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August 25, 2010 at 1:19 AM

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Political Caucus| Should Washington prohibit felons behind bars from voting?

Posted by [Lynne Varner](#)

The Seattle Times Political Caucus is a group of Times readers who have signed up to engage on issues important to government at the local, state and federal level.

[Is the felon voting ban an appropriate sanction or a civil rights violation?online surveys](#)

The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals will hear on Sept. 21 a challenge to Washington's longstanding ban on voting by felons in prison or under community supervision. A three-judge panel previously [ruled](#) the state's ban violated the federal [Voting Rights Act](#).

For 120 years, Washington has prohibited voting by incarcerated felons. By varying degrees, 48 states do the same. Here's a state-by-state [breakdown](#).

Lawyers challenging the law argue that because Washington's prison system is disproportionately minority - blacks, Latinos and Native Americans are 12 percent of the state's population but account for 36 percent of prison inmates - the ban violates civil rights protections.

A Times [editorial](#) earlier this year outlined what is at stake. This is a fascinating case with national significance. Appeals courts in three other circuits - the first, second and 11th - reached conclusions opposite of the 9th Circuit. The issue is likely headed to the U.S. Supreme Court, according to this [analysis](#).

What do you think? Is the felon voting ban an appropriate sanction or a civil rights violation?

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Absolutely. They should also be barred until they complete even their supervised release. Felons have violated the rights of other honest... Posted on August 21, 2010 at 8:33 AM by Kennel owner. [Jump to comment](#)

The short answer is "Yes". While serving their sentences, convicted felons have temporarily given up most of their civil rights. Posted on August 20, 2010 at 4:18 PM by Jerry Barr. [Jump to comment](#)

What's next? "Obama campaigns at Angola State Pen!" "Senator Smith wins big with incarcerated criminals!"... Posted on August 20, 2010 at 9:25 PM by William Slusher. [Jump to comment](#)

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