

The Democracy Restoration Act

FACT SHEET

S. 772 / H.R. 1459

Introduced by Senator Ben Cardin and Representative John Conyers

THE DEMOCRACY RESTORATION ACT WILL:

- Restore voting rights in federal elections to 4.7 million Americans who are out of prison and living in the community.
- Ensure that people on probation will never lose their right to vote in federal elections.
- Notify people about their right to vote in federal elections when they are leaving prison, sentenced to probation, or convicted of a misdemeanor.

WHY THIS BILL IS IMPORTANT:

Restoring voting rights to people with felony convictions in their past will:

- **Strengthen our democracy.** The right to vote forms the core of American democracy. A strong, vibrant democracy requires the broadest possible base of voter participation.
- **Advance civil rights.** Felony disenfranchisement laws are firmly rooted in Jim Crow and were intended to bar minorities from voting. The intended effects of these laws continue today: nationwide 2.2 million African-Americans are disenfranchised.
- **Aid law enforcement and reduce recidivism.** Allowing people to vote after release from prison encourages participation in civic life and helps rebuild ties to the community that motivate law-abiding behavior.
- **Facilitate election administration.** Restoring voting rights to people out of prison eliminates the opportunity for erroneous purges of eligible citizens from the voting rolls and relieves confusion among election officials and the public about who is eligible to vote.

WHAT THIS BILL WILL CHANGE:

In the United States, an estimated 6.1 million adult citizens are currently disenfranchised as a result of a criminal conviction, nearly 4.7 million of whom are living and working in the community. While 16 states and the District of Columbia already grant the right to vote to all citizens living in the community, 34 states continue to restrict the voting rights of community members on the basis of past criminal convictions.

Passing the Democracy Restoration Act will restore the right to vote in federal elections to American citizens who are released from prison or serving probation sentences.

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