

American Probation and Parole Association



February 13, 2009

Senator Dan Kelly
702 Capitol Ave
Annex Room 242
Frankfort KY 40601

Dear Senator Kelly:

Based in Lexington, KY, the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) is an international non-profit composed of members from the United States, Canada and other countries who work in probation, parole and community-based corrections. Our members supervise more than 5 million adults across the country and more than 38,000 people within our state. I write to encourage you to support Senate Bill No. 126 (SB 126), which would place before the voters of the state a constitutional amendment to restore voting rights to people who have fully completed their sentences and paid their debt to society, excepting those convicted of murder and certain sex crimes who would still be required to seek an executive pardon to restore their rights.

I know that promoting the rehabilitation of people with criminal records is important to you. It is important to recognize that the right to vote is an integral part of the rehabilitation process. I urge you, as Senate Majority Floor Leader and Vice Chair of the Committee on Committees, to lend your full support to SB 126 and shepherd it through the Senate.

With 35 years of experience in the criminal and juvenile justice field, I strongly believe that full civic participation by citizens living in our community protects public safety. There is no credible evidence that continuing to disenfranchise people after they have returned to the community serves any legitimate law enforcement purpose. To the contrary, restoring the right to vote sends the message that ex-offenders are welcome as integral members of their home communities and invests them in our democracy. Bringing people into the political process makes them stakeholders in their communities and encourages them to lead law-abiding lives, thereby decreasing recidivism.

Last year, APPA passed a resolution endorsing voting rights restoration after release from prison. I have attached a copy of the resolution for your reference. Other criminal justice and law enforcement agencies, including the American Correctional Association, the National Black Police Association and the Association of Paroling Authorities International, have passed similar resolutions. I have also attached a copy of an op-ed I published last year in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* urging the Kentucky Legislature to restore voting rights to people who have paid their debt to society.

As someone who shares your interest in the successful reentry of people after prison, I urge you to lend your full support to SB 126. Kentucky has an historic opportunity to join the national movement to restore voting rights to people who have completed their sentences. In the interest of protecting public safety and promoting American democracy, I hope you will help Kentucky seize that opportunity. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Wicklund
Executive Director

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