
Felons Should Be Allowed To Vote Or Not

Did you know that an estimated six million people nationwide are barred from voting because of felony convictions (Stockman)? The right to vote is granted to you in the United States at the age of eighteen. There are only a total of two states, Maine and Vermont, who stay true to that right. Twelve other states will potentially take that right away from you. However, there are many cases in the United States in which felons are ineligible to vote for the remainder of their lives. How do we take the right to vote away from someone who has accepted their consequences and done their time? Some may question trusting an ex-convict due to his or her past actions; in the end, they are still considered U.S. citizens and are members of society with a political opinion.

As a United States citizen you are born granted with twenty-seven amendments that will potentially be one's best friend throughout life's journey. These rights can be very beneficial such as, freedom to express one's thoughts, freedom to worship as one may wish, and freedom to vote for public officials in an election. As for voting, it is considered to be the most crucial role in a Democracy style government, yet many people, mostly ex-convicts are being taken away and are not allowed to do so. Sadly, a little over six million convicted felons nationwide who have completed their sentences are not allowed to vote (Gypson). According to, The Sentencing Project, a research group, found that 1 in 40 adult Americans accounting for two point five percent of the voting-age population gets impacted by felon disenfranchisement (Uggen). So, not only are the rights been taken away from these U.S. citizens, but it is also negatively impacting many people.

As a result, on election day three million seven hundred thousand American citizens are disenfranchised due to crimes that they once committed. As for felonies, they can vary from severe crimes to something as simple as check fraud. Although the ex-convict broke the law, he or she has served their time and took full responsibility for their actions. Also, good and bad behavior has no role in whether one should be able to vote or not. States are not morally or politically justified in doing so. Instead, the United States should consider reconstructing the rights, guiding the way to the community, and showing that voting is a way of indicating one's personal opinion and starting change for a better country. These citizens only want to help the country just as much, if not more than someone who is not an ex-convict. "People who have made mistakes need to be able to move on, to move forward with their lives, and we need to change our laws to allow them, even encourage them, to do so," Rhode Island state senator Harold Metts, a Democrat, said in a statement last week (Khimmm). However, some believe that because one committed a crime of any sort that consists of a felony as the overall consequence, should not be able to play their role in society and vote.

One may agree that if we could not trust a convicted felon to live a pure, honest life as a U.S. citizen then why would we trust their judgment in a presidential election? 'We don't let children vote, for instance, or noncitizens, or the mentally incompetent. Why? Because we don't trust them and their judgment...' (Clegg). If one commits crimes against The United States, then they are no longer trustworthy in the eyes of many people. Once trust is lost, it is hard to reach the initial trust stage. A wise man once said, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you" (Anonymous). The quote means that one should never hurt or criticize the people that one may rely on, in the

case of crimes, one has ultimately turned his or her back to the ones who relied on each other. Why should one be trusted to make such a significant impact on the world with their vote? Before making the terrible concrete decision one has, he or she had the opportunity to live a life of freedom.

Why should an ex-convict be allowed to live as any other non-convict if he or she has committed an act of terror? The two states that allow inmates to vote while behind bars are treating them as if there are no consequences for their actions when committing such a careless act. Washington Representative, Toby Nixon, stated the following, "If somebody's in jail, they don't vote, and if someone is not in jail they vote. It's as simple as that." Nixon's response to convicts treated with such privileges, explains itself. Why should one trust another who has been proven guilty of murder, robbery, or even fraud? 'Now why would we, as citizens, as non-felon citizens, want felons helping to pick our representatives?' (Tucker Carlson). Many felons claim when given the opportunity, they will prove that he or she is no longer the person that committed the act of mischief — overlooking the fact that he or she had already been allowed to shine and take on opportunities.

With that said, the felons who have served their initial consequence only want their role as a United States citizen back, and that is to express their political opinion. Florida, being one of the twelve states that altogether banned the right to vote for ex-convicts has begun to regret their decision in the past couple of elections. Almost two-thirds of residents who could and did vote on November sixth, elected to restore voting rights for those who couldn't (Sanburn). Sanburn also states, "It's a really important milestone just in the sheer number of people who will be re-enfranchised." That is only to say, in the two thousand sixteen elections, Florida was the country's largest when it came down to the number of disenfranchised felons. When a convict gets freed from prison the last thing he or she wants to do is fight for their rights back, he or she wants to get involved with all of the things that they were unable to while serving their sentence. In two thousand twelve, Miller and Spillane conducted the second study exploring the possible effects of record-based voting restrictions on convicted felons' self-concepts. Employing semistructured interviews with fifty-four disenfranchised convicted felons, they found that thirty-nine percent of participants viewed felon voter disenfranchisement statutes as "limiting, psychologically harmful, and stigmatizing" (Miller and Spillane). Their data suggest that disenfranchisement interferes with fundamental processes of transformation by connecting former offenders to their criminal background, making it just about impossible to re-conceptualize or abandon a criminal identity.

While it may be hard to forgive a friend, a family member, or even a stranger for the act of cruelty he or she may have committed, one must look at the overall picture, that no sin is more significant than any other. We as the children of God should forgive, as Christ forgave us. You have heard people say, "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies." But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who ill-treats you (Matthew 6:43-44). This Biblical scripture tells how Jesus explained to his followers that we should love everyone, even our enemies and persecutors. I honestly believe the law should treat everyone equally, only because the convict has served their sentence and suffered the consequences. Until proven guilty, if an act of lawbreaking was to occur again, he or she should be treated as any United States citizen would be.