

SUPPORT SB828

VOTING IN PRISON

Sponsored by Representative La Shawn Ford and Senator Mike Simmons

The Illinois Constitution states that a person in prison “shall lose the right to vote, which right shall be restored not later than upon completion of his sentence.” The exact length of disenfranchisement is not specified. SB828 restores the right to vote for voters post-conviction.

Ninety-five percent of people in prison return to their communities. Having strong ties to the community through civic engagement, specifically voting, increases the ability for reintegration, reducing recidivism, and making communities safer. Studies have shown that individuals in states with permanent felony disenfranchisement laws were about 10 percent more likely to recidivate than those in states that restore voting rights post-release.*

“It’s a very dangerous thing when you strip the right to vote from any person because it’s just a matter of time before it gets to you.”

-Renaldo Hudson
Community Organizer

The failure to include people in prisons in Illinois’ COVID-19 mitigation plan, resulting in the death of many and indefinite lockdown of thousands, highlights the urgency of including people in prison in our democracy. Without a means to hold elected officials accountable, the needs of people in prison are not considered.

The lives of people in prison are influenced by policies made by elected officials. Those who are elected are held accountable by their constituents. Until people in prison are given the right to vote, making up the constituency, they are unable to hold elected officials accountable.

We cannot overlook the intersection of veterans and people experiencing incarceration. Twenty-three percent of incarcerated veterans in Illinois have 38-life sentences. Their voice is important and their vote is needed.

*Data from the Illinois Department of Corrections Data Set as of 6/30/2021

**Collateral Consequences: The Crossroads of Punishment, Redemption, and the Effects on Communities,” U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

Who is in prison?

27,299

PEOPLE ARE
INCARCERATED IN
ILLINOIS PRISONS

55%

OF PEOPLE
INCARCERATED IN
ILLINOIS ARE BLACK

23%

OF VETERANS
INCARCERATED IN
ILLINOIS HAVE 38-
LIFE SENTENCES

80%

OF WOMEN
INCARCERATED IN
ILLINOIS ARE
MOTHERS

43%

OF PEOPLE IN
ILLINOIS PRISONS ARE
UNDER 35 YEARS OLD

#SB828 #UNLOCKCIVICS @CHICAGOVOTES

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