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KENTUCKIANS SUPPORT A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO AUTOMATICALLY RESTORE VOTING RIGHTS

Louisville, KY - - Today, the League of Women Voters of Kentucky released statewide polling results that continue to demonstrate that Kentuckians support automatic restoration of voting rights upon completion of sentence by more than a 2-1 margin.

This majority of Kentuckians, across political affiliation, gender and age categories, support the automatic restoration of voting rights for persons who complete their felony sentence. Overall support is 67% in favor and 28% opposed, according to a February 2021 statewide poll of Kentucky registered voters conducted by the Mason-Dixon Polling & Strategy, Inc. of Jacksonville, Florida from February 1 through February 4, 2021.

The polling indicates that the highest support for automatic restoration is from those 18-34 years of age with approval at 84% and disapproval at 9%. Kentucky male voters support automatic restoration with 63% approving and 34% not approving. Kentucky women voters support restoration by a larger majority with 71% approving and 22% not approving.

The number of people in Kentucky who support automatic restoration of voting rights upon completion of sentence is increasing. The current 67% approval of automatic restoration by Kentucky voters has increased from the 66% approval in the 2018 Mason-Dixon poll and the 56% approval in a 2006 poll of Kentucky voters conducted by the UK Survey Research Center.

“A constitutional amendment is needed to bring KY into the norm nationally and Kentuckians show strong, sustained support for this commonsense change,” said Fran Wagner, League President. “The time is now for HB 232 to be passed.”

Gennaro F. Vito, University of Louisville Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, analyzed the poll data and said, “It is time to lift the ‘invisible punishment’ of felon disenfranchisement and grant them the complete rights of citizenship.”

These Kentucky poll results are consistent with public opinion surveys nationally that report eight in ten U.S. residents support voting rights restoration for citizens who have completed their sentence, and nearly two-thirds support voting rights for those on probation or parole. National polling in 2020 by the Justice Collaborative Institute and Data for Progress indicates that there is “bipartisan majority support for

restoring voting rights to people who have returned home from prison. The polling also shows that more people support than oppose abolishing felony disenfranchisement entirely.”

The League of Women Voters of KY’s recently released report, *An Update: Felony Disenfranchisement in the Commonwealth of Kentucky*, shows that despite real progress, many remain disenfranchised. Our Commonwealth ranks the fourth worst state for restoring voting rights and 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. Kentucky is an outlier. Only 3 states ban persons who have completed their sentence from voting.

HB 232, found at: [21RS HB 232 \(ky.gov\)](https://legis.ky.gov/lrs/hb/200/232), sponsored by Representative Jason Nemes and co-sponsored by 10 other legislators of both political parties, 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.

This poll results and the 2021 League’s Felony Disenfranchisement Report, along with the 2020, 2019, 2017, 2013 and 2006 Reports, are available at [Felony Disenfranchisement — League of Women Voters of Kentucky \(lwvky.org\)](https://www.lwvky.org/felony-disenfranchisement)

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.