



12/2/04 – Draft resolution for the National Conference of State Legislatures on the Voting Rights of People with Criminal Convictions

WHEREAS voting is both a fundamental right and a civic duty;

WHEREAS laws that disenfranchise people with felony convictions work against those individuals' successful reentry in their communities as responsible, productive citizens;

WHEREAS such voting bans are not part of proportionate sentences meted out by legislatures and courts as punishment for crimes but are rather a form of additional political exclusion;

WHEREAS such political banishment serves no accepted criminal justice purpose and works against states' interest in rehabilitation;

WHEREAS there is no evidence that such voting bans reduce voting fraud or provide any sort of protection for the integrity of the electoral process;

WHEREAS criminal disenfranchisement laws in America have a disproportionate impact on African American and Latino communities and have a bad history of having been used in the past purposely to weaken the political voice of African Americans;

WHEREAS in our strong, inclusive democracy, the fact that all Americans of voting age participate in choosing our government by voting is what legitimates that government and its policies, and

WHEREAS approximately 5 million Americans are barred from the polls by felony disenfranchisement laws, many of them tax-paying citizens who send their children to school and contribute in every other way to the communities in which they live;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: that NCSL supports the re-enfranchisement of all people with felony convictions who reside in the community; and **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that members of NCSL will introduce and support legislation to repeal bans on voting by people with criminal convictions who are not incarcerated, to ensure that states notify people both of their loss of voting rights during incarceration and of their right to vote if they are sentenced to community supervision or upon release from incarceration, and to ensure that in developing central voter databases as required by the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) states develop an efficient system of automatically restoring voting eligibility once people who are removed from the voting rolls during incarceration return to the community.