

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS HILDA L. SOLIS AND

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Support for California Proposition 17: Voting Rights Restoration for Persons on Parole Amendment

History provides us with a myriad of examples of structural racism and sexism, in the guise of legitimate qualifications and criteria, being used to disenfranchise large groups of people. This is especially true in communities of color where qualifications and criteria centered on race, gender, poll taxes, and literacy examinations successfully disenfranchised voters for decades. Today, the same framework is used to disenfranchise individuals who have been incarcerated or are on post-release supervision. These hurdles only continue to harm and disempower communities of color.

In 2016, research showed that in the United States over 6 million people were disenfranchised due to a felony conviction; 1 of every 40 adults, who was eligible to vote, were disenfranchised due to a current or previous felony conviction; and 1 in 13 African-Americans who were of voting age were not eligible to vote, which was four

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times higher than those who were not African-Americans.

Across the country, we see examples of voting laws that continue to oppress and disenfranchise with only two states, Maine and Vermont, that have no laws prohibiting people from voting.

With this understanding, it is unfortunate that California is one of three states that still require people who are convicted of felonies to complete both their prison and parole sentences before they can regain their right to vote.

However, there is an opportunity in California to rid the state of this discriminating disqualification. The Board of Supervisors, in August 2019, in support of the restoration of these rights, approved a motion to support the Assembly Constitutional Amendment (ACA) 6, authored by Assemblymember McCarty, and the accompanying Assembly Bill (AB) 646, enacting changes to the California's Elections Code. Since the passage of the Amendment and Bill in 2020, the ACA 6, also known as, "Free the Vote Act", will now appear on the November ballot as Proposition 17.

With the passage of Proposition 17, it would restore the right to vote to every person who is on parole in California, which is almost 50,000 people. Research and studies have shown that civic engagement decreases recidivism rates as it allows people to positively and meaningfully contribute to their communities. We are talking about community members who work and pay taxes but are not able to participate in the development of the government and choose representatives of that government, that they interact with and impacts them daily.

The right to vote is threatened and used as tools of oppression and suppression, therefore, that right has been one that has always needed constant vigilance, because it

is recognized that with voting, comes power.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors take an official position to support Proposition 17 which would amend the State Constitution to grant individuals on parole for felony convictions the right to vote in California.

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