



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1082

Resolution calling on the 110th Congress to pass and enact H.R. 818, commonly referred to as the “Ex-Offenders Voting Rights Act of 2007,” which would secure the Federal voting rights of certain qualified non-violent ex-offenders who have served their sentences.

By Council Members Dickens, Brewer, Gonzalez, Jackson, James, Koppell, Mark-Viverito, Palma, Sanders Jr. and White Jr.

Whereas, The right to vote in open and free elections is one of our country’s greatest gifts of citizenship, a privilege that is protected by the U.S. Constitution; and

Whereas, Despite the United States’ reputation for being one of the world’s premier democracies, approximately 5.4 million individuals in 48 states and the District of Columbia are denied the right to vote as a result of a felony conviction; and

Whereas, This trend disproportionately affects communities of color, whose members account for the majority of the incarcerated individuals in our country’s prisons; and

Whereas, Thirteen percent of the African American adult male population in the United States are affected by these disenfranchisement laws; and

Whereas, Women also comprise a significant number of those denied the right to vote, accounting for 650,000 of those who are disenfranchised; and

Whereas, Latinos constitute 33 percent of individuals affected by felon disenfranchisement laws in the New York State; and

Whereas, The magnitude of the injustice of these disenfranchisement laws is particularly heinous in light of the fact that 82 percent of New York State’s prison population is either African American or Latino; and

Whereas, The decrease in the voting power of people of color will result in their underrepresentation in

governmental affairs; and

Whereas, State laws regarding qualifications for voting in Federal elections vary throughout the country, and attempts by ex-offenders to restore their voting rights can often be cumbersome, expensive, or downright impossible; and

Whereas, Continued denial of the restoration of an ex-offender's right to vote contradicts centuries of progress that this country has made in protecting a citizen's rights to vote, as enshrined in the Fifteenth and Twenty-Fourth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution; and

Whereas, Blind to the specificities of each state's classification of felony offenses, disenfranchisement laws affect even nonviolent offenders who were sentenced only to probation, thereby thwarting their re-assimilation into a lawful society; and

Whereas, Citizens who have completed their sentences for felony offenses should regain all rights they possessed pre-conviction, including the right to vote, upon completion of their sentences; and

Whereas, The United States seldom experiences a voter turnout of more than half the voting-age population, and should therefore make every effort to ensure that as many citizens vote as possible, regardless of race, color, gender or previous condition of servitude; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon 110th Congress to pass and enact H.R. 818, the "Ex-Offenders Voting Rights Act of 2007," which would secure the Federal voting rights of certain qualified non-violent ex-offenders who have served their sentences.