



AMERICAN CORRECTIONAL ASSOCIATION

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Governor-Elect Terry Branstad
PO Box 3747
Urbandale, IA 50323

By Mail and Facsimile (515.276.2370)

Dear Governor-Elect Branstad:

I write on behalf of the American Correctional Association (ACA) to urge you to continue the current Iowa policy of automatically restoring voting rights to people with criminal histories who have completed probation and parole. The ACA believes that continuing to disenfranchise people after they have completed their sentence works against the successful reentry of offenders as responsible, productive citizens into the community.

For more than 140 years, the ACA has championed the cause of corrections and correctional effectiveness. Today we have more than 20,000 active members across the country, including 725 members in Iowa. Our original founding principles in 1870 declared, "The state has not discharged its whole duty to the criminal when it has punished him, not even when it has reformed him. Having raised him up, it has further duty to aid in holding him up. In vain we shall have given the convict an improved mind in heart . . . if, on his discharge, he finds the world in arms against him, with none to trust him." Denying the right to vote, and creating obstacles to having that right restored, are contrary to the ACA's core principles and missions. We urge you to maintain Executive Order No. 42.

I have been the Executive Director of the ACA since 1990, and have more than 40 years of experience in law enforcement and corrections. In 2001, the ACA passed a resolution calling for the automatic restoration of voting rights upon completion of sentence. (Copy enclosed). In that resolution, the ACA asserts that criminal disenfranchisement laws are not based on a need to protect the integrity of the electoral process and the justice system and that "the loss of the right to vote does not serve any rehabilitative function."

Rather, the ACA believes that former offenders who have the right to vote are less likely to re-offend. The 2005 restoration of the right to vote in Iowa sent a message that people who have served their sentence 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.

As corrections professionals, ACA members share your interest in the successful reentry of people after prison. Sound criminal justice policy calls for encouraging full reintegration into the community; creating additional barriers and obstacles to reintegration brands people as political outsiders and endangers successful reentry. We urge you to continue to implement Executive Order Forty-Two. I would be happy to discuss this important issue with you further, and to answer any question you might have about our position.

Respectfully submitted,



James A. Gondles, Jr.
Executive Director