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APPLYING FOR RESTORATION OF CIVIL RIGHTS IN FLORIDA

In Florida, a past felony conviction usually means loss of civil rights, including the right to vote, even after completion of all the terms and conditions of the sentence. Loss of civil rights takes away not only the right to vote, but also the right to hold public office, serve on a jury, and hold certain types of state occupational licenses.

An ex-felon's civil rights are taken away permanently until and unless he or she successfully completes a lengthy clemency application process and is granted restoration of civil rights by the Governor and the Board of Executive Clemency. The information below will help you know whether you have lost your rights, and if so, how you can apply to get them back.

If you are an ex-felon* and current Florida resident, you have probably lost your civil rights if:

- You have a felony conviction in the state of Florida and have not had your civil rights restored by the Governor and the Board of Executive Clemency.
AND/OR
- You were convicted of a felony in another state while you were a Florida resident.
AND/OR
- You were convicted of a felony in another state and did not have your rights restored in that state before moving to Florida. (NOTE: Some states restore rights automatically, without any paperwork, and a few never take the rights away at all. If your rights were restored before you became a Florida resident, you do not have to apply in Florida.)

The Department of Corrections (DOC) should have helped you with the application process at the time of your release from supervision. However, if you did not receive such assistance, you can start the process on your own, though you must not be under any form of supervision, including parole or probation.

You should be aware that applying for restoration of your civil rights opens you to investigation by the Florida Parole Commission. You may also have to undergo a hearing. The process is long, and there are no guarantees that your rights will be restored, but submitting the application is often recognized as a positive rehabilitative step that may help you achieve other goals. Submitting the application also helps to change the current rights restoration process for the better.

(MORE ON REVERSE)

* Only actual felony convictions should result in loss of civil rights – adjudications withheld that do not end in conviction should not result in loss of rights.

To initiate the application for restoration of your civil rights and keep your application moving, you will need to:

- Submit the “Restoration of Civil Rights” application to the Office of Executive Clemency in Tallahassee. You can get a copy of this application off the web site of the Office of Executive Clemency at <http://www.state.fl.us/fpc/exclem.html>, by calling the Office of Executive Clemency at (850) 488-2952, or by writing to the ACLU of Florida at the address on this page.

AND

- Submit letters of reference or character affidavits from past or current employers, clergy, neighbors, etc. Such letters are *OPTIONAL*, but they may be very helpful to your application. Keep in mind that the Parole Commission may contact the people who write on your behalf. The letters can be sent to the Office of Executive Clemency, at the same address as listed on the Restoration of Civil Rights Application.

AND

- Keep copies at home of your completed application, letters, and any other documentation you submit. You should have your own complete record of all correspondence and submissions.

AND

- Call the Office of Executive Clemency to make sure all information has been received and to ask whether they need any additional information. The phone number for the Office of Executive Clemency is (850) 488-2952. You should also call periodically to find out where your application is in the review process.

If you have questions during the process, you can call the Office of Executive Clemency, or you can call the ACLU of Florida at (305) 576-2337 ext. 19. While the ACLU cannot answer all questions, we will try to provide you with as much information as possible. Good luck!