



HB 170, SB 69

RESTORATION OF VOTING RIGHTS

**KENTUCKIANS FOR THE
COMMONWEALTH**

General Assembly 2017

Democracy works best when all Kentuckians can participate in decisions affecting our lives – and that includes having **the fundamental right to vote**.

A healthy democracy is essential for ensuring justice and a good quality of life for all people. Kentucky's election laws and systems should be designed with the goal of protecting each individual's access to the ballot box and increasing overall voter registration and participation.

Kentucky's outdated constitution takes away a person's right to vote forever if he or she is convicted of a felony. Even a class D felony is enough to lose voting rights unless they can get a pardon from the governor. As a result, an estimated 312,000 Kentuckians, including nearly 243,000 people have completed their sentences, are barred from participation in our democracy. Only two other states make it so difficult to get one's voting rights back.

We believe that after people have served their time, they should be given back their right to vote – because that's the right thing to do and because it makes Kentucky's democracy stronger. And it's only fair that people who work, raise families, do business, pay taxes and contribute in other important ways be allowed a voice in our government.

Restoring voting rights even contributes to crime prevention. Former felons who vote are statistically half as likely to commit future crimes than former felons who don't vote. When you think about it, it makes sense. People who feel part of a community are less likely to act out against that community.

A solution in House Bill 70

A change is needed in Section 145 of the Kentucky Constitution to correct this problem. HB 170 and SB 69 would allow Kentucky voters to decide whether to allow automatic restoration of voting rights to most former felons once they've paid their debt to society. This legislation has passed the House by large bipartisan margins each of the last 10 years but the Senate has never concurred.



"Kentucky is one of the last states to permanently take away the right to vote when a person is convicted of a felony. I have a friend who wants to get that right back. He told me, 'I want to be a citizen again.' Let's give him and others their right to vote. Let's give them a say in their community."

RICHARD YOUNG, ELSMERE, KY

**IN KENTUCKY
MORE THAN 312,000
RESIDENTS ARE
DENIED THE RIGHT
TO VOTE**

Kentucky is one of only three states to enforce lifetime voting bans on all persons with felony convictions resulting in the disenfranchisement of more than 312,000 residents.



**1 OF THE LAST
3 STATES TO BAN
FORMER FELONS
FROM VOTING FOR LIFE**

**#3 IN RATE OF
DISENFRANCHISEMENT**

**#1 IN RATE OF
DISENFRANCHISEMENT
OF AFRICAN AMERICANS**

