of voting to political action, community power and social justice dating back the Settlement House movement. Voter engagement is still central to social work values today! Evidence exists showing that voter engagement increases individual well-being, advances civic participation, and increases social justice.

The Campaign seeks to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of voting to social work practice and social policy.
- Integrate voter engagement activities into field education for all micro and macro students.
- Provide voter mobilization skills and strategies for agencies, field instructors, students and faculty; and
- Ensure that all the people we serve have access to the vote.

Find the rules and more about how you can advocate to change these laws at:

ACLU
www.aclu.org

Southern Poverty Law Center
<https://www.splcenter.org/>

Voting Is Social Work
<https://votingissocialwork.org/>

National Conference of State Legislatures
www.ncls.org

The Brennan Center
www.brennancenter.org

ProCon.org
felonvoting.procon.org

The Sentencing Project
www.sentencingproject.org

¹Uggen, C., Larson, R., Shannon, S. & Pulido-Nava, A. (2020). Locked Out 2020: Estimates of People Denied Voting Rights Due to a Felony Conviction. The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/locked-out-2020-estimates-of-people-denied-voting-rights-due-to-a-felony-conviction/>

⁴Brennan Center (2019). *Criminal disenfranchisement laws across the United States*. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/criminal-disenfranchisement-laws-across-united-states>

²Behrens, A., Uggen, C. & Manza, J. (2003). Ballot manipulation and the “menace of Negro domination”: Racial threat and felon disenfranchisement in the United States, 1850-2002. *American Journal of Sociology*, 109(3), 559-605.

⁵American Civil Liberties Union. (2020) De facto disenfranchisement: Introduction. <https://www.aclu.org/other/de-facto-disenfranchisement-introduction>

³Manza, J. & Uggen, C. (2006). *Locked out: felon disenfranchisement and American democracy*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

⁶American Civil Liberties Union. (n.d.) Felony disenfranchisement laws (map). <https://www.aclu.org/issues/voting-rights/voter-restoration/felony-disenfranchisement-laws-map>

⁷Florida Parole Commission. (2011) Status update: Restoration of civil rights cases granted 2009 and 2010. <https://www.fcpr.state.fl.us/docs/reports/2009-2010ClemencyReport.pdf>