

## Frequently Asked Questions About Rights Restoration

STAMP  
HERE

### What is the application process for rights restoration?

Ex-felons seeking to restore their rights must submit a Restoration of Civil Rights application to the Office of Executive Clemency in Tallahassee. Forms are available on-line at:

<http://www.state.fl.us/fpc/exclem.html>.

Applicants also are encouraged (but not required) to submit letters of reference from past or current employers, clergy, neighbors, etc. Call the Office of Executive Clemency at 850-488-2952 to make sure the completed application has been received.

### How long will it take to complete the rights restoration process?

It is not uncommon for applicants to wait years to have their rights restored. But, there are exceptions. People who qualify to have their rights restored without a hearing can have their applications processed faster. Most people, though, do not qualify for restoration without a hearing.

### Does the rights restoration process also allow ex-felons to have their records sealed and expunged?

Applying for restoration does NOT seal or expunge a former felon's criminal record nor does it give a former felon the right to purchase, own or possess firearms.

### Will the rights restoration process help an ex-felon get a job?

Yes. Anyone convicted of a felony in Florida is barred from voting and other rights. By applying to restore their civil rights, ex-felons become eligible to apply for certain types of state licenses necessary for many jobs.

For more information about restoring your rights, call (305) 576-2337 ext. 19.



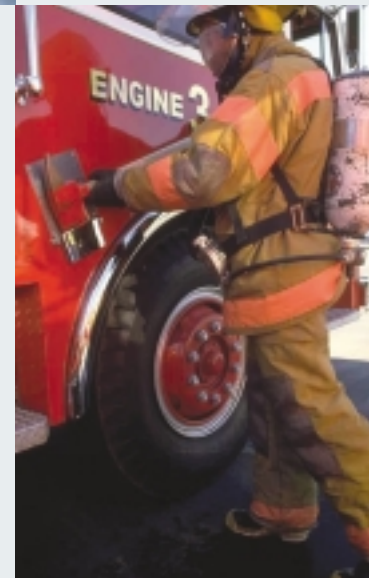
Florida Rights Restoration Coalition  
c/o ACLU of Florida  
4500 Biscayne Blvd., Suite 340, Miami, FL 33137

## Civil Rights for Ex-felons in Florida



Restore  
The  
Right  
To  
Vote

Enter  
The  
Workforce



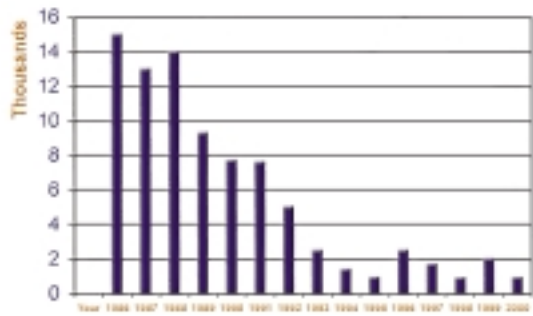
ACLU of Florida  
Voting Rights  
Restoration Campaign

## THE PROBLEM

In Florida, individuals convicted of a felony are stripped of their civil and voting rights, even after completion of their sentences. 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 qualify for certain types of state licenses necessary for many jobs, such as those in the construction and medical fields.

In order to restore those rights, an ex-felon must apply for "Restoration of Civil Rights." Only the Governor and the Executive Clemency Board have the power to restore those rights. The entire process is complicated and takes years. Even then, there is no guarantee an ex-felon will regain those rights.

**Restoration of Civil Rights for Ex-Felons 1986-2000**



SOURCE: Florida Department of Corrections

According to the Florida Department of Corrections, only 927 ex-felons had their rights restored in 2000 — significantly fewer than the 15,000 restorations granted in 1986. More than 30,000 applications await review at the Office of Executive Clemency, and despite severe budget shortfalls, the state is spending at least \$1 million this year to hire extra staff to process applications.

Florida is one of only six states that strip all ex-felons of their voting rights even after they have completed their sentences. This policy of disenfranchising ex-felons in Florida dates back to the Reconstruction Era when newly-freed slaves were granted the right to vote. Florida officials responded by enshrining this policy into the state constitution, leaving African Americans with little voice in their government for years to come. Today, approximately 30% of African-American men in Florida cannot vote because of this system.

## OUR STRATEGY

One of the ways to eliminate the injustice of felony disenfranchisement is to change the state constitution. For the past several years, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Florida — a non-profit, non-partisan organization — has worked with other advocacy groups to lobby the state legislature to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot. But, attempts to pass such legislation have failed. The other alternative is a citizen-sponsored ballot initiative.

**“Ex offenders have fully paid their debt to society. They are as much affected by the actions of government as any other citizen, and have as much of a right to participate in government decision-making...”**

Former Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall

The ACLU of Florida joined forces with other groups across the state to form the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition, a non-partisan statewide organization dedicated to achieving permanent reform through an amendment to the Florida Constitution. The coalition will lobby the Florida Legislature to get the amendment on the ballot and gather signatures to place it there. But, it takes time and money to do this work. That's why we're reaching out to other groups to develop an action plan and facilitate coalition building.

In the meantime, we continue to sponsor workshops throughout the state, in collaboration with many other organizations, to assist people who have a prior felony conviction with the rights restoration process.

**Help us end Florida's lifetime voting ban!**

**Call (305) 576-2337 ext. 19 today to find out more about joining the fight.**

[www.acluf.org](http://www.acluf.org)

## WHY WORK FOR CHANGE

Regaining the right to vote helps former felons reintegrate into civic life by giving them a constructive voice in the community. By regaining their civil rights, ex-felons also become eligible to apply for many public and private jobs, moving closer toward rehabilitating their lives while supporting their families as tax-paying, productive citizens.

## IF YOU'RE AN EX-FELON ...

If you were convicted of a federal or state crime while residing in Florida, and you live in Florida now, you have probably lost your civil rights. The Department of Corrections (DOC) should have helped you with the application process at the time of your release from supervision. But, if you did not receive help from the DOC, you can start the process as long as you're not under any form of supervision, including parole or probation. If you are still under supervision, you would need to request a waiver of the Rules of Executive Clemency in order to apply for restoration of civil rights.

Refer to the "Frequently Asked Questions" section in this brochure for more on restoring your rights, or call (305) 576-2337 ext. 19.

