

# End voter discrimination in Washington State



Washington Citizen Action supports VOTING RIGHTS FOR ALL

One of WCA's core organizational values is for a truly democratic society with open honest participation by all. Currently in Washington State people with former felony convictions are denied access to the democratic process even AFTER they have served their time and are trying to reintegrate into society.

WCA opposes the disenfranchisement of any group of citizens. So we have joined with several of our allies, including the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington (make this a link to their website <http://www.aclu-wa.org/>). It is our collective mission to simplify the complicated ins and outs of the laws supporting who can and cannot vote. Voting is a basic right and therefore the education surrounding it should be clearly stated and accessible to all.



In 2004 Washington Citizen Action registered 52,000 Washingtonians to vote. While running our voter registration drive we identified a large barrier to democracy:

Each election, over 150,000 Washington citizens are denied their right to vote solely because of outstanding financial obligations – that's almost 4% of the eligible voting population and double the national average.

## ✓ **Washington's Electoral Law Is Discriminatory**

**Washington's law fosters an electoral system that discriminates on the basis of race and economic status.** The law bars large numbers of people of color from voting due to racial bias in the state's criminal justice system and the onerous procedural and financial barriers to regaining the right to vote. Washington is one of only fourteen states denying the vote to former felons.

## ✓ **Washington's Law Imposes a Poll Tax That Disenfranchises People of Color**

Washington law requires people convicted of felonies to pay "legal financial obligations" before their voting rights are restored. These legal fines and obligations are compounded at an annual rate of 12% per year. Many people with former felony convictions are poor; paying off this money is difficult and highly improbable. As a result 30% of Washington residents who have fulfilled their sentences are unable to pay off their debt. Though poll taxes have long been prohibited as an infringement on voting rights, Washington continues to put a price on voting for those with a past felony conviction. **The poll tax, compounded by tedious procedural requirements, is permanently disenfranchising thousands of**

**Washingtonians. Washington elections will not be free or fair as long as the state's disenfranchisement law remains in effect.**

**✓ Washington State Should End Discrimination in Its Electoral Law**

Stripping voting rights of people with felony convictions institutionalizes discrimination in our electoral system and our democracy. Washington should ensure equal participation in our representative democracy by ending policy that hinges the right to vote on economic status.

***Call 1-800-562-6000 right now and tell your legislators  
we need to end voter discrimination in Washington State.***

Washington Citizen Action is supporting HBxxxx in coalition with the League of Women Voters of Washington, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington.

**-- WASHINGTON CITIZEN ACTION --**

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