**Voting Rights: 6 Reasons Ex-Felons Shouldn't Vote**

**By Jerry Shaw   |** Wednesday, 15 Apr 2015 04:32 PM

Opponents of giving voting rights to ex-felons may debate on when, if ever, they should be allowed to vote. Some people say there should be a certain time frame involved before rights are restored. Others believe felons who have committed serious crimes should never be allowed to vote.  
  
Here are six reasons they give on why ex-felons shouldn't vote:  
  
**1.**Ex-prisoners have demonstrated dishonesty and irresponsibility in their character by committing a crime, especially a serious crime and have forfeited their right to vote.  
  
**2.** Consequences result from committing crimes that violate the rights of others. A segment of the population prone to criminal behavior needs to understand that criminal violations have consequences.  
  
**3.**Children, non-citizens and the mentally incompetent can't vote because of standards involving trustworthiness and responsibility. The same requirements should apply to felons, [according to an article written by Roger Clegg in the**Center for Equal Opportunity.**](http://www.ceousa.org/voting/voting-news/felon-voting)Although a restoration of voting rights is proper, it should not be automatic and done carefully on a case-by-case basis, he noted. Those who commit serious crimes have not shown trustworthiness.

**4.**The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which addresses equal protection under the law, does not always pertain to felons and ex-felons, according to Circuit Judge Alex Kozinski in dissent of a U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decision in 2006. Although racial, gender and reproductive rights have been upheld under the amendment, felonious crimes allow lawmakers to introduce felon disenfranchisement laws.

**5.** Ex-felons should demonstrate they are willing to abide by the law during a certain time period before they are allowed to vote again, according to Florida Gov. Rick Scott. Although restoration of voting rights helps offenders return to the society, it should be done carefully, he said. Public safety and incentives for an ex-felon to avoid future crimes should be considered.  
  
**6.**The crimes committed by ex-felons don't just involve injustice to one party, but include actions against the entire society, proponents of felon disenfranchisement point out. Including voting rights as part of an ex-felon's reintroduction into society doesn't explain why past crimes were committed in the first place, attorney George Brooks wrote in a 2005 article for the Fordham Urban Law Journal.

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Many states have enacted laws prohibiting the voting rights of felons or those previously convicted of felonies. Voting laws vary among the states, many of which have lessened restrictions on voting privileges for ex-felons so they can participate in the democratic process.  
  
Here are six reasons supporters give for restoring voting rights to ex-felons:  
  
**1.** Disenfranchisement for ex-felons has helped create a racial divide within voting privileges. More than 2 million African Americans, or close to 8 percent of black adults, aren't able to vote because of felony convictions compared to just under 2 percent of non-African Americans,[according to the **Sentencing Project.**](http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/fd_Felony%20Disenfranchisement%20Laws%20in%20the%20US.pdf)  
  
**2.**The diverse and changing laws on voting rights for ex-felons in various states have created confusion. The process involved to restore voting privileges can be cumbersome, making it difficult for some ex-felons to know if they can vote or to find out how. Some states have adopted procedures for correction facilities to aid ex-prisoners in their right to vote, but in Florida, for example, a procedure to automatically restore voting rights for non-violent offenders was later rescinded.  
  
**3.**The Eighth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibits excessive sanctions and calls for punishment that fits an offense, according to proponents of restoring voting rights to ex-felons. Permanently excluding all felons from voting would go against this amendment.  
  
**4.**Allowing ex-felons to vote would help in their reintroduction into society. They learn the value of the law to strengthen their participation in common practices. Even prisoners would learn to respect the law and contribute to the "common good" with voting rights, according to sociologists Jeff Manza of Northwestern University and Christopher Uggen of the University of Minnesota.  
  
**5.** Ex-felons deserve a second chance. They have paid their debt to society and once they leave prison, they need to readjust to a new life. Voting rights play a major role in restoring the rights process.  
  
**6.** Ex-felons are denied one of the basic fundamental rights guaranteed to citizens of the U.S. if they are not allowed to vote. Going through rehabilitation and reintegration, ex-felons become part of a law-abiding society with the same privileges as others in the society, proponents for voting rights argue.