

The Democracy Restoration Act

FACT SHEET

As a standalone bill, as introduced by Senator Ben Cardin

THE DEMOCRACY RESTORATION ACT WILL:

- Give a second chance to Americans living in our communities who are disenfranchised because of criminal convictions in their past.
- Catch the entire country up to 23 states, red and blue, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico where everyone living in the community already has the right to vote.
- Enact a simple rule that is easy to administer: Americans who are out of prison and living in the community get to vote in federal elections.
- Provide notice to people with past criminal convictions about their right to vote in federal elections.

THIS BILL IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT:

- **Provides a second chance.** There is no penological justification for punishing people after they have been released from prison. Restoring voting rights encourages successful reentry into our communities.
- **Strengthens our democracy.** The right to vote forms the core of American democracy. A strong, vibrant democracy requires the broadest possible base of voter participation.
- **Simplifies a patchwork of laws.** Restoring voting rights to all Americans living in our communities would create a bright line rule that relieves confusion about who is eligible to vote in federal elections.
- **Advances civil rights.** Felony disenfranchisement is a relic of Jim Crow efforts to bar minorities from voting. The intended effects of these laws continue today: the disenfranchisement rate for Black citizens is roughly four times that of all other Americans.
- **Empowers families and communities.** Denying the vote to one person has a ripple effect, dramatically decreasing the political power of urban and minority communities. Restoring voting rights would encourage the civic participation of entire families.

THE DEMOCRACY RESTORATION ACT IS SOUND POLICY BECAUSE IT:

- Avoids confusing, rarely used carve outs that are difficult to administer for elections officials who are not trained to draw lines based on complex sentencing statuses.
- Is consistent with Congress's constitutional power under the Elections Clause and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.
- Restores voting rights to people whom the criminal justice system has already determined should be living and working among us.

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