

THE UNITED STATES HAS ONE OF THE MOST PUNITIVE JUSTICE SYSTEMS IN THE WORLD.

It has the highest rate of incarceration in the world, and among other policies, many citizens with felony convictions have their voting rights restricted.

According to the Sentencing Project, 6.1 million Americans with felony convictions have not had the right to vote as of 2016. This disproportionately impacts Black Americans, as one in every 13 Black adults had been disenfranchised for this reason — a rate four times greater than non-Black Americans.

*Represent Justice's Surrogates and Ambassadors are proud to present **FREE OUR VOTE**, a guide to voting for and by people impacted by the justice system.*



**OVER 6.1
MILLION**

Americans have lost the right to vote because of a felony conviction.

REPRESENT JUSTICE



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#FreeOurVote

REPRESENT
JUSTICE



FREE OUR VOTE

A VOTER TOOLKIT FOR THE
SYSTEM-IMPACTED COMMUNITY

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AT THE POLLS

WHILE YOU ARE IN LINE AT THE POLLS:

- If the polls close while you're in line, you still have the right to cast your ballot.
- You can request a new ballot if you make a mistake on yours.
- You don't have to speak English to vote. Federal law says voters who have a hard time reading or writing in English can receive in-person help at the polls from a person of their choice.

IF YOUR POLL WORKER SAYS YOUR NAME ISN'T ON THE LIST OF REGISTERED VOTERS, YOU CAN:

- Ask them to double check.
- Ask for a supplemental list of voters.
- Ask them to help you confirm you are at the correct polling place.
- Ask for a provisional ballot. If you are eligible and registered to vote, officials are required to count your provisional ballot.

IF YOU ARE A VOTER WITH A DISABILITY, YOU CAN:

- Bring a friend or family member to assist you at the polls. Just be sure to let the poll worker know you've brought someone to help.
- Ask a poll worker to meet your needs. If the lines are long and you can't stand, an official can bring you a chair. If you need a quiet place to vote, an election official is required to make reasonable accommodations to help you vote.

WITNESS OR EXPERIENCE HARASSMENT ON YOUR WAY TO VOTE, YOU CAN CALL THE ELECTION PROTECTION HOTLINE.

English

1-866-OUR-VOTE | 1-866-687-8683

Spanish

1-888-VE-Y-VOTA | 1-888-839-8682

HOW TO VOTE

1. CHECK IF YOU'RE ELIGIBLE TO VOTE

For system-impacted citizens, learning if you can vote can be complicated or confusing. In some states, those with felony convictions might not be eligible to register to vote, but in other states they are eligible.

You can find out if you are eligible to vote by visiting

campaignlegal.org/restoreyourvote.

2. REGISTER TO VOTE

If you are eligible to register to vote, you can do so online in most states at allinforvoting.com/register-to-vote.

Registering to vote is simple — all you'd need to provide is your name, address, and social security number or ID number. Check the registration deadline for your state - some are a month in advance and some allow for same-day registration.

3. REQUEST YOUR BALLOT

The COVID-19 pandemic has made gathering in public spaces — even for something as critical as voting — profoundly risky. Voting by mail using an absentee ballot has been expanded for the November election. Voters in 43 states will be able to vote by mail. To learn more about your state's rules and how you can sign up to vote by mail, or request a ballot head to: allinforvoting.com/mail-in-ballot.

BREAKING DOWN

THE BALLOT

There are many elected officials that work within the criminal justice system. However, knowing who you get to vote for and what each position does can be complicated. The duties of these positions can change from state to state.

JUDGES

Below, we lay out a few key positions to be aware of before you vote. We encourage you to do more research the specific candidates in your district.

Judges preside over court proceedings and are in charge of the interpretation and application of the law. Their powers, functions, training, and methods of appointment differ by jurisdiction, the geographic area where they have legal authority. Almost all state court judges are elected. The length of judges' terms varies from state to state. About 85% of criminal cases are decided in the state system, which means these judges hold a lot of power. Judges are not always allowed leeway in their sentencing guidelines, but it is important to seek out a judge's general stance on criminal justice reform before heading to the polls.

DISTRICT ATTORNEYS

DAs, sometimes called Prosecutors, are elected officials that prosecute criminal cases. Das preside over entire counties. Nationwide, 84% of Das run unopposed. In criminal cases, it is Das who decide to file criminal charges and the severity of those charges. They can also decide to instead route people into a diversion program to help them rebuild their lives, or to have charges dismissed.

SHERIFFS

Sheriffs are typically elected and preside over a county where they investigate crimes, oversee local jails, and manage the transportation of pretrial detainees. Depending on the county, sheriffs can control if people in jail are allowed to vote, if they coordinate with ICE, and much more. Many sheriffs can serve for long periods of time, often with few checks on their authority, since unlike police chiefs, sheriffs typically do not report to mayors or other elected officials.

MAYORS

Mayors are the elected heads of a city, town, or municipality. Typically, mayors appoint the chief of police in their city and have a say in police practices and the police department's budget. Mayors can also enact policies that have outsized impacts on the local criminal justice system.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

City councils, composed of elected members from the community, are responsible for proposing and passing bills, laws and resolutions that help govern the city. They can have the power to close jails, expand the use of alternatives to jail, and redirect resources to social services like mental health treatment, housing, and substance use programs.

GOVERNORS

Governors are the elected executive head of each state. They have the power to grant clemency in their states for people convicted of felonies who have received extreme or unfair sentences by reducing a person's sentence or pardoning them. Governors can also issue executive orders that can steer a state's justice system toward reform.