



**January 28, 2021**

**For Immediate Release**

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### **THE TIME IS NOW FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

**Louisville, KY** - - Today, the League of Women Voters of Kentucky released *An Update: Felony Disenfranchisement in the Commonwealth of Kentucky* showing Kentucky has made much progress since 2019 but has much, much further to go. The League of Women Voters of KY renews its call for passage of a bill to allow Kentuckians to vote on a change in our Kentucky Constitution making restoration of the right to vote automatic upon completion of sentence.

- **197,672 Kentucky citizens, formerly convicted of a felony, remain disenfranchised despite the Governor's 2019 Executive Order 2019-003 that enabled 178,397 to regain the right to register and vote**
- **KY is an outlier: only 3 states ban persons who have completed their sentence from voting**
- **KY maintains its rank at the bottom nationally for the number of citizens disenfranchised with the fourth highest rate of disenfranchisement**
- **Kentucky has the seventh highest rate (15.1%) of disenfranchisement of African-Americans in the nation – 38,665 of 256,024.**
- **A constitutional amendment is needed to bring KY into the norm nationally**
- **Kentuckians support a constitutional amendment**
- **Support HB 232 without amendments**

“The national trend is toward automatic enfranchisement especially for those who complete their sentence. Iowa’s Governor Reynolds recently signed an executive order restoring the right to vote for those who completed their sentence, and she is working for a constitutional amendment to make her action permanent,” said Nicole D. Porter with The Sentencing Project.

“The time is now to build on the 2019 progress Kentucky made in restoring the right to vote and bring our Commonwealth into the mainstream of national public policy on automatic restoration of voting rights for persons who have completed their felony sentence,” said Fran Wagner, League President. “The League’s core belief is that voting is a fundamental expression of citizenship and every citizen of our Commonwealth should be protected in the right to vote. When we show persons with a felony who have paid their debt to society that they are allowed to vote, we proclaim that they are citizens again.”

Kentucky has the seventh highest rate of disenfranchisement of African-Americans in the nation. Of the 256,024 African-Americans of voting age in Kentucky, 38,665 or 15.1% are disenfranchised. “When any

citizen is deprived the right to vote, the Commonwealth fails at making true the promise of our democracy to protect this right for all citizens, placing Kentucky at the bottom of the list of states. Nowhere is this more evident than the impact on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) communities, specifically African American and Latinx who are mass incarcerated and disproportionately disenfranchised, said Reverend Dr. D. Anthony Everett, Executive Director Mission Behind Bars and Beyond, Inc.

Citizens who have made a mistake should have that right reinstated once they have completed their full sentence. Our society is stronger when all of our citizens vote. Joshua Douglas, a leading national expert on election laws and voting rights and UK Professor of Law, observes, “Re-enfranchising persons who have completed their felony sentence is not only good for civic engagement and the overall strength of our democratic institutions. It also helps people who have served their time reintegrate into society.”

Amanda Hall has had her voting rights restored. She said, “Getting my voting rights back means so much to me. It means that I have a voice for myself and my family. A voice that can be heard and matters. Everyone deserves that voice.”

HB 232, found at: [21RS HB 232 \(ky.gov\)](https://legislature.ky.gov/legresolutions/21RS/21RS%20HB/232), sponsored by Representative Jason Nemes and co-sponsored by Representatives Pamela Stevenson and William Lawrence proposes to amend Section 145 of the Constitution of Kentucky to automatically restore the voting rights of persons convicted of certain felonies upon completion of their imprisonment, probation, or parole. The League supports HB 232 without amendment.

Veronica Cunningham, Executive Director/CEO of the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), stated, “The APPA supports passage of House Bill 232. The association firmly believes that restoring voting rights to those released from prison encourages rehabilitation and assists community supervision officials and law enforcement efforts to promote public safety.”

This Report, along with the 2020, 2019, 2017, 2013 and 2006 Reports, is available at [Felony Disenfranchisement — League of Women Voters of Kentucky \(lwvky.org\)](https://www.lwvky.org/felony-disenfranchisement)

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*The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. As a nonpartisan body, the League takes action on issues but does not support or oppose candidates or parties. Members include both men and women.*