



## Vote YES on HB 1419 (Rep. Senfronia Thompson)

### Restore the Right to Vote for People Who Have Completed a Term of Incarceration *#FreeTheVote In Texas For All*

Almost 327,000 people in Texas cannot vote because they are on parole or probation,<sup>1</sup> removing their voices from our democracy.

HB 1419 will bring Texas in line with 14 other states that restore voting rights to people with felony convictions who have completed their term of incarceration and have been released back to the community.

#### **Restoring Voting Eligibility Can Improve Social Responsibility and Boost the Economy**

Restoring the ballot to people is about restoring their place in the community. When returning individuals earn back their rights, they also reclaim their place in society and are more likely to become contributing members of their communities. A recent study indicated that restoring voting eligibility to disenfranchised Floridians would bring hundreds of millions of dollars to the Florida economy, while adding almost 4,000 jobs annually.<sup>2</sup>

- People who are living and working in our communities must take responsibility for making our communities stronger, which means participating in our democracy.
- Freeing the vote can improve public safety – protecting Texas families, while also protecting people's civil rights.
- Texans are being jailed for voting without knowing they were ineligible. This harms families and communities.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Restoring Voting Eligibility Can Reduce the Crime Rate**

When people return home after completing a term of incarceration, they often struggle to find a job and housing, and they face an overall lack of support in transitioning successfully to the community. Creating a restorative, redemptive reentry system – one that includes voting eligibility – will tell people, “You matter, your hopes for the future matter, and you have a say in your future.” Civic engagement will incentivize people to actively participate in improving their neighborhoods and communities. And, in fact, research shows that voting among previously incarcerated individuals can decrease recidivism.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Restoring Voting Eligibility Will Bring Texas In Line with Several Other States**

Fourteen states and the District of Columbia permit individuals who have been released from a term of incarceration to vote. These jurisdictions additionally allow people who are currently on probation to vote. The states that permit voting by people with felony convictions include Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Utah.<sup>5</sup>

*Citations on reverse.*

## **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), *FY 2017 Statistical Report*, [https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/Statistical\\_Report\\_FY2017.pdf](https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/documents/Statistical_Report_FY2017.pdf); see page 4 [Total Parolees Under Active Supervision: 84,838 people], page 5 [Parolees on Inactive Status listed as “Pre-Revocation – Not in Custody,” “Annual Report,” and “In Custody (Not in TDCJ custody)”: 14,091 people], and page 6 [Felony Community Supervision Population: 227,955 people], for a total of 326,884 people.

<sup>2</sup> Second Chances, “Economic Study Says Amendment 4 to Add \$365 Million to Florida’s Economy Annually,” May 2018, <https://secondchancesfl.org/press-releases/economic-study-says-amendment-4-to-add-365-million-to-floridas-economy-annually/>.

<sup>3</sup> NPR, *Texas Woman Sentenced To 5 Years For Illegal Voting*, March 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2018/03/31/598458914/texas-woman-sentenced-to-5-years-for-illegal-voting>.

<sup>4</sup> Guy Padraic Hamilton-Smith and Matthew Vogel, *The Ballot as a Bulwark: The Impact of Felony Disenfranchisement on Recidivism*, August 30, 2011, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1919617>: “[S]tates which permanently disenfranchise ex-felons experience significantly higher rates of repeat offenses than states that do not. If it is the case that disenfranchisement policy has a causal relationship with recidivism, then states that disenfranchise permanently can expect to see a significant reduction in the re-arrest rates of ex-felons. A reduction of this sort would be a potential boon for states, not only in terms of the general principles of crime control, but economically as well.”

<sup>5</sup> National Conference of State Legislatures, *Felon Voting Rights*, December 2018, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/felon-voting-rights.aspx>.