



For Immediate Release

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Response to Executive Order 36

The League of Women Voters of Virginia Calls on Governor Youngkin to Add Voting Rights for Returning Citizens to “Stand Tall – Stay Strong- Succeed Together Reentry Initiative”

Richmond, Virginia-August 20, 2024 --- The League of Women Voters of Virginia applauds efforts to assist returning citizens with housing, jobs, and other incentives to allow these people to be whole members of the community and to combat recidivism. Unfortunately, this Order ignored one particularly important component, the immediate and unhindered restoration of their voting rights.

Virginia is still burdened by arcane, Jim Crow era restoration laws, which give sole discretion to the Governor as to who is eligible for restoration and how that process is executed. Starting with Republican Governor Bob McDonnell and through subsequent administrations, we have seen great strides in making this process easier and faster. However, Governor Youngkin has not only slowed the restoration process, but his administration has also added back some requirements eliminated by his immediate predecessors and made the process more obtuse.

According to Joan Porte, President of LWV Virginia, “We have several studies, including one from the Columbia Law Review, which indicates the ability to vote reduces recidivism and allows the returning citizen to become a more involved member of the community; a member with a valued voice.”

She continued, “It is clear that with this Executive Order this administration continues to devalue the vote of these returning citizens. A person’s vote is their voice. Depriving them of this valuable voice excludes them from being fully vested in their community and being fully vested citizens again. If the aim is to truly combat recidivism, these people must get their voting power returned immediately upon release.”

The League calls on the Governor to amend this Order and streamline the process so that returning citizen’s voting rights are restored upon release.

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