

Civic Writing

This is a blog for our Civic Writing class for Spring 2008. Class members are posting their thoughts using principles that they have worked with in the class. Feedback is welcome!

SUNDAY, MAY 11, 2008

➔ A ballot box doesn't go with the jail cell decor

We all learned in elementary school history class that the 15th Amendment granted suffrage to men of all races in 1870, and the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote in 1920, but what about the men and women "serving their time?" I never thought about the issue of felons voting until this presidential race. I began to wonder if their vote counted, or if there were different laws within each state. So, I did some research. It turns out that this is primarily a state matter, and each state fits into one of five categories, which range from strict to lenient. The categories are as follows:

1. Inmates, parolees, probationers, and ex-felons are barred from voting. Restoration of voting varies by state.
2. Inmates, parolees, and probationers barred. Felons vote upon completion of all supervised release.
3. Inmates and parolees barred. Felons vote upon completion of parole.
4. Inmates barred. Felons vote upon release from prison.
5. No restrictions. Felons may vote from prison.

Although most states fall into category 2, Massachusetts is listed in category 3. Only Maine and Vermont allow felons to vote from prison. Category 2 seems to be the best compromise. I think it is absolutely ridiculous to let felons have a say in who runs this country when they are in prison—a place where all luxuries are supposed to be denied. After all, the ability to vote is one of the most precious freedoms Americans have. When our body is locked up, so should be the voting ballot. How would that work if all felons were allowed to vote from prison? Would candidates have to add state prisons to their campaign trail? Would they promise nicer televisions and meat above Grade E? Despite this ridiculous scenario, some prisoners actually do get away with casting secret ballots...some how. For example, Analysis of the 2000 vote in Florida revealed that Gore came close to winning only because as many as 5,000 felons illegally voted.

A good rule to abide by would be: If ex-prisoners are eligible to work, they should be eligible to vote. Remember that little motto which serves as part of the foundation of America? "No taxation

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without representation"? If these ex-prisoners have served their time, they should not continue to be punished. Re-integration into a community is hard enough as it is.

Posted by wholeless at [11:12 AM](#)



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