



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

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Calling on the Pennsylvania State Legislature to repeal existing Felony Disenfranchisement Laws.

WHEREAS, Nationally, the "War on Drugs" and harsh sentencing policies such as mandatory minimum sentences, three strike laws and truth-in-sentencing laws, have increased the number of offenders sent to prison and the length of time they serve; and

WHEREAS, The laws of Pennsylvania disenfranchise a citizen who has been convicted of a felony for five years after the completion of a sentence; and

WHEREAS, As a result, in Pennsylvania, the total number of disenfranchised felons is approximately 35,000, of which approximately 19,000 are African American men, representing a rate of 5.2% of the adult African American male population; and

WHEREAS, By comparison, also in Pennsylvania, the approximately 16,000 felons within the majority adult population represents a low rate of only 0.4% of the total male population; and

WHEREAS, Nationwide, 13% of African American men are disenfranchised, numbering 1.4 million or one third of the 3.9 million US citizens who are unable to vote; and

WHEREAS, Deprivation of the right to vote does not promote reintegration of offenders into lawful society, but rather severs the individual from the body politic and creates a voiceless and disinherited citizen; and

WHEREAS, An eighteen-year-old first-time offender who trades a guilty plea for a *nonprison* sentence may unwittingly sacrifice forever his right to vote; and

WHEREAS, Supporters of disenfranchisement are unable to identify state interests furthered by denying the vote to ex-offenders or to justify the continuance of antiquated laws of disenfranchisement; now therefore

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA Call on the Pennsylvania State Legislature to repeal existing felony disenfranchisement laws.

RESOLVED FURTHER, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Petition the United States Congress to enact legislation to restore voting rights in federal elections to citizens convicted of a felony.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded to both state and federal legislative officials as the sincere sentiments of this legislative body.