



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF WISCONSIN

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Restore Citizen Voting Rights

League supports bill restoring voting rights for felons who are not incarcerated

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin (LWVWI) wholeheartedly welcomes Representative Joe Parisi's proposed legislation to restore the voting rights of citizens with felon status who are not incarcerated.

Currently, felons in Wisconsin may vote only after completing all terms of their sentence, including probation and parole. This means that citizens who live, work and pay taxes in the community are regularly denied their right to contribute to the decisions of their government.

"The League of Women Voters has been advocating for free, fair elections for 87 years. As election workers and poll watchers, our members know firsthand the difficulty and expense of enforcing Wisconsin's prohibition on voting. Voter registration lists must be double checked against lists of people on probation or parole. That list changes daily. Why not make the poll workers' job less complicated and offer felons this opportunity to participate and reintegrate into society?" asks Andrea Kaminski, LWVWI Executive Director.

In addition, Wisconsin's incarceration statistics reveal that barring those who have paid their debt to society from voting means less representation for minority populations, particularly African American men. Restoring voting rights upon release from incarceration would mean better representation of our population in our elections and better integration of these individuals back into the community. "As long as our justice system is more likely to convict and sentence certain people based on race, it is unfair to tie voting rights to felon status," Kaminski adds. "We want those who are leaving prison to have a stake in their community and to play a positive role. One step towards that is encouraging their participation in the election process."

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin calls on all Wisconsin legislators to cosponsor this bill and help make our elections fair and efficient.

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin works to increase public understanding of major social issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy. A nonpartisan political organization, the League is the original grassroots network, encouraging informed and active participation in government.