

REVISED

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS
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Supporting Proposition 17 to Restore the Right to Vote After Completion of Prison Term

California’s Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation estimated that in 2019, over 50,000 California parolees were prohibited from voting in state, federal, or local elections. Many of these citizens are working, paying taxes, and otherwise contributing to the overall welfare of their communities. The burden of felony disenfranchisement has a significant impact on African Americans who are overrepresented in the criminal justice system, and thus further perpetuates systemic racism and social inequality.

Over the past few years, the County of Los Angeles (County) has taken significant steps in support of justice-involved voter engagement. In 2018, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved “Expanding Voter and Civic Engagement of Justice-Involved Populations” (Ridley-Thomas/Kuehl, February 13, 2018), and the “Creation of Voter Engagement Taskforce for Justice-Involved Populations” (Ridley-Thomas/Kuehl, July 24, 2018) to support individuals as they returned to their communities by increasing their civic empowerment which research shows serves to reduce recidivism. As a result of these motions, LA Free the Vote established LA Voice, an initiative to register justice-involved voters. LA Voice created a voter information database of clients served by the County’s Office of Diversion and Re-entry for use by staff from County departments in order to institutionalize voter registration in their case management services, and currently

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continues to increase awareness of voter eligibility. People within the County’s jail system or supervised in the community by the County’s Probation Department are eligible to vote, however, the State Constitution prevents those in state prison or on state parole from registering to vote.

Last year, the Board approved “Support for the Free the Vote Act” (Ridley-Thomas/Kuehl, August 13, 2019), a motion supporting the passage of Assembly Constitutional Amendment 6 (McCarty et. al) which placed Proposition 17 (Prop 17) on the ballot. If passed, Prop 17 would restore voting rights for people on state parole. The statewide cost to process these voter registrations is estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, less than one percent of the State’s General Fund Budget. The County Registrar-Recorder indicates that Prop 17 would have a minor impact on current operations. As of 2020, 19 states across the nation allow people on parole for felonies to vote.

As the County ramps up election operations for the November General Election, the County should continue its advocacy to promote voter registration and support legislation that advances voter rights.

WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

1. Recognize September 22, 2020 as National Voter Registration Day throughout Los Angeles County (County) and encourage the County’s residents to participate in the LA Voice National Voter Registration Day Celebration, which is a Free the Vote Task Force initiative to conduct voter registration and promote civic engagement among justice-involved individuals; and
2. Take an official position in support of Proposition 17, the “Voting Rights Restoration for Persons on Parole Amendment,” which would grant the right to vote to parolees in California who are United States citizens, residents of California, and at least 18 years of age.

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(KJ/CAS/JB)