



CaliforniaCivilLiberties.org

California Civil Liberties Advocacy
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To the Office of Governor Brown:

The California Civil Liberties Advocacy (CCLA) **SUPPORTS** Assembly Bill No. 1344. This bill will help clarify for the uninformed their capacity to vote once out of prison. Because this is a right not afforded in each state, it is easy for an individual to be misinformed of their restored right to vote. In addition, where any civil class tends to have a disproportionate enrollment within our prison system this creates a disproportionate hit against that civil class' overall capacity to vote. This perpetuates that civil class being a "minority" not because of its population ratio but because of lack of access to the same system tools as those not as grievously affected.

The bureaucracy of any state's government is often labyrinthine to those not trained or experienced in how it is ran. This is further complicated by media sources delivering information from other states which are not the case in California itself. Once misinformed on a subject, rarely does one know that there is reason to check on subject matter to verify or prove one's understanding false. This creates a path for misinformation to spread to other sources around oneself.

The above is especially problematic when it comes to the prison systems within the United States because they are not uniform. In particular to this bill, not every state offers back voting rights to former felons. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, 9 states require an affirmative action to restore their rights. In two states the rights are never taken away in the first place (1). The average citizen is not capable of distinguishing between the laws of one state and the laws of another. This is particularly problematic because television doesn't educate on how drastically laws on seemingly federal affairs can change from state to state. However, television does often include a given state's laws as exposition for stories. There is also a mistaken belief among some civilians that in no state do citizens ever get the right to vote back after incarceration under any circumstance. These paths for misinformation already disproportionately affect the less educated relative to the better educated. Compound this with the fact that 68% of inmates have no high school diploma even in modern days (2). Those in prison are statistically weak in their understanding of common law within our nation.

It is the duty of the State of California to better insure accurate information for its citizenry, especially as directed towards voting. We cannot call ourselves a state of equality when we have a percentage of our population unaware that it has the right to a voice in our elections. Because we have so many factors promoting false information, it is incumbent upon

*"Indifference to personal liberty is but the precursor of the state's hostility to it."
— Justice Kennedy, U.S. Supreme Court*

us to affirmatively address any misinformation or lack of information blocking this significant legal right of a California citizen.

Respectfully,

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cc: Assemblymember Weber's office